Chapter-IV

VAISHNAVITE PURANIC THEMES IN TEMPLE ART
Mythologically Viṣṇu, second of the Trimūrtis, is entrusted with the task of preservation, protection and sustenance (sthiti) of the universe, while Brahma and Śiva, the other two of the sacred triad, are conceived as sharing the responsibility for creation (śrībhīṣṭi) and destruction (laya) respectively, in the eternal cycle cosmic process. Popularly, Viṣṇu is known by a thousand names which together indicate his enormous importance, power, and significance. In the "Amdāsanikaparvan" of Mahābhārata Bhīṣma, the grand old man, instructs Yudhīšṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, in the sanctity and significance of these names. These names are and have been recited everyday by millions of faithful Hindus as an act of merit.

Viṣṇu did not become such an all-important deity of several attributes overnight. It was an evolution, a development over some centuries. His origin is said to back to the Vedic period. Like Śiva he too is a Vedic god. In the Veda he is known as the god of the upper region and not a particularly significant god. Such epithets as the “ancient”, “the protector” are applied to him in the Rig-veda, in which he is also known as Upendra. Further, he is identified with the Sun (Āditya) who covers the whole universe in three strides, perhaps referring to the Sun at dawn, noon, and evening when he sets. Much later when the concept of avatāras (incarnations) was developed the three steps taken by the sun were meaningfully incorporated into the myth of Viṣṇu as Vāmana-Trivikrama, who covered in three paces the earth, heaven, and the nether region, in short, the entire universe.

Gradually Viṣṇu gained in importance to become ‘Devadēva’ (the god of gods) by about the second century B.C.¹ and the other Vedic gods receded into the background. Viṣṇavism developed into a sectarian religion growing in complexity by absorbing synthesizing several cults then in vogue. The rapid progress of Viṣṇavism was part of a larger and wider movement within the Vedic fold to resist the threat posed by Jainism and Buddhism which were heterodox and atheistic.

Elucidating this situation J.N. Banerjea makes the following observation: “. . . Viṣṇu round whom one of the major cults grew up was really the result of the syncretism of three god-concepts- the man-god Vasudeva-Kṛiṣṇa, the Vedic Sun-god Viṣṇu and the Cosmic god Nārāyaṇa of the Brāhmaṇas”. In the age of the Epics, līlāsas, and
*Purânas* Viṣṇu became supreme, and “the most influential member” of the *Trimûrtis*. Myths and legends about him grew enormously, which found their way into the epics and *Purânas*. These have provided the basis for Viṣṇava art and sculpture. “The mode of representing the several aspects of Viṣṇu found expression in the various Āgama śāstras, of which the most outstanding are the *Viśhvakīrṇasūgama*, the *Pāñcharātrāsūgama*, the *Tantrasūra* of Madhvāchārya, and the … treatise known as *Viṣṇudharmottaram"*.¹

R.P. Chanda has expressed the view that “in the process of absorbing local cults Viṣṇavism developed the theory of *avatāras*. Scholars find the traces of the concept in the *Rg-veda* itself” ². ‘*Avatāra*’ means ‘descent’. Gods descending in human form for the benefit of mankind is found in many religions of the world. As R. Champakalakshmi has pointed out, “Viṣṇu is unique as the only one among the Hindu deities to be credited with *avatāras*. He is said to have assumed several forms in his role as protector. This is said to be explained by the recurrent Puranic motif of … the unceasing conflict between the gods and the demons” ⁵. She observes further; “…Though there is no definite idea of the *avatāra* in the Vedic literature, there is a pre-figuration of several later stories, as, for instance, the story of the *Vāmanavatāra*”, in which he strides over the universe, “planting his step in the three places” ⁶. The concept of *avatāra* found its earliest indication in the *Bhagavadgītā* in which Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa declares reassuringly to his disciple that he would be born again and again in this world to protect the pious and righteous, to destroy the unrighteous and wicked, and thus to establish (Dharma paritrāṇāya sādhūnam vināsasya daksītam dharmaśaṁstāpanārtaya sambhavāmi yugā yugā). The *Purāṇas* elaborate this idea.

Viṣṇu is said to have incarnated himself many times. The *Bhāgavata* and other *Purāṇas* give detailed descriptions of them and their number. As T.A. Gopinatha Rao points it, “the incarnations of Vishnu are innumerable like the rivulets flowing from an inexhaustible lake”. They are said to be of three kinds, namely, complete incarnation (*pūrṇa avatāra*), incarnation (*ambikavatāra*) which is “a portion of the power of the divine being”, and “partial incarnation” (*avesa*), which is “more or less temporary”, and whose divine power ends once the mission of life for which he is incarnated is fulfilled. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are *‘pūrṇa avatāras*”, Parāśurāma an *āvēśa*
avatāra, and the sarīkha and chakra of Viṣṇu which once in a while ordered by him to be born on earth to better human condition are avatāras. However “the most commonly accepted and recognized incarnations of Viṣṇu are ten in number” and they “have been assumed on different occasions by him with a view to destroy certain asuras and to set right the wrong done to the world by them”.

The Daśavatāras are Matsya(fish), Kurma(tortoise), Varaha(boar), Narasimha(man-lion), Vāmana(the dwarf) including Trivikrama, Parāśurāma, Śrī Rāma, Kṛiṣṇa, Balarāma, and Kalkī. Some authorities include Buddha as one of the ten incarnations. R. Champakalakshmi makes the important observation that “under the Guptas of the 5-6th centuries A.D., a period in which there was a great revival of Vedic Brahmanism and when a new orientation was being effected, leading to the evolution of Puranic religion and the development of Viṣṇuava and Śaiva pantheons”, Buddha was included “into the avatāra fold...to cut at the very root of the Buddhist religion”. However “some Hindu authorities do not consider Buddha as an avatāra of Viṣṇu, and substitute in his place Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛiṣṇa, as an avatāra”. “All the avatāras are more or less directly referred to in ... works like the Rāmāvata, the Mahābhārata, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa and the Viṣṇupurāṇa”.

The present chapter (Chapter-IV) is examines the Viṣṇuavite Puranic themes and Viṣṇuavite images- sculptures, images, panels etc., - depicted in the temples of the Rayalaseema region. The Daśavatāras were a popular theme for Vijayanagara sculptors. In the case of the Śaivite themes and sculptures in the study region detailed in the previous chapter with reference to the different forms assumed by Śiva, now in this chapter the Viṣṇuavite themes and images depicted in the Rayalaseema temples are considered avatāra or incarnation-wise, beginning with the Matsyāvatāra, the first in the series of Daśavatāras. Only when it is felt necessary, the mythological background and Puranic lore of the incarnations will be briefly explained, so that the meaning and significances of the images depicted could be better appreciated.

To begin with the Matsyāvatāra, compared with the other and later incarnations, this and Kurmāvatāra, the next avatāra, appear minor or subsidiary in importance and influence. But their significance is never in doubt. The Matsyāvatāra (the fish-incarnation) has its origin in the Indian legends about pralaya (deluge and destruction). The earliest version of the legend is to be found in the Śatapatha
The chief and only purpose of this *avatāra* of Viṣṇu's in which he assumed the form of a fish was to save the universe and recover the *Vedas*. There is more than one version of this incarnation in the *Purāṇa*, but the story in the main remains the same in all of them through they vary in details. According to one version to which T.N. Srinivasan alludes, Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish to restore the *Vedas* snatched away by two formidable demons, Madhu and Kaītabha, into the seas.

T.A. Gopinatha Rao presents the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* version of the myth as narrated by Badarāyaṇī to Viṣṇurāte. It run thus: At the end of the past kalpa... there was a partial dissolution of the universe, in which the earth and other worlds became submerged under the ocean. Then the power Hayagrīva (a rākṣasa), coming near, snatched away the *Vedas* which had proceeded from the mouth of the creator. ...on discovering this deed of Hayagrīva, the chief of the Dīnavaśa, the divine lord Hari took the form of a *sahāra* fish and recovered the *Vedas* 12. The *Agnipurāṇa* version differs from this in details. But it also concludes with the assertion that Viṣṇu slew the asura Hayagrīva and brought back the *Vedas*.

Compared with the other incarnation of Viṣṇu, sculptural representations of the *Matsya-vatāra* are rare. Wherever they are found, they are mostly seen on the *gopuras* and pillars of temples. Generally the image is depicting either wholly as fish, or as half-man and half-fish. The anthropomorphic upper half has four hands and the usual attributes of Viṣṇu, such as sāṅkha, chakra etc. This is how this *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is depicted in South Indian temples. Kalpana Desai mentions some interesting representations of *Matsya-vatāra* found in some parts of North India and some images of it exhibited in Gwaliar Museum and such places. She also says that no shrine dedicated to the *Matsya-vatāra* has come to light so far13. T.N. Srinivasan too held a similar view that there are no main temples dedicated to this *avatāra* of Viṣṇu14. Precisely here the Rayalaseema region scores a point over others. In Nāgalāpuram of Chittoor District, there is a magnificent temple built by Krishna-Kesavaiah in 1523 A.D. dedicated to Viṣṇu in his *Matsya* incarnation. The deity in the sanctum is called Viṣṇu. The main deity in the sanctum is a life size figure of a *Matsya-vatāra* form of Viṣṇu, in which the body of the god is that of a man from the girdle upwards and the lower half is that of a fish. The deity is two-handed and holds *chakra* and *sāṅkha* in the upper arms. He holds the four *Vedas* in his lower right hand. What the lower left hand holds is not clearly visible and cannot be identified. The
peculiarity of this **mūlabhēra** is that the god holds the *chakra* in profile condition, which is known as *prayōga chakra*.

A sculpture of Matsyāvatāra is depicted on the west *gopura* of the first enclosure in the same temple. The deity has four arms and holds *chakra* and *śankha* in his two upper arms. He holds four Vedas in his lower right and the object in the lower left is not clearly visible. Again on a loose pillar of the *mandapa* of the same temple, which is now seen fallen into the temple tank, there is depicted the local legend narrating the Matsyāvatāra story, in which Viṣṇu as Matsya is shown killing the demon Śomakṣūra.¹⁵

Within its limited scope the Matsyāvatāra is represented with some variety in the Rayalaseema temples. The following are the illustrative examples.

The temples of Tāḍāpatri, Onṭiṁīṭṭa, Siddhavatam Fort, Śrikalahasti, Nāgalañuram, Nārāyaṇavanam, Kārveṇagaram, Tirumala, Tirupati, Chandragiri Fort (pl.97), Manīkpuram etc. contains the sculptures of Matsyāvatāra either on the pillars, bas-reliefs or the wall portions. In all these examples, the Matsyāvatāra is shown with half-human from the girdle upwards and that of a fish in the lower-half. Invariably, the deity has four hands in all the examples. The upper right arm carries *chakra* and the upper left carries *śankha*, the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada* pose. The god is decorated with *kīrānakuta*, *bhujavalayas*, *chakrakūṇḍalas*, *makarakuṇḍalas*, *udarabandha*, girdle etc.

However, there are certain variations in the following examples.

On the eastern wall of the *gopura* of the Chintala Veṅkatārāmana at Tāḍāpatri¹⁶, interestingly the lower left hand of the god carries *gada*. The Onṭiṁīṭṭa example is found on a pillar in the mukhamandapa of Ködanḍarāma temple (pl.98) is the god has bulging eyes with ferociousness. Another example, found on a pillar in the Achyutarāya-mandapa of Śrikalahastisvara temple (pl.99) is depicted with prominent fish scales on the lower part of the body of the god and is shown with pleasant face Matsyāvatāra of Viṣṇu fighting with Hayagrīva.
On a pillar in the *manḍapa* of the main shrine of Chiṅtala Veṅkaṭaramana, Taḍipatri (pl.100), there is a fine representation of the Matsyāvatāra. The figure shows the body of a man from the girdle upwards, and its lower half that of a fish. The deity has four arms and holds *chakra* and *śaṅkha* in his two upper hands. He holds in the lower right hand the four *Vedas* which are shown as four oblong objects, and with his left hand he tears open the stomach of the demon Hayagrīva, who is shown to his left. The demon is shown as falling on his back 17. The god is decorated with *kīrtimakuta*, *bhujavalayas*, *haras*, *yajnopaviṇa* etc.

Another example of this form is found on a pillar of the *mahāmanḍapa* of the Kodaṇḍarāma temple at Oṭṭumittī (Kadapa district) (pl.lO1). The deity has the body of man above the loins, and that of a fish below the loins. He is seen in the act of punishing the demon Hayagrīva, who is represented at the front. The demon is shown seated with his legs spread on the ground and the leaning body rests on his hands. He is shown in the posture of collapse, his right hand holds a *khaḍga*. Here, the deity has four arms and holds *chakra* and *śaṅkha* in the back hands while the out-stretched front right and left hands appear pulling out the entrails of the demon. The front left hand tears his abdomen. The god is adorned with *kīrtimakuta*, *graiveyakas*, *channavira* and *udarabandha*.

The *manḍapas* inside the fort of Chandragiri, near Tirupati contain many pillars having fine bas-reliefs of the *Deśavatāras*. In one such *manḍapa* forming the entry to the front of the museum, two beautiful Matsyāvatāra sculptures can be seen on one of the pillars. Though in low relief, they are attractive to look at. A similar figure of Matsyāvatāra is found at the second entrance *manḍapa* at the same place. Matsyāvatāra is shown as relief-sculpture in one of the pillars in *dhwajasthāmba-manḍapa*, at Tirumala. The front two hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* and the back two hands hold *śaṅkha* and *chakra*. The lower portion of the body is in the form of fish.
KūrmaVatāra

In the KūrmaVatāra Viṣṇu took the form of a tortoise “in order to recover various objects lost during the deluge or to support the Mandara mountain during the churning of the ocean of milk.” The origin of the myth concerning of this incarnation back to the Vedaś. In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, it is said that the Kūrma form was “assumed by Prajāpati to create living beings” 18. It is in Purāṇas that the tortoise or Kūrma is clearly identified with Viṣṇu as his incarnation. The myth is connected with age-old struggle between the devas or gods and daityas or demons, in which Viṣṇu always goes to the rescue of the devas. The Bhagavatapurāṇa says that Viṣṇu assumed the form of the tortoise for supporting on its back the churning mountain Mandara when gods and demons churned the ocean of milk for Amṛta19. The mountain had to be supported because it was sinking under the impact of churning. The Viṣṇupurāṇa also says that Viṣṇu assumed the form of Kūrma at the time of the churning of the ocean. It would appear that serving as a strong support of the mountain Mandara is the only important part when Viṣṇu played in KūrmaVatāra.

The worship of KūrmaVatāra in temples like that of Matsyāvatāra is very rare. There is no mention of a shrine for this avatāra in North India, although Kalpana Desai refers to a few sculpted images of this incarnation found there. Significantly, there is a temple wholly dedicated to this form at ŚrīKūrma in Śrīkakulam district of Andhra Pradesh: And there are one in Kaṇchipuram in Tamilnadu, where the deity is called Kachchhapēśvara. Elsewhere, some sculptural representations of this incarnation on pillars, and paintings too are found.

In the Rayalaseema region there are only a number of examples of this incarnation, noticed already by scholars.

To cite a few examples a figure of the KūrmaVatāra is found on a pillar in the Achyutarāya-maṇḍapa of Śrīkalahastīśvara temple at Śrīkalahasti (pl.102). The figure is that of a man above the girdle, with four arms, while below the girdle it is the shell of tortoise. The god holds chakra and śaṅkha in the two upper hands and keeps the lower right in abhaya and the lower left in varada. He wears kīrtīmakuta,

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makarakunḍalas, graivēyakas, yajñopavīta and girdle. Similar example if found in the entrance maṇḍapa of Chandragiri fort (pl.103). But the god is less ornaments in this example.

An interesting depiction of Kūrmaavatāra is depicted on a pillar of the mahāmaṇḍapa of the Raṅganātha temple at Gaṇḍikōṭa20. Here, Viṣṇu is represented with the body of a man above the loins while below it is the shell of a tortoise. This image is slightly different from the others in that have four arms and holds lotus in the upper right hand, the nīlōpalā in the upper left hand, chakra in the lower right hand and śaṅkha in the lower left hand.

The adhiṣṭāna of the main gopura of Viḍanarāyana temple at Viṅgalaśāram21, has a sculpture of Kūrmāvatāra. As elsewhere here too, above the girdle the god has a human form with four arms, while below the girdle it is the shell of tortoise. The god holds chakra and śaṅkha in the two upper arms and keeps the lower right in abhaya and the lower left in vārada. He wears kiritamukta, makarakunḍalas, graivēyakas, yajñopavīta and girdle.

There are similar examples of this avatāra in almost all the temples of Rayalaseema. Viz. Tirupati, Tirumala, Tadipatri, Oṁtīti, Siddhavatām fort.

Varāhāvatāra

In the traditional order of Daśavatāras the Varāhāvatāra comes third. In contrast to its preceding avatāras, it becomes an important and influential incarnation of Viṣṇu. From its rudimentary beginnings in the Rig-Veda this myth about the boar or Varāha evolved into a full-fledged myth of Viṣṇu’s incarnation by the time of the epics and the Purāṇas. In the words of R. Champakalakshmi, “the Epics and Purāṇas represent the final stage in the evolution of the myth and make the boar an incarnation of Viṣṇu”22. The importance and popularity of this incarnation is evidenced by the appeal it has had to temple patron, artists and sculptors over the centuries as a popular subject, the worship it has commanded in shrines built for it in a few places.
Vishnū took the form of ‘Varāha’ or wild boar to dive into the sea and retrieve and rescue the Earth or Bhūdevī whom the dreaded rākṣasa Hiranyākṣa had stolen. After destroying the demon Vishnū the Varāha held the Earth on his snout brought her back. This story is mentioned by all the Purāṇas though there are considerable variations in their accounts. Champakalakshmi succinctly summarises the story: “Hiranyākṣa, one of the two sons of Diti, obtained by his tapas a boon from Brahma that he could not be hurt by noxious animals, which he enumerated. Unable to bear the burden of the excessive evils wrought by this asura, the earth sank beneath the waters of the ocean. At this critical stage, Vishnū, assuming the form of a boar, lifted the earth from the depths on his tusk. Then he slew Hiranyākṣa, for in his blind pride and desires, the asura had forgotten to include the boar in the list of animals when he obtained the boon from Brahma”.

Iconographically the Varāhāvātāra is represented principally in theriomorphic and hybrid form: being with the head of a Varāha or boar. The god has four arms in which he carries insignias associated with him such as śaṅkha and chakra. Almost invariably the earth goddess Bhūdevī, whom he rescued from the clutches of the abducting demon Hiranyākṣa, is associated with him. The ‘Varāha’ seem to have had a special symbolic significance for the Vijayanagara kings. For images of the boar appear perhaps as a symbol of royalty in many of their inscriptions and their gold coins were called “Varāhas”. The Varāha is represented in various forms, of which the more important ones as listed by are: T.N. Srinivasan Bhūvarāha, Lakṣmī Varāha, Yajñavarāha and Kevalavarāha. There are traditional prescription regarding their poses and gestures.

Unlike the first two avatāras, the Varāhāvātāra form of Vishnū has some temples built and dedicated to him. Otherwise the images of Varāha appear chiefly on pillars and walls etc, of temples. In Tamilnadu there is an important ancient and big temple of Bhūvarāha at Śrīmuṇḍam in south Arcot district. There is another at Tiruvadanai in Chengalput district, where, locally the deity is called Nityakalyāṇa. The “bas-relief of this avatāra in the Varāha cave at Mahābalipuram” is very famous. Rayalaseema, the study region, has the distinction of having a small but very ancient temple of “Adivarāhaswāmy” at Tirumala, just adjacent to the temple of
Sri Venkateswara pilgrim to Tirumala invariably visit this sacred shrine. Because of this temple Tirumala is also known as Advarahakshestram.

Images of Varaha are found on pillars in different temples of Rayalaseema. A Varaha panel is found on a pillar in the mahamandapa of the Chintala Venkataramana at Tadpatri (pl.104) has a sculpture of Varaha. In this image Viṣṇu with the face of a boar stands with the right leg stiff and bent at the knee. The left leg is also bent at the knee slightly raised and lifts Hiranyaksha up above the level of his head with his two hands. The demon holds a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left. The god’s head is lifted up. This is a solitary example in the study region.

A figure of Varaha is depicted on the south wall of the garbha griha of the Rama temple at Penukonda (pl.105). The god has four hands and he holds chakra and śaṅkha in the two upper hands and with his lower left hand catches hold of the right hand of the demon (Hiranyaksha), and hits him with a gada held in his lower right hand. The god’s face is turned to the left. Hiranyaksha who stands to his left is in the attitude of fleeing from the god. The demon holds a shield in the right hand and a sword in the left.

On one of the pillars of the pillared mandapa in front of the mahamandapa of Vēdanārayana temple at Nāgarāpuram (pl.106) is a sculpture of Varaha fighting with Hiranyaksha. The god has eight hands. He catches hold of the kīrīṭa of Hiranyaksha with the lower left arm, and grips hold of the abdomen of demon with his lower right arm. He carries chakra in the upper right arm and śaṅkha in the upper left. But the objects held in the arms are not distinctly visible. A fine example of Bhūvaraha is depicted on a pillar of mukhamandapa of the same temple (pl.107). Here the god is represented in a dynamic pose by embracing the goddess Bhūdevi with two lower hands. The upper hands hold śaṅkha and chakra. The god raises the left leg upto the level of the knee and placed on a naga. The god wears kīrtimakuta and other ornaments.

On a pillar of the mahamandapa of the Raṅganātha temple at Gandikota, the Varāhavatara is represented. In this example Varaha is not accompanied by Bhūdevi. Varaha has the body of a man with the head of a boar. The deity is shown in the act of
movement. He has four arms and carries chakra in the upper right hand, śaṅkha in the upper left, keeps the lower right in abhaya and the lower left in varada. A sculpture of Varāhāvatāra is found on a pillar in inside mandapa of Chandragiri fort. The god is seated in virūṣana. The hand objects are similar to the above example.

On the north wall of the garbhagriha of the Chennakesava temple at Puṣhpargiri (pl. 108), the figure of Bhū-varāha is depicted as standing with his right leg bent at the knee and resting on its toe, and his left leg also bent at the knee keeps forward and firm on the ground. Varāha, has four arms and holds chakra and śaṅkha in the upper two hands, gada in the lower left and keeps the lower right in abhaya. He lifts up Bhudevi with his long muzzle. The figure of Varāha is adorned with kirītamakuta, graiveyakas, vajñopaviṇa, udarabandha and arilītopuka. Bhūdevi, is shown seated within a round sphere which indicates the earth and that she is earth goddess. She holds a flower in her right hand and keeps the left hand on her left leg. She is also adorned with kirītamakuta and other ornaments. This figure agrees with the description found in the Silparama. The most interesting and unique feature of this sculpture is that Bhūdevi is represented in the centre of a circle. On the same wall of the garbhagriha of the temple, an example of Prajayavarāha is sculptured. In this the Man-Boar is shown seated on a pedestal with his right leg hanging down the seat and the left leg folded and resting on the seat. He has four arms. He carries chakra and śaṅkha in the two upper hands, keeps the lower right hand in abhaya and embraces the Devi who is seated on his left lap. The god is decorated with kirītamakuta and other ornaments. The figure of Bhūdevi, has two arms. She embraces her lord with her hand and keeps the left hand on her leg. This image partly agrees with the description found in the texts. 

A bas-relief of Bhū-varāha is found on the north prakāra wall of Chennakesava temple at Valīr. In this example the god is shown seated in virūṣana pose on a pedestal. Bhūdevi is lifted up with the left hand and the goddess keeps both her legs on the paw of the right hand. The god holds śaṅkha and chakra in the upper arms.

The Varāha panel is found on a pillar in the pavilion of the kalyāṇa-mandapa of the Gōvindarāja temple, Tirupati. The god with the face of a boar and the body of a
human stands with the right leg bent at the knee and resting on the ground and the left leg bent at the knee and raised above the level of the other knee, with the Devi seated on it. He has four hands and holds chakra in the upper right hand, saṅkha in the upper left, keeps the lower right in abhaya and passes the lower left round the back of the Devi. He wears kirītamukta, graivyakas, girdle and pūrṇotuka. The Devi is seated on his left knee, with both her legs hanging. She holds a flower in her left hand and passes her right hand round the back of the god. In the same temple there is another Varāha panel on a pillar in the verandah before the Salainachchiyar shrine. In this panel the god stands with his right leg bent at the knee and resting on the ground and the left leg bent at the knee and upraised keeping the heel of the foot at level with the right ankle. He has four hands and holds saṅkha and chakra in the two upper hands. The lower right hand is in abhaya and the lower left passes round the back of the Devi, who is seated on the left thigh of the god with both her legs hanging.

Bhū-varāha is found in a pillar in the Tirumalarāya-mañḍapa of the Tirumala temple. Here Varāha stands on his right leg. On the lap of his bent left leg is seated Bhūdevi embracing the lord. His face is turned towards the Devi as prescribed in the Vaikhānasāgama. To indicate the Nāga-loka from which the goddess was rescued, the Nāga or the snake is shown as being trampled by Varāha. A sage or īṣṭi (probably Nārada) stands looking at this in astonishment, while another person, probably Nāgarīja, is seen on his bent knees, praising him. The whole figure of Bhūvarāha is beautifully ornamented within a prabhavaḷī. In some early sculptures like the one at Mahābalipuram, Varāha is shown with jatamukta; but here he wears kirītamukta. Another example of Bhūvarāha is also found in the kalyaṇamanḍapa of the Tirumala temple. It is a simple depiction and does not have any subsidiary figures. Otherwise, iconographically it is similar to the above one. There is no prabhavaḷī. In all early sculptures, Bhūdevi’s face is turned towards the god; but here she is looking straight ahead.

Narasimhāvatāra

The fourth in the series of traditional avatāras, the Narasimhāvatāra is perhaps the most terrible of all incarnations of Viṣṇu. In this avatāra Viṣṇu combines, as the name itself indicates, both man (nara) and lion (sīmha). In all images of
Narasimha, whether of stone or metal, he is always represented in anthropomorphic and hybrid form, with a thickly manned lion’s head and the body of a man. The story of this *avatāra*, as found in the *Purāṇas*, appears to be not only similar somewhat to that of the preceding Varāha-avatāra, but in some ways seems to be a continuation of it. For, Hiranyakaśipu to annihilate whom Viṣṇu look this *avatāra*, happens to be the elder brother of Hiranyakashpa whom Viṣṇu killed in his Varāha-avatāra to rescue the earth and retrieve the Vēdas. To take revenge on the killer of his brother, Hiranyakasipu becomes a sworn enemy of Viṣṇu and all the gods and goes a rampage to work havoc. The worship of Narasimha has continued for centuries, and for countless people in South India he remains the ‘household-god’. But the origin of his worship, Kalpana Desai observes, is “rather difficult to trace”, “became early Brahmanical literature has not preserved any tradition justifying the symbolic significance of the lion”. Further, this deity, “figures in the Vēdas as a divinity who can either protect or injure men”.

The details of the story, the conflict, confrontation and the eventual fight between Hiranyakasipu and Narasimha and the consequences are found in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. In fact almost all the *Purāṇas* narrate this story with minor variations. But “the *Purāṇa* form of this legend ... does not appear to have any prefiguration in the Vedic literature”, says Champakalakshmi. Here is a summary of the Puranic story. Like his brother Hiranyakashpa, Hiranyakasipu too obtain a five-fold boon from Brahma after strenuous *tapas*.

The boon was that he might not meet with death at the hands of any being created by Brahma: that he should not die inside or outside (the house), by day or night, by any weapon on earth or in the heavens, nor at the hands of men, beast, gods and *āsuras*; that he should be unrivalled, that he should have undiminishing power; that he should be the sole ruler of all creatures. With all his desires granted, Hiranyakasipu set about avenging his brother’s death by prohibiting the worship of Viṣṇu anywhere in his realm. But Prahlāda, his son, was an ardent and devotee of Viṣṇu, unflinching and Hiranyakasipu failed to curb his son’s devotion in spite of all his persecutionary measures. Exasperated, finally he tried to win Prahlāda by argument and challenged the all pervasiveness, omnipresence and omnipotence of Viṣṇu by his mocking query whether Viṣṇu resided in the pillar of the palace hall.
and kicked it. (According to one version, he hacked it with his sword) The pillar burst open and Viṣṇu appeared in the terrible form of Narasimha and after a fierce fight killed Hiranyakasipu at the twilight hour by ripping open his abdomen with his sharp claws and wore his entrails as a garland. Another version says that he tore open the demon’s chest with his sharp claws and thus killed him.

In contemporary and later sculptures, both stone and metal the Narasimhavatāra is presented in two ways. The actual fight between the two adversaries when the god Narasimha catches the asura by the hair, followed by the scene of the killing of Hiranyaksha on his lap is found in sculptured panels, whereas in metal images the act of killing alone is depicted. Often the two scenes are preceded by the appearance of Narasimha from the pillar, which is shown as breaking open. Worship of the pillar-symbolising god is a very ancient practice and has been noticed earlier.

The Narasimhavatāra was perhaps the first avatāra to become an all-India phenomenon which the later avatāras of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were to become. None of the avatāras preceding it attained this status, comparatively speaking. The unbroken continuity of Narasimha worship in South India has already been referred to. There are numerous centuries of this deity’s worship are spread all over the country. The proliferation of this incarnational god was so wide under successive dynasties and rulers that a variety of images of this deity came to be evolved in later times, “especially under the Vijayanagara rulers” 31. Wherever they had their sway this brings us to the widespread popularity of Narasimha in the Andhra country. Not only are there a considerable number of centuries of Narasimha worship and cult in it but “development of a regional nature based on local traditions may be noticed in important centres of worship” 32 such as Śimhāchalam, Maṅgalagiri, and Āhobilam each of which presents a different form of Narasimha. In Rayalaseema, the study region, where the cult of Narasimha has been a continuous religious concern, there are more temples dedicated to him than in either the coastal Andhra region or Telangana.

N. Adinarayana has identified eighty-eight temples of Narasimha on the basis of personal survey of the region and study of the inscriptions in the region 33. Of them only a few have retained their importance, such as the Narasimha temple at Āhobilam in Kurnool district and Kadi in Anantapur district, in which the image of Narasimha
is found in the sanctum as they are dedicated to him. But many images of the god appear on pillars and towers of many other temples whether they are Vaišṇavite or Śaivite in their affiliation. The earlier depiction of Narasimha in Rayalaseema is found in a stone plaque of 5-6th century A.D., from Peddamudi in Kadapa district. In this panel nine deities are represented of whom Narasimha is the third. The deity stands in samabhānga has only two arms in kālirasta, wears a makuṭa, yagnopaṇīta, and pūrṇorūka. His ears are pricked up, his eyes round, and mouth open.

Images of Narasimha are of five different forms or types with minor variations, namely Girija, Yoga, Sthauna, Anugraha and Śraivāsa. Yoga, Sthauna and Anugraha forms of Narasimha, found in the study temples of Rayalaseema are discussed in this chapter. An interesting feature of the iconography of Narasimha is that in the early medieval sculptures, the lion-face is depicted realistically and later on in the Vijayanagara period, they are stylized.

Understanding the name Girija-Narasimha is the conception of a lion emerging out of a mountain cave. This form of the deity is represented in several ways. In his standing form, he is depicted as having four hands. The upper hands hold śaṅkha and chakra and the lower ones remain in abhaya and vratadā poses. The expression on his face is ferociousness. Yōga-Narasimha, on the other hand is always represented as seated and in padmāsana and utkūṭika posture. The legs are held in the required position by the yōga-patta, which goes round the legs and back of the body. Thus the entire body is held firmly in a position appropriate to meditation. The name Sthauna-Narasimha is derived from the idea of the figure of Narasimha bursting out of the pillar (sthauṇa). The description of Sthauna-Narasimha form is given in the Vaikhānasāgama fits in with known figures of Narasimha killing Hiranyaka and tearing out his entrails. The word ‘sthauṇa’ is derived from the word sthauṇa (stäṁba or pillar). As Narasimha came out of a pillar he is called ‘Sthauna-Narasimha’. According to the Vaikhānasāgama, Sthauna-Narasimha should stand in tribhānga and have twelve or sixteen hands. On his left thigh Hiranyakaśipu should be stretched out with the belly being ripped open by two of the hands of Narasimha. One of his right hands should be in abhaya and another should carry a sword so as to make its point reach up to the kunḍala in the ear. One of his left hands should hold the makuṭa of Hiranyakaśipu and other should be shown raised to administer a blow to the
demon. The legs of the asura are taken hold of by a right hand and two other hands, one right and one left, should be lifted up to the ears of the image and hold the drawn out entrails of Hiranyakasipu in the form of a garland. The figure of the god should be sculptured so as to indicate that he has been attempting to kill the demon and be armed with a sword and shield. If the figure of the deity is shown with only eight arms, two of them should be employed in tearing open the belly of Hiranyakasipu, while four other hands should carry $\text{\textasciitilde s\textacutemkha, gada, chakra}$ and padma all Vi\textsc{n}u's insignia. The remaining two hands should hold the drawn out entrails of Hiranyakasipu garland-wise.

Now follows a brief account of the $\tilde{Y}$oga-Narasimha images in Rayalaseema.

The sanctum of the $\tilde{Y}$oga-Narasimha temple at Peddamudiyam in Kadapa district contains a stone image of deity. He has a lion's head with a thick mane and a human body with four arms. He has bulging eyes, cheeks and a mouth wide open with the tongue protruding out and two prominent sharp long and curved teeth on both sides of the mouth. He has three 'Namas' on the forehead and wears a $\text{\textasciitilde s\textacutemkha, gada, chakra}$ and padma all Vi\textsc{n}u's insignia. The god sits with crossed legs and raising his knees upright and supporting his feet on the pedestal on which he is seated and the $\text{\textasciitilde y}\text{\textasciitilde o}\text{\textasciitilde g}\text{\textasciitilde a}\text{\textasciitilde p}\text{\textasciitilde t}\text{\textasciitilde t}\text{\textasciitilde a}$ belt passing through the knees, maintains the legs in the required position. He holds $\text{\textasciitilde s\textacutemkha}$ and $\text{\textasciitilde c\textacutemkra}$ in his upper arms; his two lower arms are stretched forward and supported on the knees.

There are two loose sculptures of $\tilde{Y}$oga-Narasimha in the same temple. On the basis of their stylistic features they seem to belong to the 16th century A.D. In one of them the god is seated with legs crossed and holds chakra in the upper right hand, $\text{\textasciitilde s\textacutemkha}$ in the upper left and keeps the two lower hands stretched forward and supported on the knees. He has a thick mane and wears a necklace, $\text{\textasciitilde k}\text{\textasciitilde e\textasciitilde y\textasciitilde r\textasciitilde s}$, $\text{\textasciitilde k}\text{\textasciitilde a}\text{\textasciitilde k}\text{\textasciitilde a}\text{\textasciitilde n}\text{\textasciitilde a}\text{\textasciitilde s}$, wristlets and anklets. The god in the other image is seated with his legs crossed and bound by a $\text{\textasciitilde y}\text{\textasciitilde o}\text{\textasciitilde g}\text{\textasciitilde a}\text{\textasciitilde p}\text{\textasciitilde t}\text{\textasciitilde a}$ belt below the knees. He has four hands. The contents in the upper hands, the postures of the lower hands and the ornaments are similar to those in the other sculpture.
Ahobilam (Kurnool District) has been a renowned Narasimha kshetra for centuries. There is a sculpture of Yōga-Narasimha in the Lower Ahobilam temple, on a pillar. In this example, the god is seated in the uktāśīka posture with the yōga-pattā round the knees. He has four arms, holding chakra in his upper right and śāṅkha in his upper left arm. The two lower arms are stretched forward and are supported on the knees. He has a mane. He wears kirtimakuṭa, nāmam, a necklace, udarabandha, yajñopaviṭa, armlets and rings on the fingers. This seems a stylised image.

Kadiri in Anantapur district is another long-standing centre of the cult of Narasimha. There is a sculpture of four-armed Yōga-Narasimha on a pillar in the Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Kadiri. Seated with the legs crossed, the god holds chakra in the upper right hand; śāṅkha in the upper left and keeps the front two hands on the knees. He wears kirtimakuṭa and other ornaments. An interesting iconographic feature of this sculpture is that the deity is shown flanked by his two consorts Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi who stand on either side of him. The goddesses stand in dvibhaṅga and each holds a flower is one of her hands and keeps the other hanging.

This sculpture belongs to the 15th century A.D. Another carving of Yōga-Narasimha is seated on a pīṭha in the uktāśīka posture is seen on a pillar in the mukhamanḍapa of the main shrine of the Madhavarāya temple at Goraṭla (Anantapur District). This sculpture is similar to the sculpture described above.

Yet another sculpture of Yōga-Narasimha is found on a pillar in the pavilion in the kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa of the Gōvidarāja temple at Tirupati. He has four hands and is seated on the head of Adiseśa, inside a sakona, with in a circle, with the legs crossed and bound by a yōga-pattā below the knees. His two right hands hold śāṅkha and the two left hands hold chakra.

The image of Yōga-Narasimha found on the gopura of the Chintalā Venkataramaṇa temple at Tadipatri, conforms to the description given in the Vaikhanasāgama. According to this text the god should be seated cross-legged, and have four hands. He should hold the chakra and śāṅkha in his upper right and left hands, and he should keep the lower two hands stretched forward and supported on the knees.
There is a four-armed sculpture of Yōga-Narasimha on a pillar in the kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa of the Śrī Veṅkaṭeśwara temple of Tirumala. In this sculpture, the god is in the utkūṭika posture with the yōga-paṭṭa belt passing round his knees. He has four arms. He carries chakra in the upper right, sāṅkha in the upper left and the two lower hands are stretched forward over his knees. He has stylised mane, wide open eyes, protuberant cheeks and an open mouth. He is in a decorated with kirtimakuta, hāras, yajñopavītā, wristlets and anklets. He is in a calm yogic posture. This sculpture belongs to the 16th century A.D. A similar sculpture of Yōga-Narasimha is carved on the north wall of the garbhagriha of Śiva temple at Vallūr. Another two similar sculptures are found on a pillar of mahāmaṇḍapa of Kōdanḍarāma temple at Ontimitta.

In the study temples, there are a large number of sculptures which represent either the combat between the god and the demon or the god killing the demon. Other representation available is that of Sthāuna-Narasimha, as he comes out of a column. The Sthāuna-Narasimha is shown in the temples in the following three stages:

a) Stambodbhava-Narasinha.

b) Narasimha fighting the demon Hiranyakaśipu

c) Vidarana-Narasinha (Narasimha killing the demon).

These images are considered one after another.

The description of ‘Stambodbhava-Narasinha’ is given in the Narasimha and the Mātsyapurāṇa, Nārāyaṇiyam, Āndhra Bhāgavatham of poet Pōṭana and also in the Tamil hymns of Tirumangai Āḻvār. The Mātsyapurāṇa gives a vivid description of the second stage, the god fighting the demon with eight hands and the demon with a sword and the shield. Vidarana-Narasimha has been described in the Viśṇudharmottaraapurāṇa as tearing the bosom of Hiranyakaśipu with sharp claws. Images of Sthāuna-Narasimha is found in plenty in the study region. The following are some instances.
An example of Sthāuna-Narasiṃha is found on a pillar of the mukhamāṇḍapa of the Agastyesvara temple at Chilāmkūr (Kadapa District). It conforms to the description found in the Vaikāḷasūgama. The deity has six-hands. Here Narasiṃha is represented in a seated form. His two lower hands are seen tearing open the belly of Hiranyakasīpū. The demon is seen lying helplessly on his lap, with his hands in the action of wearing the entrails pulled out from the belly of Hiranyakasīpū as garland. Of the remaining four arms, two carry chakra and śāṅkha and the other two hands hold sword and gada. Narasiṃha is adorned with kīrtamukta, channavira, graiveyakaś, yajnopavita, and udarabandha. Hiranyakasīpū wears kīrtamukta, channavira, yajnopavita, and ardhamukta. There are two female figures seated, one at the feet of the demon and the other at his head. On either side of Narasiṃha there are two male figures of which one may be Prahlāda.

On the east prākāra wall of the Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśailam the panel of Narasiṃha is represented in two stages. In the first stage Narasiṃha and Hiranyakasīpū are seen standing facing each other. Narasiṃha has eight hands. He holds a sword in each of the hands, excepting the upper left, in which he holds chakra. Hiranyakasīpū holds a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left. In the second stage, Narasiṃha is shown tearing open the stomach of Hiranyakasīpū with his two lower hands. He is seated in virasana keeping Hiranyakasīpū on his thighs.

In a panel on a pillar of the mahāmāṇḍapa of the Raṅganātha temple at Gaṇḍikōṭa the story of the emergence origin of Narasiṃha and his killing Hiranyakasīpū, is depicted in three stages. First, Hiranyakasīpū is shown standing in front of a broken stāmbha or pillar holding a gada. Narasiṃha is shown emerging out of it. To the right of that stāmbha is the figure of Prahlāda standing and keeping his two arms in anjali-mudra. In the second panel the lion-faced Viṣṇu is running after the demon to get hold of him. In the last one, Narasiṃha stands firm on one leg and the other one bent at the knee, which is lifted up. Hiranyakasīpū is lying helplessly on the thighs of Narasiṃha. The ferocious deity has six arms. With the two lower hands he pulls out the entrails from the torn belly of the demon, the other two hold the demon one at his legs and the other at his head and the remaining two upper hands hold chakra and śāṅkha. Another example is found on the adhiṣṭāna of the māṇḍapa in front of the Chennakesava group of temples at Pushpagiri, the Sthāuna-Narasiṃha is
shown seated with his two legs hanging down the seat. The demon Hiranyakasipu is shown lying helplessly on the thighs of Narasimha. The lion faced deity has eight arms. His two lower hands are in the act of tearing the belly of the demon, while his two upper hands pulls out the entrails from the torn belly and wear them as garland. Narasimha holds the demon’s legs and head with two hands. The remaining two hands carry chakra and sāṅkha. His head is adorned with kirītamakuta. To his right is the figure of Prahlāda kneeling down and he keeps his hands in aṇjali. The figures of a man and a woman are shown standing on the same side. In the interior of the south gopura of Nāgarāpuram is a sculpture of Sthawna-Narasimha which is shown in two stages. In the first stage Narasimha and Hiranyakasipu are shown fighting with each other. In the second stage Narasimha is shown tearing open the abdomen of Hiranyakasipu.

On the entrance gopura of Tirumala hills at Alipiri (pl.109 & 109A) there is a beautiful carving of Sthawna-Narasimha. It is in three stages: In the first stage the god is shown coming out of the pillar. Hiranyakasipu stands to the right of the pillar, his left hand is raised to touch the top of the pillar and the right holds a gada. In the second stage the god is seen fighting with the demon, face to face. He has four hands. The upper left hand holds sāṅkha and the upper right hand is indistinct. In the fighting scene is vividly presented with the hands and legs of the adversaries involved in the fight. The description in the third stage is similar to the lower Ahobilam example. But here the god’s right leg is crossed and kept on the left thigh. Prahlāda and Garuḍa seen in the Lower Ahobilam are absent here.

On a pillar in the mukhamandapa of the main shrine of the Kalyāna Venkaṭēśwara temple at Nārāyanavanam, this form of Narasimha is depicted. The god has four hands. He stands with his right leg bent at the knee and resting on the ground and the left leg bent at the knee is upraised and with its toe touches the ground. He holds chakra in the upper right hand, sāṅkha in the upper left, keeps the lower right in abhaya and the lower left is stretched to the left. He wears kirītamakuta and other ornaments.
An excellent sculpture of Stambödhvava-Narasimha is found at Lower Ahobilam (pl.110). Narasimha is shown coming out of the pillar. He has four arms and holds chakra in the upper right hand and saṅkha in the upper left. The lower arms are shown clasped together below the girdle. He wears kiranaku, yajnopavita, kaṅkaṇas and a girdle. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara sculptural art of the 16th century A.D. To the right of the bottom of the pillar Prahlāda stands and his right hand is raised to the level of his head. A similar sculpture of Stambödhvava-Narasimha is found on a pillar in the maṇḍapa to the north of the pūṣkhariṇī(tank) of the Kapileśvara temple of Kapilathīram at the foot of the Tirumala hills. This sculpture is also belonging to the same period. But in this instance Prahlāda is absent.

A beautiful example of Stambödhvava form of Narasimha is found on a pillar of the mahāmaṇḍapa of the Kedaṅḍarāma temple at Oṇḍītīttā (pl.111). The god is shown emerging out of a stambha. Only the upper portion of the body above the loins is sculptured and the lower portion below the loins is still within the stambha. The deity has the terrible countenance of a lion. He has four arms. He carries chakra and saṅkha in the upper two hands while the lower two hands are in the act of breaking the pillar into two. To the right, Prahlāda stands touching the pillar with his left hand without expressing any fear in his face. Another sculpture of the same theme is found on the exterior wall of same temple (pl.112). It is similar to the Ahobilam example but the upper left hand of the deity is not clearly visible. The god wears yajnopavita. In this instance, Prahlāda stands to the right of the pillar and his hands are held in añjali. Yet another sculpture of this form is found in the ruined Śiva temple at Chandragiri fort. Here the god emerging out of a stambha. But his two upper hands are not clearly visible and the lower hands are kept on kāti. Prahlāda stands to the left of the pillar and his right hand touches the top of pillar.

An image of Stambödhvava-Narasimha is also found on a central pillar to the left of the mukhamanḍapa of the Lakṣhmī shrine within the Lakṣhmī Narasimha temple (pl.113) at Kadiri. The god is shown as coming out of the pillar, exposing only the left part of his body. He comes forward outstretching his left leg towards the demon. The god has probably eight arms, but only the left four arms are distinct. He
holds certain deadly weapons in his upper three arms and in the last arm is hanging down obliquely with the fingers projecting down. To the left of the god, Prahlāda is standing in anjali. To the extreme left of the god, beside Prahlāda, the demon is standing with an outstretched sword in his right arm. The god has a thick mane, protruding eyes, bulging cheeks and a wide open mouth. He wears makuṭa, kaṭibandha and a piece of cloth on his waist. The deity looks ferocious (ugra-rūpa).

This sculpture belongs to the early Vijayanagara art of 15th century A.D.

b) Narasimhā chasing Hiraṇyakaśipu

The panel of Narasimhā chasing Hiraṇyakaśipu is found on a pillar in the mukhamantapā of the main shrine of Chintala Veṅkataramanaṇa temple at Tādipatri (pl.114). The deity has six hands and holds chakra in one upper right hand, the hands of Hiraṇyakaśipu with the other, and śaṅkha in one upper left hand, catches the shoulder of Hiraṇyakaśipu with another left hand and catches the stomach of the demon with the two lower hands.

Another excellent sculpture of Narasimhā chasing Hiraṇyakaśipu is found at Upper Ahobilam (pl.115). The ferociousness in the face of Narasimhā and the defiant attitude in the face of Hiraṇyakaśipu has been successfully captured in this sculpture. Narasimhā has four hands. The upper right arm carries chakra with the forefinger and the middle finger. The upper left arm holds śaṅkha. The lower left arm is placed on the head of the demon. The lower right arm is kept on the abdomen of Hiraṇyakaśipu. Hiraṇyakaśipu holds a sword in the right hand, which is upraised and a shield in the left arm. The god has a thick mane, protruding eyes, wide open mouth and puffed-up cheeks with a fierce look. He wears kirīṭamakuṭa, graiveyakas and pūrṇorūka.

A beautiful sculpture of Narasimhā, fighting the Hiraṇyakaśipu, is found on a pillar in the portico of the mukhamantapā of Naṅgaḷapuram temple (pl.116). This sculpture depicts a hand to hand fight between the god and the demon both in the standing position. The god has six hands. His back arms are raised up as it to strike the adversary, the middle right arm is broken and the upper right arm is upraised. While his front right arm holds the waist of the demon, the left holds makuṭa of the demon, obstructing the movement of the demon’s left leg. The demon looks back in
desperation and he holds a *bitua* in his right hand. The god has a thick mane, bulging eyes, *kirițamakuta*, girdle and anklets.

A similar sculpture is found on a pillar in the *Raiṅga-maṇḍapa* of the Tirumala temple. But in this instance, the deity has four hands. Two sculptures of this type are found on the pillars in the temple of Narasimha at Lower Ahobilam and another sculpture is found on a pillar in front of the entrance of the Narasimha temple at Pennahobilam in Anantapur district. This sculpture is assignable to the 16th century A.D.

c) *Vidarana-Narasimha*

The word *vidarana* means ‘rendering’, ‘tearing’, ‘ripping up’, ‘tormenting’, ‘shattering’, ‘killing’, ‘slaughtering’, etc. Therefore the ‘*vidarana*’ form of Narasimha lays all the emphasis possible on the sheer terror and violence in Narasimhāvārā’s dealings with the demon Hiranyakaśipu. The ‘*Sthāuna-Narasimha*’ form stresses more the god’s emergence from the pillar than his act of violence. Thus the two forms are distinguished. Four, eight and sixteen armed sculptures of *Vidarana-Narasimha* are found in the Rayalaseema temples. These sculptures as found in some of the temples are described below.

In the temple of Upper Ahobilam, *Vidarana-Narasimha* is shown in two stages. In the first stage, Narasimha and Hiranyakaśipu are shown in two sections. In the first, Narasimha and Hiranyakaśipu are shown engaged in fighting. Narasimha has four hands. He holds *chakra* and *śaṅkha* in the upper hands and grips Hiranyakaśipu with the other two hands. Another demon is also shown standing with a sword and shield in his hands, to the right side of Hiranyakaśipu. In the second stage, Narasimha is shown tearing open the stomach of Hiranyakaśipu. He is seated in *vīrasana* and keeps Hiranyakaśipu on his thighs. He has eight hands and rips up the stomach of Hiranyakaśipu with his front two hands. His uppermost hands hold the entrails of the demon in the form of a garland. The next pair of hands carries *chakra* and *śaṅkha* and the third pair of hands firmly hold the legs and the *makuṭa* of the demon.
A carving of the ferocious Narasimha killing Hiranyakasipu is found from the Lower Ahobilam temple (pl. 117). It appears as follows. Narasimha supports Hiranyakasipu on his right thigh and is tears open the abdomen of the demon. Narasimha has eight hands, and with his two upper arms he is seen supporting the head and legs of Hiranyakasipu and in two other upper arms he carries sāṅkha and chakra. The two lower arms tear open the abdomen of Hiranyakasipu. With two lower arms the god holds the intestines of Hiranyakasipu. He has a real lion’s face and wears kirītamakūṭa, graivēyakas and pūrporūka. Prahlāda is shown standing to the right of the base with his arms held in anjali-mudra. Garuḍa in human form is shown below the god.

A similar sculpture is depicted on a pillar in the mahāmanḍapa of the Kōṭaṇḍaraṇa temple (pl.118) at Onaṇimiṭṭa. But in this instance Narasimha supporting Hiranyakasipu on his left thigh tears open the abdomen of the demon. Another image depicting similar features is found on a pillar of the mahāmanḍapa of Vedanārāyanā temple at Nāgalaṇurm (pl.119). In this sculpture the demon’s right leg is bent at knee and the god’s left leg is shown on the demons right leg. The left leg of the demon supports the right thigh of Narasimha.

On the back wall of the garbhagriha of the Chintala Veṅkataranaṇa at Tāḍipatri (see pl.114) the form of Vidarana-Narasimha with eight hands is found standing in samabhāṅga. Narasimha is seen with his uppermost hands in the act of tearing the entrails out from the belly of Hiranyakasipu as garland. He holds chakra in the second upper right hand and catches hold of the hair of Hiranyakasipu with one more upper right hand. One upper left hand holds sāṅkha, while another grips the neck of the demon. He also holds the right hand of Hiranyakasipu with his lower right hand and the stomach of the latter with the lower left. Hiranyakasipu keeps a sword in his right hand and a shield in the left.

A similar example of Vidarana-Narasimha is found on a pillar in the Achyutharāya-mpāḍa of Śrīkālaḥastūvara temple at Śrīkālahasti (pl.120). But in this instance, the god is shown in ardha-paryanka posture. Narasimha supports Hiranyakasipu on his left thigh and tear open his abdomen. The uppermost hands hold
the drawn out entrails of the demon in the form of a big garland. With his two lower arms he is supporting the head and legs of Hiranyakasipu.

In the Tirumala Tirupati temples, a large number of sculptures are seen which represent either the combat between the god and the demon or the killing of the latter. The following forms of Narasimha are shown in the Tirumala Tirupati temples—Stambodhava-Narasimha, Narasimha fighting the demon Hiranyakasipu and Vidarana- Narasimha (Narasimha killing the demon).

The Varaha shrine at Tirumala contains on its outer wall is an eight-armed sculpture of Vidarana-Narasimha. The god sits in ardhanaryasana. The demon is placed horizontally across the god’s lap. The head of the demon is kept on the left lap of the god and the legs of the demon are stretched straight on the right thigh of the god. The god’s uppermost hands hold the drawn out entrails of the demon in the form of a garland. The next two hands are lifted up and the third pair of hands hold the leg and the makuṭa of the demon. The first two hands are shown opening the stomach of the demon. The god has protruding eyes and puffed-up cheeks. This sculpture is datable to 16th century A.D 46.

A sixteen-armed sculpture of Vidarana-Narasimha is found on a pillar in the kalyanamanḍapa of the Tirumala temple. The god sits in ardhaparyanka posture. The demon is stretched across his lap, and his head is placed on the right lap of the god. The god has sixteen hands. He holds the entrails in his uppermost arms in the form of a garland. The second pair of arms, from the top, is raised up in a striking posture. The next two arms hold chakra and śaṅkha, fourth and fifth pair of arms holds the kirāmakutās of the couple of demons who are attacking the demon. The sixth pair of arms is holding a sword and shield. The seventh right arm holds the makuṭa of the demon and the left, the legs of the demon together. The last pair of arms i.e., the front two arms are shown ripping open the bosom of the demon. The god has thick mane and protruding eyes and bulging cheeks, which give him a fierce look. This is a rare sculpture depicting the ferocious form of Narasimha. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara art of 16th century A.D 47.
After the fierce fight with Hiranyakasipu ends and the enemy of both man and god is annihilated, Narasimha confess his favour and blessings on Prahlāda, the demon’s son. This theme is depicted in the Prahlādāṅugrahamūrti. An excellent sculpture of Prahlādāṅugrahamūrti is found on the exterior wall of the antarāla in Chintala Veṅkataramaṇa temple at Tāḍāpati (pl.121). In this carving the god is seen standing in dvībahāra. He has two hands and keeps the right hand on the head of Prahlāda as a gesture of his blessings and keeps the left hand at kati. Prahlāda stands to the right at the base. The god has the face of a lion and has no kirīṭa. It is no longer ferocious or terror striking. He is beautifully decorated with bhujavalaya, yanānopavīta, girdle and puṁṣoruka. Two similar examples are found on the pillars inside mandapas of Chandragiri fort. But the decoration of the god is not clearly seen. In one sculpture the god is decorated with a conical type of hair-do.

Another carving of Prahlādāṅugrahamūrti is found on a pillar in the pavilion of the kalyāṇa-mandapa of the Gōvardanā temple at Tirupati. The god is standing on the right leg stiffly and his left leg is slightly bent at knee, he has a real lion’s face and two hands. Prahlāda stands to the right of Narasimha with his hands in anjali. Narasimha keeps his right hand in abhaya and the left hand is shown in katiḥasta. There is another sculpture of Prahlādāṅugrahamūrti on a pillar in the mahāmandapa of the Narasimhāyān temple at Kapilathīram.

Yet another depiction of the same theme is seen on a pillar in the mahāmandapa of the Koṇḍandarāma temple at Oṭṭīnīṭṭī (pl.122). The god stands in samabhanga and has four hands. The two upper hands hold chakra and śāṅkha and the lower right hand is in abhaya and the lower left hand is in varada. To the right of Narasimha, Prahlāda stands in anjali. The god is decorated with kirīṭamakuta, graivijaka, hāras, channavira, girdle, anklets and he wears pūrṇoruka.
Vamanâ-Trivikramavatara

Unlike the first four *avataaras* of Vishnu in which he takes animal and semi-human forms, the Vamanâ-Trivikramâvatara is the first of the incarnations in which Visnu assumes from the beginning a human form. Another remarkable point about this *avatâra* is that unlike the other *avataaras* "Vâmana is not a separate entity later on synthesized with Visnu, but it represents the essential and original aspect of the God" 48. The Vâmana myth has its germ in "Visnu's feat of traversing the universe with his three steps", to which the *Rig-Veda* explicitly alludes. One hymn in the *Rig-Veda* in particular runs thus: 'Over this earth with mighty steps strode Visnu, ready to give it for home to Manu. In him the humble people trust for safety; the nobly born hath made them spacious dwelling" 49. "Vâmana is mentioned for the first time in the *Satapatha Brâhmaṇa*. He is seemingly, mild and weak in the beginning but soon he engulfs the whole world with his effulgence and banishes the demon of darkness to the nether world" 50. In the *Satapatha Brâhmaṇa* myth about Vâmana, Visnu is "the dwarf among the gods". In the fight between the gods and asuras for supremacy over the earth, this dwarf of a god becomes instrumental condescendingly agree to give the gods “that part of the earth which would be occupied” by the three steps measured by the dwarf Vâmana. But Visnu covers up the whole earth with his body, and the asuras cannot but part with it 51. Later in the Puranic versions of the fight between the gods and asuras, not only the place of hordes of asuras is taken by the titanic asura king Bali but the myth of Vâmana covering the whole earth with his body is woven round the formidable Bali and Vamanâ-Trivikrama.

Several Purânas narrate the story of Vamanâ-Trivikrama *avatâra*. But it takes its final form in the *Bhâgavatapurâṇa*. Bali, the grandson of Prahlâda, ambitions of power and authority, extends his dominion over the three worlds. He defeats the gods and forces them to leave their homes. Though a virtuous and righteous monarch, Bali lacks humility and fails to realize that his power has limits. The defeated gods appeal to Visnu to restore them to their former power and homes. To subdue Bali’s pride and restore to the gods their rightful position, Visnu choose to be born as Vâmana, the dwarf- son of Kâśyapa and Aditi. In the guise of a *brahmachâri*, he approaches Bali when he is performing a ‘sacrifice’ (yâga). Vâmana, exercising the privilege of a
religious mendicant, asks Bali to give him as much land as his three footsteps measure. Unaware of the real identity of Vāmana and not heeding the warming of his preceptor Sukrāchārya, Bali generously grants him the boon. The moment the gift is made, Vāmana expands himself “into the cosmic Viśnūpurusā”, and measures “with his first step the entire earth and sky”, and with the second reclaims all the heavenly regions lost by the gods, when there is no place left for the third step, Bali offers “his head for the god to place his foot”.

Iconographically, this avalāra of Vishnu is represented in two ways. He is either sculptured “as Vāmana or dwarf, depicting the earlier part of the story, or as Trivikrama- the dwarf grown into gigantic stature measuring the three worlds with his three strides”. There are Sanskrit texts which describe how this incarnation has to be sculpturally represented. “The iconography of Vāmana... is simple”, but the texts vary in their descriptions of his image. Generally Vāmana is to be shown “either as a mendicant or a brahmachārin”. The Viṣṇudharmottara allows only the “staff” or danda as his emblem. “Agnipuriṣṭha prescribes the umbrella and the staff as his emblem, if the figure of Vāmana is two-handed”. In physical appearance he is dwarfish, his limbs and body uncouth, and fat. Kalpana Desai also points out that “Vāmana figures, though not uncommon in the Gupta period, are not as numerous as those of Varāha and Narasimha”. “The image of Vāmana could be four-handed, but the emblems in his hands differ according to different texts”. According to the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, which describes this image in detail, the emblem Vāmana, who has four hands holds are in “the umbrella, the staff(danda), and the kamanḍalu full of water in his three hands, while the fourth hand is in the abhayamudra...”. During the medieval period however, there seem to have been a number of four-handed images of Vāmana holding the emblem of Viṣṇu.

As Vāmana and Trivikrama are always thought of together, there are arises the important question whether there were separate shrines dedicated to Vāmana, where he is worshipped. It is Kalpana Desai’s view that “Vāmana, like the Varāha and Narasimha incarnations, must have been much worshipped by the people right from the Gupta period. Though, no shrine dedicated to Vāmana has come to light so far, it is a possibility that cannot be ruled out”. T.N. Srinivasan, who has made a special study of South Indian images, observes: “there are no important shrines dedicated to
this aspect. However the form of Trivikrama is more popular and well represented”. He cites in particular “the Ulagalānda Perumāl shrine at Kānchipuram” in Tamil Nadu, which has “a gigantic bas-relief image” of Trivikrama 54. In Rayalaseema there are no separate shrines for either Vāmana or Trivikrama. But there are quite a few iconographic representations of Trivikrama on pillars and walls in such temples of the region, as Tādipatri, Chilamkūr, Pushpagiri, Penukonda, Tirumala, Tirupati, and Nāgalāpuram.

Before considering the Trivikrama images, a representation of Vāmana may be considered. A small figure of Vāmana is depicted on a gopura inside south face left of niche of the Chintala Veṅkaṭāramanā at Tādipatri, with an umbrella in his right hand and left hand is uplifted.

In the Raṅgamāndapa of the Śri Veṅkaṭeswara temple at Tirumala an image of Vāmana appears in the Daśavatāra group. He is presented as a young brahmacharin. He has two arms and stands in dvīhāṅga. He holds a kumāṇḍalau in his right arm and an umbrella in his left. He wears graivīyakas, channavīra, girdle, anklets, ardhorūka, and maṇīras. This image of Vāmana confirms to the requirements of the Vaikhanasāgama 56. In the Raṅgamāndapa of Tirumala, Vāmana is represented and shown receiving the water from king, Mahābali. Vāmana as a young lad is having a daṇḍa, whereas Mahābali wears the crown 60.

The Sournyananatha temple at Nandalūr (pl.123, 124) in Kadapa district contains two examples of Vāmana. Both the examples are found on the pillar of mukhamāndapa. In one example a dwarf size Vāmana is shown approaching Bali. Vāmana is bending forward like and old man and holding an umbrella in his left hand. His coiffure is arranged in such a way that the terminals of hair arranged in a knot at the back and he wears an ardhorūka. In the second example Vāmana is meeting Bali and the latter is shown seated on a pedestal in virasana pose. He is the depicted is attitude of listening to the demands of Vāmana.

There are for more images of Trivikrama than Vāmana probably, this form gives great scope to the imagination of sculptors. The image of Trivikrama may be sculptured in three forms viz., with the left foot raised up to the level of the right knee
(to measure the Universe) or to the navel (to measure the mid-world) or the forehead (to measure the heavens). These three varieties are obviously intended to represent Trivikrama as striding over the earth, the mid-world and the heaven-world respectively, and all are exemplified in sculptures.

The Chintala Venkataramana temple at Tadipatri has a relief carving on the north wall of the garbhagriha (pl.125). The carving here depicts three distinct stages of the strides taken by Trivikrama. The Lord is shown standing with his stiff right leg firmly planted on the ground and the left leg lifted to the shoulder-level. For fulfilling the placement of third step the artist has depicted a third leg with which he is shown pushing down king Bali into the nether world, Pañcaloka. Bali is shown with his both hands in anjali. The lord holds śankha and chakra in the back right and left hands respectively, the front right is held in abhaya-mudra and the corresponding left hand rests on the uplifted leg. Three-faced Brahma is shown seated near the toe of the uplifted leg and washing it. Brahma is represented with a beard and wearing mukutás on his heads. He is fourhanded and what the backhands hold is not clear. In the front right hand he holds a kamandalu from which he seen pouring water on the uplifted foot of Trivikrama and with the corresponding left hand he is seen washing the uplifted foot of the lord. Some fish are depicted in the flowing water which descends down on the left. The dress of the deity pattern and the ornaments like hānas, yajnopavīta, keyūras, kaṅkaṇas, kundalas and kirītimukuta, which he wears are elegantly represented. On a pillar in the mukhamandapa of the same temple is found another figure of Trivikrama. Here the right leg of the deity is on the ground while the left foot is being washed. To the left only the bust of Bali is represented.61

Another example is on a pillar in the mahāmandapa of the same temple contains an image of Vāmana. On the top position the god is standing with the right leg stiff and the left leg lifted up. The four-handed god holds the śankha in the upper right hand and the chakra in the upper left. The lower right hand is held in abhaya, and the lower left holds the foot. Bali is in anjali pose on lower side. In the middle portion of the pillar (pl.126) the god is shown Vāmana a small figure holding the umbrella in his left hand. The king Bali’s hands are placed above the hands of the Vāmana. In the panel the king Bali is shown in anjali, kneeling before the god Vāmana.
An example of Trivikrama is found on the south-east pillar in the mukhamandapa of the Agastyēśvara temple at Chilamakūr. Here the figure of Trivikrama is shown as standing firmly on his right leg and the left leg is raised above the level of his head. The deity has four arms. He keeps the lower left arm in danda-hasta stretched upwards in parallel to the left leg. He holds the gada in his lower right hand, sāṅkha in his upper right and the chakra in the upper left. He is adorned with kriñmakṣa and other ornaments. To his right the demon king Bali is shown seated in ukṣgitkāśana on a pedestal facing Trivikrama. He keeps his two arms firm on the seat behind so as to support himself. This posture suggests that the demon king is ready to receive the foot of Trivikrama. The god is adorned with ardhanārīka and other ornaments. Behind the demon king, a female figure, probably his wife stands in tribhanga. To the left of Trivikrama is a male figure standing and holding a drum in his hands 62.

On the north wall of the garbhagriha of the Chennakesava temple at Puṣhpagiri,(pl.127) Trivikrama is shown as standing on his right leg firmly on the ground while the left leg is raised up to the level of his forehead. He has four arms and carries chakra and sāṅkha in the upper right and left hands respectively. He keeps his lower right hand in abhaya and holds a lotus and his lower left is raised straight upward. He is adorned with kriñmakṣa, griñvīyakas, yajñopavīta, udarabandha and pūrṇorūka. Brahma, seated on a high pillar at the level of the raised foot of Trivikrama, is seen washing the uplifted foot of the god with his two lower hands. His remaining two upper arms carry kamanḍatu and akṣhamūla. Brahma has three heads adorned with kriñmakṣās. Gauḍa stands to the left of Trivikrama keeping his arms in anjali-mudra. To the bottom right is depicted a man, probably Bali, the demon king standing and keeping his two hands in anjali.

On the north wall of the garbhagriha of the Rāma temple at Penukonda, Trivikrama is shown standing with the right leg is firmly planted and the left leg raised to the level of the forehead. The deity has four hands. He holds chakra and sāṅkha in the two upper hands, keeps the lower right hand in abhaya and the lower left in varada. He wears kriñmakṣa, grāvīyakas, yajñopavīta and pūrṇorūka. Brahma stands before Trivikrama holding his uplifted foot with his lower left hand.
and washing it with water contained in a *kamandalu* held in his lower right hand. Brahma has three heads which are adorned with *kirtimukutas*, and beards. His upper right and upper left hands hold *akshamala* and *kamandalu* respectively. He wears *patrakundalas*, *graiveyakas*, *yajnopavita*, *channavira* and *purnoruka*.

A fine representation of Trivikrama is found in the *kalyanamandapa* of the Govindaraja temple at Tirupati (pl.128). He is seen standing on his left leg and measuring the universe with his right leg. The leg is stretched to at the navel-level instead of raising it high vertically as in the usual *urdhva* type. This depiction follows the description in the *Agamas*. Similar sculptures are to be seen in Ellora, Badami and Nuggarahalli (Hoysala). Here in the example under considerations, he is measuring the mid-world. One of his right hands has its palm raised upwards as in *tarjani*, another holds *sankha* frontally. Of the two hands one holds *chakra* and the other is in the *katyavalambita*. The foldings of his *antarila* are seen fanning his right leg and stretched to his left leg. Another Trivikrama panel is found on a door-jamb of entrance *gopura* of Tirumala hills at Alipiri (Tirupati) (pl.129) his instance, the god is seen standing on his on his left leg and measuring the heaven with his right leg. The right leg is raised to a level of head. His hands are stretched vertically to the level of shoulders.

An excellent Trivikrama image is found in the Vedanarayana temple at Nagalapuram, is now preserved in the TTD museum, Tirumala. This sculpture belongs to the 16th century A.D. In this image, Trivikrama has four arms, two of which carry *sankha* and *chakra*, while the third is stretched parallel to the uplifted leg and the fourth is held in *varada*. Brahma is shown washing the upper foot of Trivikrama. The water flowing down there forms a vigorous stream, in which a few fish are visible. It is actually the river *Gaiga* descending and is made to fall on the *jaṭa* of Śiva, who receives and arrests the descending celestial river Gaiga on his head. Interestingly this episode of the descent of Gaiga is associated with the incident of Brahma washing the foot of Viṣṇu in the Trivikrama incarnation. There is authority for this in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, and connecting the two different events is evidently intended to show that the water sanctified by washing the foot of Viṣṇu was devoutly received by Śiva on his head. Therefore, it is argued, the superiority of Viṣṇu was devoutly acknowledged by Śiva himself. This is an instance of sectarian prejudices.
altering the usual composition of sculptures. The lean body, the systematically arranged folds and creases in the clothing of Trivikrama in this image is noteworthy.

A sculpture of Trivikrama is found on pillar in the antarāla in the Soumyanātha temple at Nandalūr. In this instance, Trivikrama is stiffly standing on the left leg and with four hands. The upper two hands are holds in usual attributes and the lower right hand supports on the uplifted right leg and kept in abhaya pose. The lower left hand is raised to the level of shoulders. The right leg lifted level of head, it measures to the heaven according to the Āgamas.

Parāśurāmavatāra

It is the sixth in the series of Daśavatāras. His role as an incarnation is limited, and it is said that Viṣṇu assumed this form to quell the arrogance of the kṣatriyas. The Viṣṇupurāṇa narrates in great detail tells this story. Parāśurāma was the son of Renuka and Jamadagni. Once, a king named Kārtavirya, while on a hunt, visited the hermitage of Jamadagni. Jamadagni entertained the royal company lavishly by means of his cow Sabala, who could fulfill any wish. The king, impressed by the cow’s performance, requested the Sage to give him the cow. On being refused, Jamadagni was slain by the son of Kārtavirya. Enraged at this outrage Parāśurāma pursued Kārtavirya and killed him in battle. Further he vowed vengeance against the whole kṣatriya race and relentlessly he took revenge on that race. But to cleanse and purify himself of these senseless killings, he performed expiatory rites, handed over the world to brahmānas, and retired to the mountains.

The Mahābhārata tells another story of Paraśurāma. He was the younger son of sage Jamadagni. For an inadvertent lapse of his wife Renuka the angry sage ordered his sons to kill their mother. The first four sons declined and were cursed to death. Paraśurāma, however, obediently killed his mother. Pleased Jamadagni offered to grant whatever boon he asked for. Paraśurāma asked for the restoration of life his mother and brothers.

The Agnipurāṇa prescribes four hands to the image of Paraśurāma holding the bow, the arrow, the axe and sword. The iconography of Paraśurāma is simple and
unvaried. According to the *Vishnuharmottara* he should have a *jaṭa* on his head and his only emblem is the axe. The *Vaikhunatasagama* describes two varieties of the image of this *avatāra*. One is two handed and the other is four handed. The two handed image should have the axe in the right hand and the left hand should be in the *suchi-hasta*. He should wear *jaṭamakuta*, *yajnopavīta* and other ornaments. If the image is four-handed, it should hold the usual attributes of Viśnū.

Parāśurāma is often called ‘Bhargava’ Rāma as he is said to have belonged to the race of the Bhrigus, who figure prominently in the Vedic literature. He, however, plays a relatively minor role in the Puranic literature. Parāśurāma is believed to be an *āveśa* or a temporary incarnation of Viśnū and in the *Rāmāyana* account. This aspect is emphasized by his *tejas* being taken away by Rāma himself. According to his story, when Rāma Daśāratthi was returning to Ayodhya after his marriage with Sīta, he met Parāśurāma on the way. The latter haughtily accosted Rāma and challenged him to tie the string on his bow, which he considered to be stronger than the bow of Sīva, which Rāma broke in the contest at Mithila to win Sīta’s hand in marriage. Rāma succeeded in stringing of the bow with ease and deprived Parāśurāma of his divinity. Thenceforward Parāśurāma really ceased to be an *avatāra* of Viśnū, but the place that was assigned to him in the Daśāvatāras, was never denied him, even after this episode.

There are no particular shrines or temples for this incarnation of Viśnū, though Parāśurāma is specially revered in the Malabar region of Kerala. How the Parāśurāma myth originated remains unknown, though it is surmised that he was actually an historical figure, “probably a great warrior of a particular tribe, later on deified and exalted to the position of an incarnation” Some images of Parāśurāma are found in the North. But they “are few in number” and “datable to the medieval period”.

In the Rayalaseema region the Parāśurāma cult was not particularly popular. We hardly find any separate shrine for him. However, the Śiva temple at Attriāla in Kadapa District contains the idol of Parāśurāma at present. The sanctum of this temple has a standing, two-armed image. The left hand is shown hanging down, while the right hand holds a *paraśu*. The figure has a *kiriṣamakuta* and he wears a number of ornaments on his body. The lower garments are shown upto the thigh. This obviously
represents Paraśurāma. We know that in all the Saivite temples the deity Śiva is represented by a Linga. But in the case, the image stands on a padmabandha pedestal over a larger pīṭha. One can be certain that must have been a Linga to represent god Śiva named consistently as Tiruvirameśvara and Paraśurāmeśvara in inscriptions. Subsequently or rather recently it might have been removed for reasons not known us and representing image Paraśurāma was placed. It is no wonder that the deity is now called Paraśurāma 70. Paraśurāma is obviously found among the Śiva panels found at the door-jamb of Gōvindarāja temple of Tirupati. There is an image of Paraśurāma on the under surface of the beam in the pavilion of the kalyāna-mandapa of the Gōvindarāja temple, Tirupati. Paraśurāma stands in dvibhāṅga and holds paraśu in the right hand and keeps the left hand at kati 71. There seem to nothing in particular to distinguish them.

The image of Paraśurāma in the Raṅga-mandapa in Tirumala stands in dvibhāṅga and holds paraśu in the right arm and keeps the left arm at kati instead of in suchi-hasta. He wears kīrtīmakula, graiveyakas, channavira, and girdle with lotus design, pūrṇoruka and maṇjiras. In this image, the content in the right arm is in accordance with the texts and the mudra of the left arm differs from the texts72. However, Paraśurāma sculptures are found in almost all the temples of Rayalaseema, wherever Daśāvatāra panels are depicted.

A bas-relief of Paraśurāma is found on a pillar of mahā-mandapa of Soumyanātha temple at Nandalur (Kadapa District) (pl.130). The figure is shown standing in samabhāṅga, wearing paraśu in right hand and a bow is shown suspended to the left shoulder of the god. He wears pūrṇoruka with side pleats.

Ramāvatāra

Cherished, venerated and worshiped for centuries as the seventh and pūrṇa-vatāra or complete incarnation of Viṣṇu all over India, Rāma also referred to as Raṅghava Rāma, Daśaratha Rāma, Kōdaṇḍa Rāma etc – is perhaps the most human avatāra of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa comes closed to him in this respect, although a divine halo always surround him, even in his most human moments. Champakalakshmi makes the perceptive observation that even though Rāma is distinguished as divine
and an *avatāra* his life “never lacked the poignancy of human life”73. The story of his eventful life and his unique character has had such pervasive and lasting impact on the life, mind, religion and culture of the vast majority of people in India, that it is difficult to find a parallel to it in the rest of the world. The learned and lay, poets, painters, artists, craftsmen, sculptors etc have all felt it. Age after age, century after century, the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been told and retold with some local variations in all Indian languages. Through every possible medium the Rāma story has been revealed. Yet another fascinating factor is that incidents and episodes of the Rāma story are so closely associated with many places all over India that they have become parts of India’s sacred geography. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, as written by Valmiki, has immortalised Rāma’s life and character. The Rāma myth and legend as Kalpana Desai points out, “must have had a long history before it was incorporated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*” 74. But it has not been easy to trace its origin and evolution, and “Rāma himself never figures in the pre-*Rāmāyaṇa* literature”. The term ‘Sīta’ which occurs in the *Rig-Vēda* and means ‘furrow’ has nothing to do with the epic character, and the Janaka mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇikas* and *Upānishads* may not be the same Janaka, father of Sīta, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.75 Further, “it cannot be definitely determined at what particular date he was deified and regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu” 76. It is the opinion of scholars that in the “genuine portions” of Valmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, the great hero Rāma is only likened to Viṣṇu. He is conceived as an *avatāra* in the “Bālakāṇḍa” and “Uttarakāṇḍa”, which in scholarly opinion, are later additions. “The Mahābhārata version is similar to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Purāṇas also follow the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Valmīki in treating Rāma’s life” 77. “Popular belief” in Rāma’s “avatāra” hood appears to date from the early centuries of the Christian era all over India” 78. In the *Raghuvaṁśa*(Canto X) of Kālidāsa, Rāma is identified as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. It is clearly said that the births of Rāma is preceded by the usual appeal of the harassed gods to Viṣṇu save them and the world from the menace of the *asura* Rāvaṇa, and his assurance to them that he would be born, soon as a son of Dasaratha for this purpose. According to Kalpana Desai, “the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have become popular in the Gupta period as we find it illustrated in stone on the walls of the early temples... But still the Rama worship, forming its own separate and distinctive cult, does not seem to have existed before the medieval period” 79. Kalpana Desai cites a number of panels carved on the outer walls of temples in North India depicting the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes and episodes” 80.
As pointed out by Champakalakshmi, the story of Rāma of Vālmīki’s epic “has been well-known in South India from at least the beginning of the Christian era”. While incidents from it are cited in the ‘Saṅgam’ works, Rāma’s identity “as an avatāra of Viṣṇu is established in Śilppadikāram”, a Tamil classic of the 5-6th century A.D. In the hymns of the Viṣṇuva Āḷvār (who are assigned to the period between the fifth and ninth centuries), the story of Rāma as an avatāra becomes widely known and also popular. In the hymns of the Āḷvārs of the seventh-ninth centuries, Rāma is given a place of great honour and reverence. “However, no image of Rāma seems to have been represented in stone or metal till the close of the 9th century A.D”. The “earliest representations of the story of the Rāmāyaṇa occur only in the early Chōlā temples of the Tamil country and the existence of independent shrines dedicated to Rāma in the tenth century is... attested by epigraphy”. The images of Rāma during this period were rare because the cult of Rāma “was in the process of evolution and hence the need for representing them in sculpture was not yet felt”. Once the cult began to have a strong hold and the imagination of the people and their rulers, as it did at the beginning of the tenth century, independent shrines of Rāma began to appear.

Temples dedicated to Rāma are many in South India, in particular in the Telugu and Tamil speaking regions. But ancient Rāma temples are very few and most others are comparatively of recent origin. In Andhra Pradesh there are a few temples solely dedicated to Rāma. The most famous of them is at Bhadrachalam in Khammam district (made famous by Rāmadāsū). Less famous is the temple at Oṇḍi in Kadapa district (which is associated with the name of Pūlana, the author of the Bhāgavatam in Telugu). And there are in the state more than thirty temples which have the Rāmāyaṇa panels. How widespread was the Rāma story in the Rayalaseema region is indicated. The Rāma cult became popular in Rayalaseema during the Vijayanagara period. It was also considerably due to the spread of Haked and the Bhakti movement. For the Śrī Viṣṇuvas the Rāmāvatāra has a special significance. For them the Rāmāyaṇa, which they read allegorically, embodies and exemplifies their concept of god and their basic tenets of Saranagatī and Prapatti (in short, Nyasavidya), of absolute and total surrender to Nārāyana or Viṣṇu, the Supreme reality. Naturally the Rāmāyaṇa themes figure in temples wherever the impact of Viṣṇuavism is felt. It must be added that images of Rāma and others
associated with him appear in non-Vaiśñavite temples also, such being the impact of the Rāma story on all. There is hardly a temple built during the Vijayanagara period which does not have at least some scenes of the Rāmāyaṇa depicted. In the Rayalaseema region the Vijayanagara temples depicting panels of the Rāmāyaṇa themes are to be found in Tirumala, Tirupati, Tadipatri, Penukonda, Puṣṭhapagiri, Oṁṭimīṭṭa, Sōmapālem and Attirāla. Among them the most extensive and detailed sculptural representations of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes are found in the Chintala Veṅkaṭaramaṇa temple at Tadipatri. In all the avatāras prior to that of Kṛiṣṇa, Viṣṇu incarnated himself in a particular zoomorphic or anthropomorphic form to perform one or two specific tasks. Once they were accomplished, the avatāras ended. But in the Rāma and succeeding Kṛiṣṇa incarnations, their lives and experiences are so varied and rich, their activities and the tasks they perform are so many, distinct and different that opportunities for recreating them imaginatively in stone or metal, colour, paint, words and similar media are immense. Therefore in attempting to represent them in stone or metal or similar plastic medium, necessarily attention is focused selectively by the temple artists on those situations and episodes which are believed to be specially significant. It was noted earlier that in non-Vaiśñavite temples too stray images connected with the Rāma story appear. It is to be pointed out further that, although the temples belong to different sectarian faiths, Śaivite and Vaiśñavite, the Rāmāyaṇa images depicted in them are viewed as somehow meaningfully related to one another rather than clash with them. Moreover, though the sculptural representations of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes follow in general Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa, occasionally they differ as they are influenced by the regional and local recreation of the Rāma story, including the folk versions of it. It was noted earlier that in the case of the Narasīṁhāvatāra, at one or two places the god is associated with the ‘Cheṅchu’s, a local tribe, and a Cheṅchu bride. Who is identified with Viṣṇu’s consort Lakṣmī.

It follows from what has been said so far that not only the Rāmāyaṇa panels in the temples of the study area are very many, but even a very brief and sketchy account of select panels will be necessarily long. The sculptural representations in them can be examined justifiably in more than one way: Either they could be taken in the sequential order of the episodes as found in Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa, or the temples themselves may be taken one after another and the panels depicted in each of them.
studied. In the present attempt, it seems more convenient to adopt the latter procedure. For there are among them a few temples solely dedicated Rāma, with Rāma as the presiding deity, and also have some Rāma panels in their precincts. The Ṛōḍāṇḍarāma temples at Tirupati and Oṁśīrinīta are of this kind. Ṛōḍāṇḍarāma, along with Sīta and Lakṣmīna, presides in their sanctum. And there are temples dedicated to other deities which also have some panels of stray episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa. Above all there are in the study area two other temples which are distinct from the others— the Chintala Venkaṭaramana temple at Tāḍāpati and the Ṛōḍāṇḍarāma temple at Penukoṇḍa which have a large number of narrative Rāmāyaṇa panels presenting the episodes sequentially from the very beginning. The Penukoṇḍa temple has panels depicting the episodes from the Puruṣottama in Balakānda up to an episode in Sundarakānda. The Tāḍāpati temple is far more ambitious and has episodic panels covering all the six kandas of the epic. Therefore it would be appropriate to consider them separately. Incidentally, an interesting feature of the temples dedicated to Rāma is that in the sanctum. The image of Rāma is very often consecrated along with those of Sīta and Lakṣṇīna, some times an image of Hanumān too may their company.

To begin with the Ṛōḍāṇḍarāma temple at Tirupati, which is dated in the 13th century A. D. In the sanctum are more than life-size images of Rāma, Sīta and Lakṣmīna, all standing but each on a separate pedestal, obviously carved out of separate blocks of stone. Sīta is to the right of Rāma and Lakṣmīna to his left. Both Rāma and Lakṣmīna each carry a bow and arrow in their left and right hands respectively. A few stray episodes of the Rāma are seen carved on pillars inside the temple. But the majority of the panels covering several significant episodes of the Rāma are seen carved in along series of panels in the middle of the eastern, southern, northern walls outside the temple’s Ratha-mandapa. The attempt seems to be to present in these panels in brief the entire story of Rāma. However the order in which the episodes are arranged appears to be irregular and jumbled up rather than chronological. S.L.N. Prasad surmises that during the renovation of the Ratha-mandapa sometime ago the mason probably out of ignorance misplaced the panels disturbing their original order. But this seems to be only a plausible explanation, and requires to be examined.
On the eastern wall (pl.131), starting from the right and moving to the left the panels appear one after another. In the fist panel there are three sections. The first shows the meeting of Rāma and Vibhūṣṭhaṇa. Both are seated and Rāma seem to hold the other’s hands as a gesture of friendship, assurance and protection to Vibhūṣṭhaṇa who has surrendered himself to Rāma (jāranajagati) Lakṣṭhaṇa, Hanumān, Neela and Āṅgada stand near by as interested observers. The middle section of the panel depicts the building of the bridge (sēhabandhana). A number of vānaras are seen carrying in their hands stones for the construction. Some of the vānaras carry swords, bows and arrows. Rāma (seated in cross-legged), Lakṣṭhaṇa(standing), and some vānaras watch them while they are at work. The third section depicts the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa in which Rāma is seen knocking down the heads of his enemy one after another.

The next significant episode depicted is Rāma giving Hanumān his ‘āngulyāyaka’. This panel Rāma, cross-legged and seated on a puṭha, is seen giving with his left hand a ring to Hanumān to serve as a token of identification, when he is about to set out to search for Sīta. Hanumān receives this precious object respectfully with both of his hands, as Lakṣṭhaṇa who stands behind Rāma holding a bow in his right hand, watches them. Behind Hanumān stand some vānaras in āṇḍali. In the next panel Hanuman is already in Laṅkhya at the door of the fort, from where he goes to the Aśokavanā. The following panel shows Rāvaṇa seated cross legged only his five heads and twenty hands are seen. Right in front of him sits a vānara on his own coiled tail which serves as a seat higher than Rāvaṇa’s. He is seen raising his left hand as if he is taking to Rāvaṇa urging him to listen to him. Some identify this vānara as Hanumān. But such an affronting gesture is not characteristic of him. But it is far more likely that he is Āṅgada, Vāli’s son, whom Rama sends on embassy to Rāvaṇa. This episode is not found in Vālmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa. Probably it is based on a regional or local version of it. The next three episodes depict the clash between the sons of Rāvaṇa and the vānaras. One of them shows Indrajit taking Hanumān captive by discharging the missile Brahmāstra. Another depicts the fight between Akṣṭhakumāra and Hanumān, in which the former gets killed (pl.132).

There is a panel which shows Sīta and Hanumān in Aśokavanā. She is seated along with a few rākṣhasas. Her right hand is extended towards Hanumān. It is not
clear whether she is receiving something from him or giving him something. It she is receiving, it should be the signet ring of Rāma. If she is giving, it should be her crest jewel, chūḍāṁanī. Hanumān stands reverentially before her in either case (see pl.132).

Rāma Pattabhīṣṭēkam is a much favoured theme for temple sculptors. This coronation scene is depicted in this temple on one of its pillars. The panel is in two parts. In the first both Rāma and Sītā are seated on the throne, the former in virasana and the latter in sukhāsana. Behind them stand two maids fanning them with chāmaras. Lakṣmāna stands to the right of Rāma, and Bharata and Śatruṣṭhna stand beside Sītā. Lakṣmāna holds a bow in his left hand, and the chatra (emblem of kingship) in his right hand. Very significantly Hanumān is seen placing the right foot of Rāma in his lap to mark his total and utter devotion to him. The second part of the panel shows some vānaras who are identified as Aṅgada, Nila and others, and also Jāmbavan they are all stand in anjali.

On the southern exterior wall of the Ratha-maṇḍapā of the Kālaṇḍarāṁā temple, there are several other panels depicting important episodes. The episodes are all jumbled. One of them presents the pāṇigrahaṇa, the wedding of Rāma and Sītā. As his brothers were also married at the same time the panel presents all the four brothers along with their brides. The brothers are seen hiding with the right hands the right hands of their respective brides (pāṇigrahaṇa), indicating that the marriages are solemnized. The bridegrooms are adorned with kiritamakutas, kunḍalas, and other princely ornaments. The hair of the brides is pattered into a knot which touches the left or right ear of each person.

On the southern wall outside the maṇḍapā appears another panel which depicts the scene of Hanumān, after his return to Kīṣkindha from Lanka having found Sītā, handing over the chūḍāṁanī to Rāma. Rāma sits cross-legged and receives with his right hand the ornament. Lakṣmāna stands behind Rāma (see pl.132).

The duel between Vāli and Sugrīva form the theme of another panel which is presented in two parts. In the first, while Vāli and Sugrīva are fiercely fighting, Rāma is seen aiming an arrow from behind a tree. In the second part Rāma is seen standing
in front of Vāli who is totally hurt and about to fall as Rāma’s arrow pierces his heart. Tara, his wife, is seen supporting from behind left hand an arrow, probably the total arrow. Behind Rāma stands Lakṣmana in aṇjali. The shock, surprise and agony of approaching death in the face of Vāli, and sorrow on the face of Tara are very successfully depicted 89(pl.133).

Dāsaratha’s performance of Putrakāmēṣṭi and the birth of Rāma and his brothers are depicted in some panels. The narrative panel begins with Rishiṣyavrīga seated cross-legged on a pedestal officiating at the yajña. The yajñapurūsha is seen emerging from the sacrificial fire and giving the vessel containing the divine pāyasam to Rishiṣyavrīga. In the next scene the sage is seen handing over the vessel of pāyasam to Dāsaratha. Next Dāsaratha distributes it among his three queens. The hair of each queen is gathered into a bun which touches are of her ears. The queens wear vṛttakundalas and nūparas. Next appears the engraved scene in which Dāsaratha and sage Viśvāmitra are seen engaged in a conversation. Both are seated. The sage is asking Dāsaratha to send Rāma to safeguard his yajña. Rāma and Lakṣmana are seen standing by their side in aṇjali and intently listening to their conversation. They hold in their right hands bow and arrows. In the next panel appear Viśvāmitra, Rāma and Lakṣmana on their way to the forest for yūgasanirakṣaṇa.

There are two panels which are a narrative sequel to the two princes keeping rigorous watch over the sage’s yajñās and thus preventing all possible disturbances. The first one depicts Ahalya’s redemption from her condemned condition by Rāma, and the other shows Viśvāmitra, and Rāma and Lakṣmana on them way to Mithila. In the Ahalya panel, she is seen emerging from a boulder in aṇjali and Rāma’s left foot is shown as touching the shrine from which she is redeemed by Rāma’s touch. Rāma’s left hand is raised above. His right hand carries his bow. Behind Ahalya stands Viśvāmitra who holds a kamaṇḍalu in his left hand, while his right hand is raised high as if to praise and bless Rāma. The second panel shows the three, Viśvāmitra, Rāma and Lakṣmana on their way to Mithila (pl.134).

The next panel depicts another much favoured theme—Rāma’s knocking down of the seven Śala (Tala according some versions) trees with a single arrow all at once (Sapta- saḷabhaṇjana), to demonstrate to Sugrīva and convince him of his prowess.
While many panels of this episode elsewhere show only Rama aiming his arrow at the seven Śāla trees here the arrow Śāma shorts is shown as piercing through all the trees at a stretch, severing every one of them into two. Right behind Śāma, Lakṣaṇa and a few vānaras stand. An interesting feature of this panel is that Śāma, while shooting his arrow, tramples down with his left foot the tail of a huge serpent whose head is raised as high as the tall Śāla trees. This mythical part of the episode is a clear deviation from Vālmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa, and is based on other local versions of the Rāma story. Adjacent to this episode is the panel depicting the episode of Jātaḍu attacking fiercely, Rāvaṇa who is abducting Śīta. Interestingly there seem to be here two different depictions of the episode. In both the five heads of Rāvaṇa and his twenty hands are seen. In one of them he is shown as standing discharging an arrow and Jatayu is seen pecking fiercely at one of the legs of Rāvaṇa to obstruct the speed of his fast moving chariot. In the other, Jātaḍu is pecking at Rāvaṇa’s hand which is about to discharge the arrow. Another panel depicts the abduction of Śīta by Rāvaṇa. He is seen driving a chariot, while Śīta is seen seated in the rear past of the chariot (pl.135).

The Gōvindarāja temple at Tirupati, which is centrally situated in the town and dominates it with its impressive temple tower and large layout, has sculptural panels of some Rāmāyaṇa episodes. But they are not presented in an order and their selections itself seems to be random. Further, they are mixed up with the Bhāgavata episodes. They are found on the second gōpura of the temple carved on its inner walls, and on some pillars inside the temples complex. Some episodes, for example Śāma’s breaking the bow of Śiva, his killing of Vālī, his coronation, are repeatedly carved on the pillars inside the temple. A plausible explanation may be offered for such repetition. As the temple complex grew from small beginning over a considerable period, from and additions were made to it from time to time, certain familiar Rāmāyaṇa episodes were carved again despite their being repetitive.

In the entrance door way of the first magnificent gōpura of this temple on the door-jamb there is a Daśāvatāra panel in which all the ten avatāras including Rāmāvatāra, are carved in a series of circles formed by ornament creepers. The figures are presented from the bottom to the top in an ascending order beginning with Matsya and ending with Kalki (pl.136). In the entrance door way of the second
gopura is a large panel on the wall depicting some scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhāgavata. In the bottom row is carved the panel of Rāma's shooting an arrow through seven Sāla trees, as Lakṣmīna and Sugrīva stand watching the remarkable feat in wonder. Interestingly all of them and the Sāla trees too stand and the back of a huge and lengthy serpent (pl.137). In the same row there is a panel which shows Rāma, Lakṣmīna and Hanumān. Another depicts Hanumān bringing the Śanjīvani hill. There is yet another in this row which shows Lakṣmīna, Sugrīva and Hanumān worshipping Rāma as Viṣṇu. In the second row is a panel which shows Rāma and his brothers, Hanumān and a Garuda, all standing in aṇjali in front of two seated figures who are probably Naśāyaṇa and his consort Lakṣmī. There are two more panels in this row which represent two interestingly episodes. The first shows the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, the other shows a vānara sitting right in front of Rāvaṇa challenging his authority. They could very well be Aṅgada seen on an embassy by Rāma. In the third row a panel shows Viṣṇu Hanumān by himself. In addition to the panels mentioned above there are representations of Rāma chasing the elusive golden deer and Rāma's coronation, both are popular themes.

The panel in the Tirupati Museum is noteworthy. In that the sculptor carved the episode of the abduction of Śīta by Rāvaṇa briefly probably owing to the constraint space. In the extreme left Śīta is sitting in the hermitage. In the centre she is offering bhikṣa to Rāvaṇa who is in the guise of a mendicant. He is holding bikhṣāpūra in his left hand and kamaṇḍalu in his right. He wearing dhoti and his hairdo is like that of a hermit. Behind Śīta and Rāvaṇa an idealized tree is carved suggesting that it is a forest or the Paṇḍavatī.

In the world famous Śri Veṅkatāsvarā temple at Tirumala, there are quite a few narrative Rāmāyaṇa panels sculptured on the lintel of the kalyāṇa-mandapa. They are in two registers or series. The panels in the lower registers are mixed up with dancing figures and musicians playing on different musical instructions. There are also some episodes and figures sculptured in the other parts of the temple. For instance in the entrance mandapa(also known as the Pratima-mandapa) we find sculpted on pillars figures of Rāma breaking Śiva's bow and Rāma's Pattisābhisheka. In the pillared corridor mandapa in the vimāṇa-pradaksīṇa of the temple there is an unusual figure of Rāma carved on a pillar. In it Rāma is seated cross-legged. His right
hand is in \textit{mudra} and the left is placed on his thigh. Sīta sits next to him on his left side and carries a lotus in her right hand. And Lakṣmī stands to the right of Rāma, his palms together in \textit{añjali}. Further his bow is slung over his right shoulder. There is an interesting relief figure carved on a pillar in the \textit{Raṅgarāya-mandapa} of the temple, in which there are Rāma and Lakṣmī flanking a central figure, all standing and in \textit{añjali}. In the \textit{Tirumalarāya-mandapa} of the temple there is a relief figure of Kōnda Rāma, in which Rāma stands in \textit{trībhānī}, holds a bow (\textit{dhanus}) in his left hand, and an arrow in his right hand. He wears a \textit{kirītāmukta}, a hūra, and a short \textit{antarīya} with a \textit{katisūtra}.

There are two panels of Rāma’s coronation in the temple, one in the \textit{Pratimā-mandapa} (as noted already) and another in the lintel of the \textit{kalyāna-mandapa}. Through the episode is the same, they differ in some details. In the \textit{Pratimā-mandapa} panel, Pātābhīrāma is seated on a throne with Sīta sitting on his left lap. He embraces Sīta with his left hand, and his right hand is in \textit{abhaya}. To his right stands Lakṣmī in \textit{añjali}. To his left and slightly behind Rāma and Sīta stands Bharata holding the \textit{chekatīra}, while Śatrughna stands to the left and slightly behind. Lakṣmī, waving the \textit{chāmara}, Hanumān sits at the feet of Rāma holding them in reverence. In the other coronation panel, which appears to be rare at least in the study region, Pātābhīrāma and Sīta are seated on a throne. It is Lakṣmī who whorls the royal \textit{chattra}, while Bharata and Śatrughna stand behind them with \textit{chāmaras}. Hanumān is seated near Rāma’s feet. Behind him stands a sage, probably Vasiṣṭha the royal preceptor, and behind him stand \textit{vānara}s one behind the other with folded stands.

The panels in the \textit{kalyāna-mandapa} cover a number of episodes of which the more important ones are this \textit{Pratikāmēṣṭhi} of Daśaratha with Rīḍhyasṛṣiṇī officiating and the birth of Rāma and others, Rāma and Lakṣmī’s keeping of visit over the \textit{yāga} of the sages warding off the intruding \textit{asuras}, the wedding or \textit{kalyāna} of Rāma and his brothers, Rāma’s encounter with Parāśurāma, Rāma’s chasing of the golden deer, his shooting down the \textit{sāla} trees, the duel between Vāi and Sugrīva, the climatic fight between Rāma and Rāvana, and Rāma’s coronation (which has already been briefly described).
The *Putrakāmeśhti* is covered in a few panels, beginning with the arrival of the virgin Riṣhyasṛiṅga at Ayodhya in a palanquin escorted by two courtesans, his officiating at the *yāga*, Dasaratha himself receiving the *pāyasa* from the *yajñapurūsa*, and dividing it among his queens and the subsequent birth of his four sons. On their way to the place where Viśvāmitra and others performs a *yāga*, Rāma and Lakṣmanā sent by Dasaratha and Viśvāmitra’s request, encounter the ṛākṣhasi Tātaka. This is depicted in a panel, which shows Rāma shooting an arrow and killing her. What is unusual about this panel is that the dying ṛāka holds a mace in her right hand and a shield on her left hand. No where else like depiction is said to have been seen. The two brothers safeguarding the *yoga* throughout from being defiled by *asuras* depicted in a panel in detail. In the panel, Viśvāmitra and other riṣhis are seated facing each other before the altar in the act of performing the *yajña*. Rāma is shown engaging the ṛākṣhasas in a fight with his bow and arrows. On the right side of the panel is seen the discharged arrow piercing through an *asura*, the falling *asura* still holds a sword (*khaḍga*) and a shield in his hands. To the left of the altar is seen one of the two brothers- it could be Lakṣmanā ready to shoot an arrow at a ṛākṣhara who is charging towards him with a sword and shield.

The weddings of Rāma and Sītā, and others (their *pañigrahaṇa*) are presented vividly in a large panel. There are four sections in each of which one couple with distinctive poses, are presented. In the first section, Rāma and Sītā hold their hands with each other and the second, Lakṣmanā and his bride next to be married are depicted, and they too hold their hands, but their description is slightly different. In the next two sections the other two couples are seen engaged in *talaṁbrāṭu*, pouring on each other’s head auspicious rice coloured yellow with turmeric. This suggests that their wedding rituals are not yet over. The momentous encounter of Rāma, who is on his way to Ayodhya after the wedding, with Parasurāma who challenges him and is subdued is depicted in another panel. The defeated Parasurāma stands before Rāma in *āṇjali* as he recognizes in him Viṣṇu incarnate. Lakṣmanā stands behind his brother. He holds a bow in his left hand. Viśvāmitra, with a *kamaṇḍalu* in his left hand, stands witnessing the scene. Two women attendants are also present there who point to Rāma with their right hands. Rāma chasing after the elusive golden deer forms the subject of another panel. Rāma is shown as aiming an arrow at the speeding deer whose neck is bent backward as if it is watching the pursuing Rāma only to elude
him. The depiction of Rāma’s knocking down the Salā trees is more or less similar to its depiction elsewhere. The presence of the huge serpent indicates the source for the myth outside Vālmīki’s work. In the panel representing the fraternal duel between Vāli and Sugrīva, only they are shown exchanging blows, their tails raised over their heads with a curl at the end. None else is present on the scene.

The fight between Rāma and Rāvāna marks the climax of the war between the two armies. It is depicted vividly and in detail in a panel appropriate to its importance and significance. Both the adversaries, Rāma and Rāvāna, appear in chariots. A number of important warriors also appear. Rāma is seen at the centre standing on his chariot aiming an arrow at Rāvāna confronting him in another chariot. The horses of their chariots with their raised front legs appear to push one another. Above the two pairs of arrows is seen cross- crossing suggesting that the battle has been fierce and long drawn out. Behind Rāvāna’s chariot are seen his severed heads falling on ground. To his extreme left behind him stands a man with a sword and shield. His identity is uncertain though some surmise him to be Kuṁbhakarṇa. On Rāma’s side to his extreme right stands Hanumān with closed fists and upraised tail, ready to fight. Vibhīṣṭhaṇa stands next to him and has his mace on his left shoulder. Lakṣmaṇa stands nearby picking up an arrow to use it against his opponent.

It seems rather strange that the Kōdanḍarāma temple at Oṇṭiṁiṭṭa (Kadaṇḍa district), dated to the 16th century A.D., and made famous by its association with the great poet Bāmmra Pōṇana the author of the great classic Bhāgavatam in Telugu, should have just a handful of stray panels of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes. This fact becomes strikingly obvious when compared with the other temples dedicated to Rāma in the region. Interestingly there are many more panels depicting the Kṛiṣṇa story in the Oṇṭiṁiṭṭa temple. In the sanctum of this temple are installed the images of Rāma, Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa, all carved out of a single stone and placed on a common pedestal. Here, as in most other Rāma temples, has only two hands, despite his being worshipped as an avatāra of Viṣṇu. He stands in triṇaṁganga on the centre of the pedestal, with Sīta to his left and Lakṣmaṇa to his right standing. Rāma holds a bow in his left hand (and hence he is called Kōdanḍa Rāma) and an arrow in his right. He wears kirīṭamakuta, makaraṇḍālas, kēyūras, graivaṇkas, channavira, vajnopavīta, girdle tucked in with a dagger, and pūrṇorūka. Sīta stands with two graceful bends in
her body, and holds a lotus in her right hand while her left hand and an arrow in his right hand. He too wears like Rama kirītamakuta and other decorative ornaments. On the pillars in the outer edge of the mahāmandapa of the temple are found images of Rama, Sīta and Lakṣmīna as bracket figures. Rama stands in tribhaṅga, holds a bow in his left hand, and lets his left hand hang down. He is adorned with kirītamakuta, graivēyakas, channavīra, udarabandha, yajñopavīta, and pūrṇorūka. Lakṣmīna also stands in tribhaṅga, and adorned likewise as his brother. He too holds a bow in his left hand, and lets his right hand hang down. Sīta is adorned with kirītamakuta, channavīra, kuchabandha, mokhala and pūrṇorūka.

All the other Rāmāyaṇa panels in the temple are found on the pillars of its mukhamandapa. In one of them sage Viṣṇuviśāṁ is seen requesting Daśaratha to send Rama along with him to keep watch over and thus safeguard the yugās a sacrifices undertaken by him and his fellow rishis. Both the sage and the king are depicted as seated and engaged in conversation. The two young princes, Rāma and Lakṣmīna, stand respectfully and earnestly to a side in anjāli. Both hold their bows in their right hands. Another panel shows Rāma aiming his arrow to knock down at one stretch seven Sāla trees. The trees are depicted as standing on the back of a huge serpent whose head is raised as higher as the sāla trees. Rāma, while he aims his arrow at his target, also firmly tramples upon the tail of the serpent with his left foot. As in the Kṛṣṇarāma temple at Tirupati, considered earlier, here too the myth about the serpent is taken from a source other than Valmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa.

Rāma giving Hanumān his signet ring (anūguliyakam) before he embarks on the formidable task of searching for Sīta forms the theme of another panel. Hanumān is seen kneeling before Rāma requesting him to give him a token of identification and recognition. Lakṣmīna stands in anjāli by the side of Rāma, and he holds a bow in his right hand. Another panel shows Hanumān kneeling reverentially before Rāma and Sīta, both seated on a piṭha in sukhaśana. Rāma’s hand is in abhaya-mudra, reassuring his bhakta (devotee) all the care and concern of his master he longs for. This episode, obviously, takes place after the war in Lanka, and the reunion of Rāma and Sīta. There are a couple of episodes depicted in this temple, which are not as frequently represented as the others. One such is the crucial episode of Hanumān bringing the life-saving herb Sāṇḍīvani from far Himalayas. In fact this episode is
depicted in detail in a three-part panel on a pillar in the eastern side of the mahāmandapa. In the first part, Sugrīva and Hanumān are seen discussing anxiously Lakṣhmanā who fallen unconscious in the battle field. Hanumān is seen standing to the right and seems to assure Sugrīva that there is no cause for worry and that he would bring the herbs mritasanañjīvani from the Himalayas. In the second, he hands over the herb to Rāma in whose lap the unconscious Lakṣhmanā lies (pl.138). In the third, Rāma is seen embracing Hanumān for his help while Lakṣhmanā, who has regained consciousness and fully recovered, stands with folded hands in gratitude.

The other rarely depicted episode, which is drawn from two popular Telugu recreations of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa, namely the Ṛṣiganaṭha Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhāskara Rāmāyaṇa, is about Hanumān’s encounter with Kālanēmi, an asura, when he is on his way to fetch the herb Sanjīvani from Drūmādi in the Himalayas to save the life of Lakṣhmanā. As this episode is depicted vividly and rather elaborately in six panels, it is necessary to recount briefly this episode Kālanēmi is actually sent by Rāvana to obstruct Hanumān, by disguising himself as a sage performing penance in a hermitage. Hanumān who fears that he may have lost his way approaches this pseudo-sage in the hermitage for help, and also to quench his thirst. Kālanēmi asks him to go the nearby pond. When Hanumān enters it, his leg is caught by a crocodile. When Hanumān kills it, a celestial nymph emerges from it. From her he learns that she under a curse became crocodile. She reveals the evil design of the asura disguised as a sage. Hanumān fights and kills Kālanēmi who assumes various forms during the fight, and proceeds swiftly on his errand to accomplish it successfully.

In the first panel of this episode Hanumān stands in añjali by side of Kālanēmi disguised as a bearded sage with a japamala and seated in yogāsana. A few trees and creepers are seen nearby to suggest that it is a hermitage. The next two panels are about the celestial nymph. She emerges from the dead crocodile, which looks like half lion and half elephant combined. Having emerged fully from the beast, she tells her story to Hanumān and reveals the design of Kālanēmi. The next panel shows with raised hands and open mouth about to pounce upon the asura who gets ready to counter the attack. The remaining panels are about fight crushed under Hanumān’s attack, Kālanēmi as he falls down sheds his human form to assume the form of a bird
fist and then that of a tiger. Hanumān stands in wonder at the tricks the asura plays to tail has attack by assuming different forms. In the last panel is seen a small tiger from which the asura is found slowly and partially emerging. He is seen wearing a crown. Hanumān in these last panels stands with his clenched right fist still raised and his left hand on his left thigh. There is another very unusual stray panel in the Oṇḍimittā temple, in which Hanumān is seen carrying rocks for the construction of the bridge across the sea. He carries a huge stone on each of his hands, one on his head and another on his tail.96

In the Chennakesāva temple complex of Puṣhpagiri in Kadapa district, there are the shrines of Chennakesāva which is the chief shrine, Umapahāsvara, and Sāntānuamalleshvara. All of them have some stray Rāmāyaṇa episodes depicted. The Chennakesāva temple appears to have the larger number of these panels, among them. Here again the episodes are chosen at random. In this temple is depicted the episode of Viśvāmitra requesting Daśaratha to send Rāma to guard the yajñā against intruding and obstructing rākṣhasas. The figures of the sage and the two princes Rāma and Lākśmanā, carved in this panel are full of life and dignity. The youthful princes are slender-waisted and broad-chested. Both are in dvibhaṅga and carry bows in their hands. They wear dresses and ornaments appropriate to their births and status. Viśvāmitra is represented in a manner worthy of his stature and wisdom. The next panel in the same Chennakesāva temple shows Viśvāmitra, Rāma and Lākśmanā on their way to the hermitages of ṛishis in the forest. Viśvāmitra is seen holding an arrow in his left hand while the palm in his outstretched hand suggests that he is explaining something to the young princes. Probably the sage is initiating them into the use of special astras, Bala and Atībala. Rāma and Lākśmanā who listen to him attentively are without any weapons with them. The next scene in the same panel shows the princes now armed with bows and arrows. On the northern outer wall of the temple there is a panel which shows Rāma and Lākśmanā standing guard vigilantly while Viśvāmitra performs the yajñā. On the same outer wall is depicted the wedding of Rāma and Sītā, a much favoured theme for devotees as well as sculptors. While panels elsewhere on the same theme focus on pāṇigrahaṇa and talāṁbrātu, here the focus is on the solemn ritual of kanyādāna, gifting the bride to the bridegroom ritualistically. In the panel Janaka is seen standing in the left corner holding a vessel of water in both hands and pouring the water into the right palm of
Rāma symbolizing the act of giving away his daughter. The water thus poured is collected in a bowl placed on the head of a servant who stands between Janaka and Rāma. Having received the water Rāma holds the little finger of Sītā thereby signifying that he has accepted the gift or dāna of the bride. Rāma is dressed befitting a bridegroom and Sītā who stands next to him is dressed appropriately as a bride should. Janaka, Rāma and Sītā wear crowns and dresses of different designs. Rāma’s three brothers and their brides are also depicted, as they too were married at about the same time. The three couples are shown between pilasters separating each couple from the other. The mutilation of Śūrpanākhā, Rāvaṇa’s sister, by Lakṣmaṇa is depicted in another panel on a pillar. In the middle of the panel Lakṣmaṇa is seen approaching Rāma captivated by his handsome features. In the middle of the panel Lakṣmaṇa is seen cutting off the ears of the she-demon. At the other end of the panel Rāma and Sītā are seen standing witnessing the event. The brothers carry in their hands their weapons. There are two related panels in this temple depicting the episode of Sītā’s asking Rāma for the golden deer and his pursuit of it. In one of them both Rāma and Sītā are seen seated in padmāśana close to each other. Her right hand is on the shoulder of Rāma, and his left hand is placed on her left knee suggesting their intimate and affectionate relationship. There is every indication in the panel to suggest that they are happily conversing with each other relaxedly. In the other panel Rāma is seen aiming his arrow fixed to his bow at the fleeing deer. The deer, whose neck is bent backward, looks at Rāma who is pursuing it, obviously to tantalise him and yet be beyond his reach.

Sītā’s abduction by Rāvaṇa and his fight with Jāyū in which the great adn heroic eagle is mortally wounded is depicted in a panel in the same temple. Rāvaṇa is shown as abducting Sītā in a chariot. The panic-stricken Sītā is seated in padmāśana and Rāvaṇa stands behind her with drawn sword in his right hand. The charioteer’s whip and galloping horses of the chariot suggest the great speed at which the chariot is driven. Jāyū who notices this atrocity of Rāvaṇa’s, attacks him to save Sītā, but gets mortally wounded. The panel in this temple which depicts the familiar episode of Rāma’s shooting down the seven Sāla trees, is different from its depiction in several other temples in that it shows only Rāma in the act of aiming his arrow at the trees. There is no serpent at all in the panel. Which mean that this episode is depicted following Valmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa rather than other versions of the story.
On the outer southern wall of the Chennakeshava temple is depicted the favourite episode of the deadly fratricidal fight between Vāli and Sugrīva. The depiction is actually in three panels, to render the episode as vividly as possible. In the first Vāli’s wife Tārā is seen warming him about the hazards of the fight and imploring him to be caution. The actual fight between the rival brothers follows in the next. They fight with their fists and exchange blows, and their raised tails suggest the excitement and fierceness of the fight. Strongly Rāma is shown shooting down the Sala trees in the same panel, which is certainly out of place. In the third panel Tārā is seen with disheveled hair. She is grief-stricken because of her husband’s death. A grateful Sugrīva is seen in the panel expressing his gratitude to Rāma.

The Santhānamallēśvara temple in the Chennakeshava temple complex has some panels depicted on its west outer wall. Two of them deserve special mention because they depict Sāgarasaraṇāgati and Vibhīṣaṇasaraṇāgati, which are rarely depicted elsewhere. Having reached the seashore on his way to Lanka, Rāma prays to Sāgara, the king of the ocean, to allow him and his army a smooth passage in the sea to reach the other shore. But proud Sāgara fails to respond. Growing furious Rāma aims his powerful missile, Brahmāstras, at the ocean to dry it up. Then terrified Sāgara shows up along with his wife and a servant carrying a box full of precious gems as gifts to Rāma to appease his anger and seek his pardon. Rāma’s indignation at Sāgara’s indifference is impressively sculptured. He stand with his feet firmly planted, his tightly strung bow held in his outstretched left arm, and the expression of fury on his face, are all well brought out in the sculpture. The humbled Sāgara and his wife are seen in the panel, with their hands in anjali.

Vibhīṣaṇa’s seeking asylum under Rāma, a well-known episode, is given special significance in Śrīvaishṇavism. It is viewed as a supreme example of Saraṇāgati, total and unqualified surrender to God, Rāma being viewed as an avatāra of Viṣṇu. It is possible that in depicting this episode in this temple of Santhānamallēśvara Rāma is viewed as incarnation of Viṣṇu. For his right hand held in abhaya in this panel suggests it. Rāma here is seated in the centre of the panel in sukhāsana. The seat or pīṭha on which he is seated looks like one woven out of bamboo sticks. Sugrīva stands to his left looking at the approaching Vibhīṣaṇa who
stands in anjali. His upraised suggests his surprise probably at Rāma’s extending spontaneous protection to his enemy’s brothers. Lakṣmana stands behind Rāma with his right on his waist. He appears to be at ease. In sculpting Rāma’s compassion, Vibhishana’s sense of helplessness, and Sugrīva’s astonishment are clearly brought out. There is an interesting depiction on the same wall of the fight between Rāma and Rāvana. Unlike some panels elsewhere depicting this episode, this panel shows Rāma, being carried on the shoulders of Hanumān (rather than riding chariot), discharging his arrow while Rāvana is shown dead lying on the ground.

In the narrow gala at the top edge of the adhisthāna in the Umāmahēśvara shrine in the Chennakesava temple complex, in Puṣpagiri, is depicted the tragic episode of Śrīvaṇakumāra getting inadvertently killed by young Daśaratha. Though it is an important and crucial episode, few other temples in Rayalasēma, with the exception of the temple at Śrīśailam, seem to have depicted it. The temple in question depicts the episode in three stages. In the first, Śrīvaṇakumāra is seen carrying his blind parents in a kāvadi or yoke with two baskets suspended from each end. The devout boy wears only a lion cloth and a rosary of beads around his neck. He wears no yajnopavītā. In the second, the yoke only is seen suspended from the branch of tree indicating that the boy has gone to the river to fetch water. In the third Śrīvaṇa appears once again with two pitchers in his both hands, but he is seen buckling down in pain as Daśaratha’s arrow has hit him in his abdomen. At the left end of the panel Daśaratha is seen standing behind a tree with his left foot bent forward, an arrow in his left hand and a bow in his right. In Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśailam, the episode is depicted with some more vivid details to stress the sheer and hopelessness pity of the situation, such as the body of the dead boy in the lap of his blind and sorrowing father and the boy’s blind mother sitting and waiting in sheer incomprehension. Bewildered Daśaratha stands in anjali before them.

The Parāśurāmēśvara temple in Attirāla (Kadapa district) has some Rāmāyaṇa panels, which are among the earliest to be depicted in the Rayalaseema region. There are found on the western side of the temple’s tower. One of the panels depicts Rāma giving his signet ring to Hanumān before he goes in quest of Śīta. Rāma and Lakṣmana in the panel are seated on a pedestal cross-legged, and Hanumān is seen bowing before them. While the figures are exquisitely carved, it is strange that Rāma
and Lakṣhmaṇa are represented as wearing beautiful crowns and many chains. Such
depiction is inauthentic, because before setting out for the forever they discard every
royal ornament. A second panel represents Śīta and Hanumān in Aśokavanama. She is
seated on the ground with her left leg folded and Hanumān with the ring in his right
hand stands to her left. A couple of female guards are also seen. What is most
noteworthy is the skill and workmanship in carving the different figures. It is so
intricate that minute details are taken care of. The hair of Śīta is nicely and clearly
distinguished. A third narrative panel represents Hanumān’s encounter with Śīnhika,
a rākṣasi, when he is flying over the sea to Lāṅka and his triumph over her. This
episode is rarely depicted. The depiction adheres closely to Valmiki’s account.
Śīnhiika was very large in size, ugly and frightening and had the power to catch her
prey, man or animal, by tugging at his shadow. She could widen her mouth when
necessary. Hanumān anxious to reach Lāṅka without any delay appealed to her not
to obstruct him. When she hungry for flesh, refused to oblige, and opened her mouth
wide he enlarged his size to present her from devouring him. When she widened her
mouth to sent his enlarged size, he abruptly shrank his body to a minute size, entered
her mouth, destroyed her from within, and emerged triumphantly. The panel in the
temple carves this episode very graphically. It shows this monstrous woman of huge
size, with wide open mouth, fallen dead on the ground. Hanumān, shrunk to a very
small size, is seen coming out of her mouth bringing her entrails with him. The dead
Śīnhiika’s bulging eyes, thick eyebrows, potbelly, heavy limbs, bent legs and arms,
are all vividly carved. Every detail contributes to show her monstrous nature and
stature.

The Chintala Veṅkāṭaramaṇa temple at Tadipatri in Anantapur district is
unique in that it makes an extraordinary and ambitious attempt to render the entire
story of the Rāmāyaṇa in terms of sculptural panels, right from the birth of Rāma to
his coronation. It is as the temple precincts provided the sculptors a huge canvas with
all the space required for recreating the epic story of Rāma. Therefore this temple has
been aptly described as a “veritable treasure house of narrative sculptures”. The
entire story is sculptured on the four sides of the mukhamāṇḍapa, antarāla, and
garbhagriha. There are three registers of narrative panels. Which start at the
bottom register of the south exterior wall, occupy all the three registers on the
northern side exterior walls of the antarāla, and the north and eastern walls of the

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Another interesting feature of these panels is that each panel carries an explanatory label in Telugu. These labels help the viewer, of course. The well-known episodes can be recognized straight away, but some such as Vasiṣṭha worshiping Śiva, angry Bharata holding Manthara upside down, and ten others require help to recognize them. As there are much more than a hundred panels in this temple, all of them cannot be described. Only the more important ones are considered hereafter. It may be noted that they successfully maintain narrative continuity. There are few abrupt jumps in depicting the episodes.

The panels begin from the southern porch doorway with Daśaratha performance of Putrakāmēśhti guided by Rishyasringa and its results. The first few panels cover them. First the scene of the yajña is depicted. Three cows in one row, a cow and a calf in another, a horse, and a pair of standing Brāhmaṇas are depicted. They all suggest the presence of many more of their kind at the yajñas. One of the Brāhmaṇas holds a kamanḍalu in his right hand and a chhatra (umbrella) in the other. The other stands with his right hand on his waist. Both wear graivēyakās, kundalas, kēyūras, and yajñōpavīta appropriate to their status. The horse depicted is no ordinary animal but looks like a royal charger. Next the officiating Rishyasrīṇga, who has the head of the horse, is depicted. He is seated cross-legged on a pīṭha in front of the altar. He wears a yajñōpavīta. His left hand in jñānamudra rests on his lap. He appears to be reciting the mantras appropriate to the occasion. Agni is seen emerging from the flames of the altar carrying in his hands a vessel containing the divine pāyasam. Only the upper half of his body is seen. A panel is the mukhamandapa which is to the right of the niche, depicts Daśaratha distributing the pāyasam among his three queens. The gesture of his right hand suggests that he is speaking to them. He is dressed as a king should be wearing kirtīmakuṭa and others. Suggestively Kausalya and Kaikeyi are seen in front of Daśaratha, which Sumitra is depicted separately on the lower part of the pilaster. This separation could be of course for want of space. But of the three wives of Daśaratha, she is the least considered. Kausalya is his first and chief queen and Kaikeyi is his favourite. Moreover when the pāyasam is distributed, she is the last to be served. All the queens have in their hands their share of the pāyasam. They wear ornaments appropriate to their queenly status. The figures are so carefully sculptured that the folds of the sarees
they wear are clearly depicted. On the western wall of the mukhamandapa are two panels one of which shows the three queens with their respective children in their laps, and other show the form youthful princes, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Satrughna adorned royally and carrying bows and arrows.

The next important episode sculptured in a few panels on the western wall of the mukhamandapa is Viśwāmitra’s request to Daśaratha to send Rāma to protect his yajñas, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa following him to the forest and successfully fulfilling their task. In the panel which depicts Viśwāmitra requesting Daśaratha to send Rāma, the others are seen seated cross-legged. Their appearance, their facial dress expressions, and gestures are well delineated, the sculpting shows the sage commandingly urging Daśaratha to send his young son with him, and the king’s anxiety and hesitation to respond to the sage’s request. It also shows Rāma who stands nearby respectfully listening to their conversation. The next panel carved in the antarāla shows the two teenage princes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing flanked by Daśaratha and Vasiṣṭha, who are seated. Daśaratha’s left hand is in the danda pose and his right hand is raised. Though unwilling at first, appears to have been convinced by Vasiṣṭha that he should send his sons with Viśwāmitra. Another panel carved on the western wall of the mukhamandapa depicts Viśwāmitra taking leave of Daśaratha. One of Daśaratha’s wives in āṇjali, probably Kausalya, is also seen standing with them. Viswamitra’s hands are seen grasping the hands of Daśaratha, as a gesture of assurance to the king that no harm would come to his sons and that they would be back home soon. Another panel carved on the same wall shows the sage leading by hand the young Rāma to the forest. He is in tribanga and appears to bow a little towards Rāma whose hands he holds as if to guide him to the forest.

Viswamitra initiating Rama into the use of the rare and powerful missiles, Bala and Atibala, preparatory to his guarding the yajña, is depicted in panel on the western wall of the mukhamandapa(pl.139). A remarkably well chiseled panel, it is deservedly regarded as one of the best panels in this temple. The sage stands in dvibanga and his left hand is in varada. His right hand is in the act of giving Rāma an arrow, and his eyes are closed to suggest the concentration with which he teaches Rāma the secret mantras to be used to discharge the near missiles. Rāma stands reverentially in graceful tribanga as he receives the astra Lakṣmaṇa stands in
tribaṅga by his brother’s side, and his palms are folded in anjali. In these and other panels in which Viśwāmitra appears, he is dressed in garments appropriate to him and his vocation as a rishi. In this particular panel, he also wears an upper garment along his shoulder reaching down to his right knee. Rāma and Lakṣmana wear kirītamakṣya and other usual royal ornaments, but the design of their ornaments vary. Lakṣmana stands by the side of Rāma in anjali. Rāma guarding the yajña of Viśwāmitra and knocking out the menacing demons is depicted skilfully in a panel carved on the south wall of the garbhagriha (pl.140). It shows the rishi sitting before an altar of fire performing the yajña, while Rāma, stands in tribaṅga, with his right knee slightly bent forward, to give his legs a firm foothold. He has in his right hand a strung bow and his left hand has fixed an arrow to it, ready to be discharged any moment. Above in the sky are seen two demons flying, probably Maricha and Subāhu, who are ever causing trouble to the hermits and their yajñas.

The redemption of Ahalya from her husband’s curse far her errant conduct is depicted on the southern wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. This is a much and tastefully praised panel. The sculpture captures the gentle yet manly grace of Rāma and his handsome features, as he stands in tribaṅga, in the centre. To his left stands Lakṣmana with his bow in his left hand. Right in front of Rāma's feet is a stone next to which stands Ahalya in anjali, and with a slightly bowed head expressive her gratitude and reverence for her deliverer. Rāma's right hand is in vismaya mudra and there is a gentle smile on his face, which express his pleasant surprise at the sudden appearance of Ahalya at his foot touching the stone unawares. Lakṣmana's amagement at this unexpected development is reflected in his face. Both the brothers wear kirīṭa, kundalas, necklaces, purṇoruka, yajñopavītā, kēyūras, ear-rings etc. Care is taken to distinguish the designs of their dress, ornaments and others worn by the brothers. Ahalya who is restored to her original form wears necklaces, ear-rings and other ornaments. The folds of her saree are distinctly carved. The depiction of this episode follows the later versions of the Rāmāyaṇa (see pl.140).

There is a panel in the antarāla, to the right of the niche, which shows Viśwāmitra and Rāma in conversation. The sage appears here with the same accoutrements as in the other panels. But Rāma appears richly ornamented. He has his bow in his left hand. What is interesting is that there is a shower of flowers
(pushpavisht) on Rāma from above. Reddy Ram Mohan interprets the shown of flowers as suggesting the blessings of the sage. Could it be that the gods above shower flowers as Rāma for redeeming Ahalya of her curse by the mere touch of his feet.

On the southern wall of the sanctum is depicted the favourite episode of the wedding of Rāma and Sīta which is depicted in the temples at Tirupati, Tirumala, and Puşhpagiri (as seen already). Here the panel comprises three sections separated by two pillars. In the first Rāma is seen with the lightly strung bow of Śiva in his left hand ready to wield it. His right leg, firmly planted on the ground, is slightly bent at the knee, and his left leg is stretched, both indicating his readiness to act. Lakṣmana stands to his left. In the second section Rāma and Sīta are seen, both standing on two separate pedestals or pīthas. In the third the ritual of talaṁbrātu is depicted. Rāma is seen standing and showering auspicious rice (coloured yellow with turmeric) on the head of Sīta, is seen standing in front of him. Her right hand is on her waist. Her attendant stands nearby. Soon after his wedding Rāma who is getting ready to return to Ayodhya, is challenged by Paraśurāma. A panel in the north wall of the mukhamandapa depicts it. It differs from the panel on this episode in the Tirumala temple. The Tirumala panel shows a humbled and subdued Paraśurāma who recognizes in Rāma Viṣṇu himself incarnated. And hence he stands in añjali. Here in the Tadipatri temple it is the angry, arrogant and vengeful Paraśurama who is out to destroy all kṣatriyas that is depicted. He is well-built, wears makuṭa, hāras, kēyūras, kaṅkaṇas etc for ornaments. His blazing eyes and folded right hand express his anger. Challenging he gives Rāma the bow of Viṣṇu with his left hand. Young and youthful Rāma, full of self-possession, receives the bow with his right hand. He has an arrow in his left hand. He appears ready to accept the challenge flung by Paraśurama, and holds the bow with enormous ease effortlessly.

Manthara corrupting the mind of Kaikēyi is depicted in a panel carved on the northern wall of the mukhamandapa. More interesting is the panel depicted in the same place which shows Kaikēyi insisting on Daśaratha’s fulfilling his promise that he would grant without fail two of her wives. One part of this panel shows an angry and adamant Kaikēyi lying on the ground her legs folded, while Daśaratha stands by her side helpless. The other part shows Daśaratha seated and trying to disguise
Kaikeyi, who stands by his side, from her obstinate demands, and make her see region. That Kaikeyi has her way, and Rāma instead of being crowned as crown-prince, has to go to the forest on long exile is depicted in a panel depicted at the top of the mukhamandapa. When it is known for certain that Rāma has to go to the forest in obedience to his father’s wish, Śīta urges him to take her along with him because she can be happy only in his company. He hesitates to yield to her earnest request because of the many hazards. A panel depicts this touching situation, in which Śīta is seen learning towards Rāma and holding his right arm as she makes the requests. Her figure is beautifully carved, and her tresses, kundalas, and saree clearly distinguished.

There are several panels in the mukhamandapa depicting such deeply moving situations as Rāma, Śīta and Lakṣmaṇa taking leave of the helpless Daśaratha, Kausalya’s falling into a swoon on seeing them dressed in bark-cloths her advising Śīta to be careful in the forest, Sumitras advise to Lakṣmaṇa reminding him of his duty towards Rāma and Śīta in the forest, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa gifting away their ornaments to Vaiśisṭha’s son, and Śīta’s giving away hers to Vaiśisṭha’s daughter-in-law before their departure for the forest, and Kausalya and others circling a lighted flame in a plate (ārati) round their faces for their safety, welfare and protection in the forest, and their departure in a chariot driven by Sumanta. There is a some what amusing panel that may be noticed. It depicts an indignant Bharata belabouring Manthara for corrupting Kausalya’s mind leading to Rāma’s exile. In the panel he holds her upside down. This episode is not depicted anywhere else. In Vālmikī’s Rāmaḥaṇa, it is a furious Satruṣṭa, not Bharata, who takes Manthara to task.

Bharata’s bringing the pādūkas (sandals) of Rāma from the forest to be coronated instead of king is depicted in a panel. It is a very important event he is seen seated on an elephant with the pādūkas. An attendant is also seen holding a chhatra (a royal emblem) obliviously over the sandals. Some individuals, probably rishis, are seen. On the whole, the details in the panel are not clearly visible, because it seems to have weathered.

The panel the north wall of the mukhamandapa shows the Rāma and Śīta in Pańchavatī in the forest. They are seated on a stone in ardhamārgasana. They appear to be engaged in an earnest conversation Rāma seems to be explain something
of importance to Śīta, as suggested by the gestures of his hands. Śīta appears to be listing to him very attentively. To the left of Śīta on a pilaster are carved figures of a tree with fruits, nesting birds, a lizard and a monkey, all being quiet. To suggest a quiet forest seen and also simply that life for Rāma and Śīta there has been untroubled and peaceful. It seem to however odd that Rāma wears kīrītāmukūṭa, because he is said to have discarded all ornaments and donned the robes of ascetic before setting of the forest.

While at Pāncchavatī, Rāma is approached by the hermits living there for his help, because they are ever menaced by rākṣasī. He readily assures them of his help this is the theme of a panel on the western wall in the mukhamandapa. It shows Rāma, Śīta and Lakṣhmāna standing out of respect for the approaching sages. There are a couple of sages to the right of the Rāma. One of them is explaining something to Rāma. The right hand of Rāma and Śīta are in abhaya, and so Lakṣhmāna’s left hand as a gesture of assurance to them. Lakṣhmāna’s right hand is pointing to something. There is a bow on his left shoulder:

The encounter with Śūrpanākha, her mutilation and its sequel of the annihilation of Khara, Trishira and Dushana are in detailed sculpture (pl.141) in a few panels in this temple, because this episode leads to the subsequent developments in the Rāma story. In the Chennakesvā temple at Puṣpagiri it is very briefly depicted, but here in pilaster next to the panel. Which depicts Rāma and Śīta in Pāncchavatī in the mukhamandapa, Śūrpanākha attractively dressed, wondering at the handsome looks of Rāma, is depicted. In the panel next, Lakṣhmāna holding lightly her hands with his left hand and cutting off her nose with the sword in his right hand, in spite of her resistance is depicted. She now appears with wide and horrified eyes, and her hair dishevelled. On the pilaster adjoining the panel the disfigured Śūrpanākha is seen again, shrunk in size and holding with her left hand her mutilated nose. The sculpture even adds a tail to the sacred and fleeing and demoness. The next panel in three parts depicts the donkey-headed Khara, three headed Trishira, and the wide-mouthed Dushana, to whom Śūrpanākha tells of her humiliation being killed by Rāma’s swift arrows. In these panels Rāma’s mastery in archery is made evident.

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The next panel on the wall shows Śūrpanākha, who is beside herself with shame and humiliation, reporting to Rāvaṇa the recent happening, and provokes him to retaliate. Her hair is untidy and ruffled, her eyes bulge, and folds of her dress clearly demarcated. Rāvaṇa is seen seating rather uncomfortably in his couch. His ten heads are depicted. The first pair of his hands is boldly sculptured and others are suggested. Rāvaṇa springs to action at once and commands his uncle Marīcha to practice deception on Rāma and Sītā. The next panel depicts this situation. An angry Rāvaṇa, gigantic in form, is seen standing on a horse-drawn chariot. In his right hand he carries a sword, and the disposition of his left hand suggest that he is instructing Marīcha about what he should do. Marīcha appears a diminutive figure by Rāvaṇa’s side. He has the appearance of an ascetic with long beard, kṣīvaḷaś and strings of rudrākṣha beads around his neck Śūrpanākha appears seated in the back ground.

There are appropriate a number of panels on to northern wall of the mukhamandapa, depicting the trio, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmana, in different comfortable and relaxer postures, suggesting their quiet and happy life, despite being exiles, the forest environments, the peace and harmony of their life is disturbed by the seemingly sudden appearance of Marīcha disguised as a deceptive golden deer near their thatched hut to enchant Sītā with disastrous consequences. The next panel on the same wall of the mukhamandapa and preserved intact, depicts this episode in two parts. The first shows the deer and the sacred Rāma and Sītā. The sculpture captures admirably the deer in its leaping and fleecing action. It rests on its hind legs, and its fore legs are raised, one of which is slightly bent and its neck is turned backwards and stretched as it wants to see how close a for away is the chasing huntsman. That it is no ordinary deer is indicated by the ornaments, bands around waist and neck. The second pair shows Rāma and Sītā sitting at ease and relaxed at the entrance to their hut (suggested by the tōraṇa (bunting) above their heads). Their faces express their amagement at the sight of the rare animal. Sītā is seen pointing out the deer to Rāma with her right hand and expressing her desire to possess it. The panel, in two parts, shows Rāma going after the deer, looking back at Rāma to make sure that he is following it, tantalizes and eludes him. Next, the arrow shot by Rāma piercing through the deer’s body and the dying Marīcha in his own form as rākṣasa emerging from its trunk is depicted. Marīcha holds in his right hand a sword and a shield in his left. The agony and torn approaching death is clearly visible in his face (pl.142).
The dying Mārīchas deliberately loudly calls out the names of Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa, initiating Rāma’s voice, to mislead them. Unsuspecting Sīta, easily misled, sacred that Rāma’s life is in great danger, urges Lakṣmaṇa to go at once to his rescue. But Lakṣmaṇa is unconvinced and suspects some foul mischief of the rākṣasas, an agitated argument follows between him and Sīta. A panel on the northern wall of the mukhamandapa depicts this situation. Anxious and disturbed Sīta is seen standing with her left hand slightly raised suggesting that she is addressing Lakṣmaṇa, who stands to her right. He carries a bow in his left hand, and his raised right hand suggests he is trying to ward off Sīta’s fears. The buntings at the top of the panel indicate that the scene takes place in front of their hut. The next panel is a continuation of this scene. As Lakṣmaṇa goes to look for Rāma, Rāvana appears disguised as a humble mendicant asking for alms. He holds a kamanḍalu in his right hand. A danda a staff rests on his left shoulder, with a small bundle of alms collected tied to its end. Sīta is seen with a plait of food or fruit, about to cross the threshold of their hut. Rāvana’s right hand with the kamanḍalu is stretched forward a little seemingly to receive the alms. The panel which depicts the sequel is found on the eastern wall of the mukhamandapa. Rāvana is seen in his true form, tall and fearful. For want of space in the panel only eight of his heads and twelve hands are sculptured. The rest are to be imagined. Sīta, dismayed stands fixed to the ground. Her right hand is on chest suggesting her anxiety and fear, while her left hand hangs limply.

Following the above panel on the same wall is depicted Rāvana abducting Sīta in speeding chariot and Jatayu’s vain attempt to obstruct it. Rāvana is seen standing tall and powerful at the centre of the four-wheeled chariot yoked to horses and driven by a charioteer. The galloping horses suggest the speed at which the chariot is moving. Rāvana carries a bow and an arrow in his hands. Sīta sits at the very rear end of the chariot her legs folded, bemoaning her fate. The second part of the panel shows Jatayu picking at the left palm of the charioteer and thus compel him to curtail the speed of the chariot Rāvana who continues to stand at the centre holds a sword threatening about to cut off the wings of Jatayu Sīta who continues to sit at the rear end seems to be desperately calling out for help. Her raised left hand suggests it. The next panel shows three vānaras, all follower of Sugrīva in Kīśkinda, staring for long at the sky.
as they see some ornaments being dropped from above. One of them is on the point of catching what look like a girdle and an anklet. The other two with upraised heads and other left legs stretched backward being. They do not know whose ornaments they are. Two of them wear crowns, and all wear some ornaments which suggest that they are vānaras of high rank and status.

On their return to their hut after killing Marīchā Rāma and Lakṣmīnāraṇa are bewildered to find Sītā absent. Their confusion and anxiety know no bounds, the next panel on the southern wall of the mukhamāṇḍapa represents this touching situation. The brother appears to be talking to each other about it their mode of standing, the gestures of their hands, and the expressions on their fellation and anxiety. The panel at the top of the eastern wall of the mukhamāṇḍapa shows Rāma and Lakṣmanā, who have begun their search for Sītā, meeting the totally wounded and dying Jātāyū. Jātāyū is seen resting painfully on his broken wings, bringing together his legs in anjali. Rāma’s right hand is raised above Jātāyū’s head as if he is blessing him. Obviously Jatayu has hold Rāma about Rāvana abducting Sītā and his clash with the demon (see pl.141).

The important episode depicted on the eastern wall of the mukhamāṇḍapa is the meeting of Rāma and Sugrīva. Rāma is seen seated cross-legged on a pedestal and Sugrīva stands before him indicating that they have already made each other’s acquaintance. Sugrīva is showing him a boy containing the jewels dropped from above, and the expression on Rāma’s face and the vismukta-mudra of his right indicates his surprise at recognizing them as Sītā’s ornaments. The gesture of his left hand suggests that he is asking Sugrīva for more details about the jewels. On the pilaster to the right of Sugrīva Hanumān with his right hand raised is seen, and probably is pointing out to Rāma where from the jewels were dropped.

Rāma’s demonstration of his strength and prowess in archery by suitting down with a single arrow seven Tāla trees at one stroke, to convince Sugrīva is depicted on the middle of the eastern wall of the mukhamāṇḍapa. The episode is depicted, as seen already, in the temples of Puṣpapagiri, Oṃtīṁṭṭa, Tirumala, Tirupati and other places. Rāma stands in tribhanga with his lightly string bow in his right hand and the arrow he as discharged is seen piercing through the seven Tāla or palm trees (it is Sāla in
other versions). Following the myth found in some of the regions variations of the Rāmāyana, the panel shows the Tāla trees standing on the back of a hooded serpent, whose head rises above the trees. On the pilaster to the left of the panel Lakṣmīmaṇḍapa is depicted observing his brother’s feat. On the other pilaster is an admiring Sugriva sands hailing the feat.

The next decisive event is the fight between Vāli and Sugrīva in which finally Vāli dies shot by the arrow of Rāma. In between the panel which depicts this episode and the episode described above, there are a few which represent Sugrīva challenging Vāli to a duel, Vali’s wife Tāra and the women of her harem, father Vāli and son Aṅgada, and Tāra’s efforts in rain to prevent Vāli from the fatal combat because of her apprehensions the episode of the fight is depicted in the mukhamanḍapa to the right of the kośṭhira. The panel shows the brothers fiercely wrestling each other. Their murderous excitement is indicated by their long tails raised over their heads. On the pilaster of the panel is seen Rāma is holding bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right hand, watching for the opportune moment to shoot his arrow. The panels are following the present one continuous to depict the duel, Vāli being struck by Rāma’s arrow. Another panel, found on the lower part of the southern wall of the mukhamanḍapa, shows Vāli, before succumbing to Rāma’s arrow which passes through his chest, giving his parting advice to Sugrīva who is seen seated before Vāli with upturned face listening to him. There is a hint of regret in the expression of his face, for what has happened. Two panels depict its aftermath. One of them shows the conversation between the dying Vāli and Rāma in which Rāma seems to be explaining and justifying his mode of action. The other panel shows Vāli lying in the lap of Tāra and Tāra holding the head of her dying husband with her right hand. Her raised left hand indicates her wailing.

A series of follow which depict Vāli’s crinimation, Sugrīva’s coronation as the king of Kīśkindha, Lakṣmīmaṇḍapa’s admonition of Sugrīva who has almost forgotten his promise of help to Rāma, Sugrīva’s realization, and groups of vānaras and their leaders sent in search of Śītā. Then comes the panel depicted at the top of western wall of the mukhamanḍapa, which shows Rāma seated on an elevated seat, his legs crossed, giving with his right hand signet ring for recognition and identification (āngulyakam). Rāma carries a bow in his left hand. Hanumān is seen standing, his
size some what shrunk, and his palms hold in put in reverence to the receive ring. This ‘ring’ episode, as noted already, is depicted in the temples at Pūşpagiri, Oṁtāṭṭa and Tirupati.

The search for Sītā by the vānaras begins in the right earnest. During they are unable to make any headway in their search, lose heart and bitterly regret their failure. Then they happen upon Swayaṁprabha in a cave where she does penance. From her they learn about the where about Sītā. She guides them to the seashore. This episode, which is based on the Bhāṣaṅa-Rāmāyaṇa, is depicted in a panel in Tāḍāpattī temple. It deserves notice because it is rarely elsewhere. The vānaras, Hanumān in particular, meet Sāmpathī, Jatayu’s elder brother, from whom they learn especially that Rāvaṇa has abducted Sītā and placed her in Lāṅka. This is another episode not generally depicted. In the southern wall of the mukhamandapa of the present temple there is a panel representing this episode. In it Hanumān is seen standing before the aged Sāmpathī and listening to him intently.

The Sundarākānda, regarded as the very heart of the Rāmāyaṇa, naturally given specially attention depicting in series of its episodes. Hanumān becomes the central figure. The first narrative panel, depicted at the top of the southern wall of the mukhamandapa, shows Hanumān standing on the seashore contemplating before he leaps high to cross, it to reach Lāṅka. The ocean depicted in the panel almost looks like a big pond in which fish of various kinds, tortoises, crabs and tidal waves are seen. Perhaps there is the suggesting that to Hanumān determined n the quest of Sītā, vast ocean appears to be no bigger than a pond. Having successfully crossed the ocean Hanumān enters the Lāṅka and begins his search for Sītā. The panel in the middle of the western wall of the mukhamandapa shows him on an elevated place looking at palatial structure. Next panel on the same wall the seen shifts to the Aśokavanam. In the first of its three parts Hanumān is shown perching on the top of the Aśoka tree and watch the seen below. In the second part wocbe gone Sītā under it in padmāśana. She holds a blade of grass in her right hand. In the third part the ten headed Rāvaṇa is seen holding a sword in his lower right hand, while his left appears to be making a threatening gesture towards Sītā. Placing the blade of grass to serve as a barrier between herself and Rāvaṇa, Sītā turns down all hopes and promises of happiness he
makes and warns him in stern language about the consequences trespass. The panel implicitly suggests this conversation between them.

The next two panels depict two significant occurrences. The first depicted in the middle of the western wall of the mukhamandapa, shows Hanumān respectfully giving Sīta with both of his hands Rāma’s ring to convince her that is Rāma’s messenger and also to assure her that before long she would be rescued (ṅgulīyakapradānam). Sīta seated in padmāsana under the Aśoka tree receives the ring with her right hand. The other panel depicted on the same wall at the top, shows Sīta giving her crest jewel (chūḍāmaṇī) to Hanumān who is on the point of receiving it reverentially with his hands. This jewel, which has rich personal associations for both her and Rāma, is given to Hanumān to be handed over to Rāma as a proof of Hanumān successfully finding Sīta and also of her abiding and unshaken in these panels in which she appears she is seen wearing a number of ornaments including a kirīṭa. This goes against Vālmiki’s account of Sīta in thee Aśokavana. Actually she drops virtually all her ornaments from above while being abducted by Rāvaṇa. It is these ornaments that the vānaras collect. Sīta, according to Vālmīki carefully preserves only the chūḍāmaṇī. The sculptor here has followed local versions of the story.

His mission accomplished Hanumān, before returns, deliberately destroys the Aśokavana to register his presence, and thus provoke the rākṣhasas to fight with him this is depicted a panel. In the next panel his capture by Indrajit is depicted. In Vālmīki’s Raṅgāvana Hanumān allows himself to be bound by the Brahmastra used by Indrajit. The sculpture here, following a later regional version, depicts Hanumān as being captured by the use of nāgastra. It shows Indrajit binding Hanumān’s tail with the help of this missile. The hood of the Nāga is also seen above his head. These two panels are found in lower part of the western wall of the mukhamandapa on the same wall in the top row is depicted Hanumān setting ablaze the entire city of Laṅkā with the flame of his burning tail. Another panel in the same place represents Hanumān’s return from Laṅkā to Rāma stationed at the Prasravana hill. In the first part of the panel of Rāma is seated in virāsana, while Lakṣmanā stands behind him. Rāma’s right hand is in abhaya-mudra. The second part shows Hanumān once again kneeling.
before Rāma, touching his feet with his head. Rāma for his pan touches Hanumān’s head reflectonately as a gesture of blessing him.

There is an episode depicted only in this Tāḍāpātri temple and nowhere else in the study region. It has also a touch of the comic about it. It is the episode of all the vānaras including Āṅgada and Hanumān plundering and virtually emptying the Madhvavana of Sugrīva, full of fruits and honey, disregarding totally the warning of the caretaker Dadhimukha. This happens after Hanumān’s successful return from Lakhā. This episode is covered in more than one panel. In one of them Hanumān himself is seen on a tree plucking the fruits and Āṅgada below catching them. The other panels show Hanumān and other vānaras going to meet Sugrīva and Rāma, which has already been referred. The Madhvavana episode is singled out here for particular mention because of its rare depiction.

After Rāma’s army crosses over to Laink after the bridge across the ocean is built (a separate panel depicts it) before the bank begins Rāna sends Āṅgada as his messenger to Rāvana to make the last effort to avoid a war. This episode of Āṅgada’s meeting Rāvana is depicted in the middle row of the western wall of the mukhamandapa. The panel shows the ten-headed Rāvana seated on a high pedestal. For want of space only ten of his hands are visible. Āṅgada is seated right in front of him. Following probably a local and version of the Rāmāyaṇa, Āṅgada is shown sitting on a seat higher than Rāvana’s formed by the coils of his own tail, to show that he is not given the seat appropriate to an ambassador the gestures of their hands clearly show that they are engaged in a heated argument. Āṅgada’s mission, as expected, fails.

The next important episode is the surrender of Vibhīṣaṇa to Rāma (Vibhīṣaṇa, Sāraṇāgatī). When Vibhīṣaṇa fails to discuss Rāvana from the ruin our war with Rāma, he seeks asylum under Rāma. It has already been pointed out how well this episode has been depicted in the Sāntānāmalleśvara temple at Puṣṭapagiri. It is carved in this temple at Tāḍāpātri, in the panel Rāma is seen seated on a pūlha cross-legged. To his right stands Hanumān who suggests to Rāma that he could grant asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa, while another vānara (probably it is Sugrīva) who is surprised at Rāma’s willingness to welcome Vibhīṣaṇa. Vibhīṣaṇa and his accompanying minister stand humbly facing Rāma.
Among the ups and downs of the war, Lakṣmaṇa falling into a swoon struck by Indrajit’s missile, and Hanumān bringing sanāttvani from the far off Himalayas to revive Lakṣmaṇa’s life, is an important episode. A panel on the southern wall in the mukhamandapa depicts it. It shows Hanumān still holding the mountain and the royal physician Sushena standing in front of him. Another panel shows the revival Lakṣmaṇa killing Indrajit. The most decisive event is the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa in which Rāvaṇa gets killed. Two panels depict this event. Both adversaries appear to be standing on pedestals. It is not clear whether the pedestal stand for chariots. In the first panel on one side of the pilaster, Rāma is seen holding in his left hand his tautly strung bow, and his right hand raised high suggesting that he has already released arrow. On the other side of the pilaster is Rāvaṇa seen, apparently sunk to the ground, and an arrow piercing through his neck and severing his head. In the second panel on either side of a pilaster the two enemies are seen. On one side Rāma stands with his bow in his left hand, and his right hand hangs loosely indicating that he has sent his arrow. On the other side, is Rāvaṇa fallen to the ground dying his several severed heads flying in the air. More importantly, the arrow shot by Rāma is seen piercing through his navel, and hitting the ‘āmṛtaabhūnda’ (jar of nectar) concealed there. As long as this jar remains intact, Rāvaṇa remain invincible. In depicting this situation the sculptor obviously has followed the Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa in Telugu.

After the war is over and victory won, Sītā is released from her captivity. A panel in the middle row of the eastern wall of the mukhamandapa shows Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā standing together Sītā has her hands folded. On the main beam across the doorway is a panel which depicts Sītā undergoing the ‘fire-test’ to establish her absolute and spotless purity by entering flaming fire. The two-head Agni, the god of fire, is seen emerging from the fire and handing over Sītā to Rāma who receives her by holding her left hand. Above them Indra on his elephant Airavata, Siva on his Nandi, the three-headed Brahma on his horses, and Dārāra, are seen showering flowers on them(pushpa-rīṣhṭi). Next to the gods are depicting Lakṣmaṇa and the vānaras.

The final panel represents the coronation of Rāma, who is back in Ayodhya. It shows Rāma and Sītā seated on a pīṭha, Hanumān with folded hands is seen kneeling
by their side. Viśvāmitra and Vasishtha are seen seated on separate pīṭhas. Sages like Gauṭama, Jāmbili and Kāśyapa, and Rāma’s brothers Lākṣmanā, Bharata, and Śatrughna, are seen standing on either side of the panel.

On the whole the panels maintain narrative continuity. A most noteworthy omission however in this elaborate narrative scheme is the meeting of Sabari and Rāma. It seems to be an oversight rather than a deliberate omission.

The Kālūgarāma temple at Penukonda (Anantapur district), in only next to the Chintala Veṅkataramaṇa temple at Tadipatri, in Rayalasemma presenting a very large number of Rāmāyanā panels. They are all rectangular and curved on the outer walls of the temple. The narrative panels here are not as elaborate as those in the Tadipatri temple, but by and large they appear more lively and graceful than their counterparts in the other temple. Even then one may feel that there is a certain monotony, repetitiveness, and lack of variety feature of certain sculptures. The episodes covered range from the pūtakāmeṣṭhit in Bālākāṇṭha to cchāṇanipradāmanu in Sundara-kāṇṭha. Why the remaining episodes were not covered, it is difficult to say or could they have been lost. It is risky to haggar an answer. As most of the episodes covered in the panels of this temple are found elsewhere, it should suffice here to refer to only some of the panels which depict important episodes, and to those which are rarely represented in the other temples.

On the western half of the southern wall of the temple is a panel which depicts the pūtakāmeṣṭhit performed by Daśaratha and his wives, under the guidance of Rishyasringa who is horse faced. Daśaratha and the pīṭhi are seated on the floor in padmāsana facing each other before the sacred fire off the hōma. The three wives of Daśaratha stand behind him respectfully watching the rising flames of the fire. Their hands are an añjali. They wear queenly ornaments, which Daśaratha wears kirītamukuta, kundāla and other royal ornaments. As they watch Agni emerges from the flames, and only his head is seen above the flames. Daśaratha receives a vessel from the fire-god. An adjacent panel shows a relaxed and happy Daśaratha and his three wives with their infant babies. All of them are sitting on the floor, and the mothers are seen feeding their infants. Their faces express their feelings of happiness and contentment. Another panel shows the growing sons of Daśaratha. They all stand
in dvibhaṅga and carry bows in their left hands and then right hands hang down freely. The princes wear ardhāruka, graivṛyakas, kuṇḍalas, kaṅkaṇas, kṛyāras, and pūdaṇvalayas.

Viśvāmitra approaching Daśaratha to send Rāma and Lākṣṭhamaṇa with him to the forest to guard his yāga is depicted in a panel. Viśvāmitra, his disciple, and Daśaratha are seen sitting on the floor cross-legged. Rāma and Lākṣṭhamaṇa stands respectfully behind their father. The sage is seen with his forefinger (tarjāni) raised to suggest that he is virtually commanding Daśaratha to send his sons. The king’s astonishment and fear at this is clearly brought out in the sculpture. Daśaratha wears kīrīṭa and the usual royal ornaments. His sons carry bows in their left hands. Viśvāmitra wears necklaces and bāhuvalayas (armlets) of beads. His hair is gathered into a tuft in the centre of his head. His disciple is dressed likewise. Viśvāmitra, his disciple, Rāma and Lākṣṭhamaṇa are depicted in a panel in which they are seen walking in a forest. Two trees depicted at either end of the panel suggest the forest. The disciple walks a head perhaps showing the way. He and Viśvāmitra carry a kāmalūla in their right hands, and a dāṇḍa on their left shoulders. Rāma and Lākṣṭhamaṇa walk behind them with strung bows in their left hands. Rāma’s forefinger is raised indicating that he is telling something to Lākṣṭhamaṇa who walks behind him.

Viśvāmitra’s partly encountering the she-demon Tāṭaka as their way is depicted in a panel. This episode is rarely depicted elsewhere. It is found on the prakāra wall of the Mallikārjuna temple in Śrīvidyālam. The panel in the Penukonda temple presents more details. Here Rāma stands in the front with his bow ready to discharge an arrow. Behind him stands the sage and seems to be giving instructions to him. Lākṣṭhamaṇa stands next to the sage, and does not seem to be interested in what is going on, probably because he is very sure of the outcome of the encounter with Tāṭaka. The demoness is seen stands in front of Rāma. Two of his arrows have already pierced her head and shoulder. She looks as of she is about to pounce upon Rāma. The panel here which represents the episode of Rāma and Lākṣṭhamaṇa guarding the yāga of Viśvāmitra is slightly different from its counterpart in the temples at Tirumala and Tadipatri, in depicting the disrupting the yāga, defiling and polluting the holy altar. Here three rather than two asuras as in the other temples are seen flying in the air directly above the altar, trying to dirty the place. One of them carries a sword.
in his hand. Interestingly all the three whole flying have their heads turned downwards to suggest that they can fly in any direction, plunge down or soar high if need be. Rāma who stands to the left of the altar has taken his stance, ready to send out a missile with his tautly strung bow. Lākṣṇmaṇa stands in dvībhaṅga behind him holding his own bow with his left hand. Both Rāma and Lākṣṇmaṇa in the panel wear a variety of ornaments. The Ahalya panel differs from its counterparts in the Kōḍanda Rāma temple at Tirupati and the Taḍḍipatri temple in that the redeemed Ahalya who emerges from the boulder is seen only from her waist upwards. The rest of the body is still within the rock. Of course she holds her palms in ṣāṅjali. As in other panels Rāma’s right foot touches the rock. Both he and Lākṣṇmaṇa, who stands behind him, carry their bows in their left hands. Both wear princely ornaments. Viśwāmitra’s left hand seems to point to the emerging Ahalya. The raised forefinger of Rāma’s right hand perhaps expresses his surprise.

A panel shows Viśwāmitra and king Janaka sitting on elevated seats or pīṭhas and engaged in conversation. The pīṭha on which the sage sits is slightly higher than Janaka’s probably to indicate the special respect that the king has for the sage. Rāma and Lākṣṇmaṇa stand to that rear of Viśwāmitra. It is surmised that Janaka in this panel is explaining the term covering the svayamvara of his daughter Viśvāmitra. This episode is not generally represented sculpturally elsewhere. The next panel depicts an important episode, namely Rāma breaking the impregnable bow of Śiva, which enables him to win the hand of Sīva. The Taḍḍipatri panel does not depict this episode as virtually as the present one does. The episode is also depicted more than once in the Gōvindārjuna temple, Tirupati. The Penukonda panel brings out convincingly the enormously of the task and the determination with which Rāma performs it. He is seen in the act of trying to string the bow with his right hand, while his left hand is seen exerting pressure on the bow to bend it, with the support of his bent but firmly planted left foot. Both Janaka and Viśwāmitra are seen watching the act with expectations. Lākṣṇmaṇa stands at the rear watching the scene.

The very popular episode of the wedding of Rāma as Sīta, depicted in the temples of Tirupati, Tirumala, Puṣṭhapātī, Taḍḍipatri and other possible places, also sculptured in a panel in the Penukonda temple. What distinguishes this panel from most others is that it focuses entirely on the sacred ritual of kanyādāna, not mere
pānigrahaṇa. The popular amusement of talaḥṭaḷu is left out. One sees in the
panel Janaka and his wife standing, next to them in the same row, Sītā and Rāma, and
after them the hands of Rāma. Janaka is seen holding vessel obvious containing water
to be ritualistically poured into Rāma’s hands as kanyādāna. All of them are
appropriately dressed for the occasion. The Sītā Rāma kalyāṇam panel is followed by
a few which cover Kaikēyi’s temptation by the hunchback Manthara, Daśaratha’s
helpless yielding to the obstinate demands of Kaikēyi, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmī
going to the forest as exiles and their happily setting down at Paṇḍhavaṇī. These are
found on the western outer wall of the temple.

A very important episode following their exile is Bharata’s bringing Rāma’s
pādukas with him to Ayodhya, to coronate them, and to function as his deputy. In the
panel at Tādipatri, Bharata brings the Pāduka on an elephant with all royal honours.
Here at Penukoṇḍa, Bharata himself carries them on his head reverentially, supporting
them with his hands, consistent with his character and conscience. The Pāduka
episode does not appear to have been sculptured in any other temple in Rayalaseema.
This episode and several others which follow it till Rāma’s meeting of Sabari are
found on the outer wall of the sanctum and antarāla. Another rarely depicted episode
which, however finds a place at Penukoṇḍa, is the killing of the menacing asura
Virudha in Daṇḍahāraṇya by Rāma. The panel has two parts. At one end Sītā is seen
complaining to Rāma, who has just them returned to their hut, about the evil asura. In
the other section Rāma is seen quickly walking away in the opposite direction
shooting his arrow at the demon. The swiftly shot severs his head and virtually
sweeps away the mutilated body, like a wind-swept leaf. There is a unique panel in
this temple which does not have a counterpart in any of the temples in the study
region. Therefore it deserves special appreciation. It shows Sītā’s right foot resting on
Rāma’s left knee, and Rāma is seen trying to remove a thorn from her foot with a
sharp pin-like stick. This tender situation speaks volumes about their relationship.
There is no textual source for this episode which is not found in any of the known
Rāmāyaṇa. Some find the sculpting of this episode artistically not satisfactory.

The Śurpanakha episode her mutilation by Lakṣmīna, and as a sequel the
killing of Khara, Dushana, and Trisira, by Rāma-is depicted already in the Tādipatri
temple, is depicted in the present temple too, but with limited details. But an addition
made here is that the panel shows Rāma shoots his arrow against Marīchita with such tremendous force that it flings him to a far off place. The panel shows the asura flying in the air, his legs and hands outstretched, and hair disheveled, and indicates the speed at which he is being thrown away. With what force Rāma discharging his arrow is also suggested, in the panel by the fact that his utarpa (upper cloth) is seen slipping down from his left shoulder. There are in this temple panels depicting the appearance of the golden deer to temple Sita at Pancavati, Lakṣmīna being urged by Sīta to go to Rāma’s help, and Rāvana disguised as a mendicant approaching Sīta for bhikṣa. The panel in which Jatāyu is showing doing his best to present Rāvana from abducting Sīta, the huge bird appears right in front of the horse and stops the chariot. Panels elsewhere on this episode show Jatāyu pecking at Rāvana’s leg or the hand of the charioteer.

The Penukonda temple seems to be the only place in Rayalaseema to depict the Kabandha episode, and therefore requires to be taken note of. Otherwise it is not as significant as the episodes preceding or following it. When Rāma and Lakṣmīna are wandering in Dandakaranya, searching for Sīta, they are attacked by Kabandha, an ugly monstrous demon who looked like a mere headless trunk, as his head and thigh had been thrust into his trunk he was actually a gandharva under a curse. Rāma slays with his arrows. Once demon is killed, from his body emerges the heavenly being freed from the curse, and salutes Rāma with gratitude.

Following closely the Kabandha panel appears another which depicts one more episode, which does not seem to have been sculptured in the temples of the study region. The meeting of Rāma and aged Sabari and her hospitality to him is a well known and memorable episode. During their anxious search for Sīta, Rāma and Lakṣmīna come to Sabari’s hut. The panel in the temple shows her offering fruits, which she had carefully preserved, to Rāma and Lakṣmīna. Another woman is also seen in the panel. Both women stand before the brothers with folded hands. On the northwestern wall of the mukhamandapa this episode is depicted once again.

The panel which represents the episode of Rāma knocking down the seven Sāla tree with a single arrow, shows him aiming his arrow at the trees, which are in a row. Sugrīva, Lakṣmīna, Hanumān and a few others are also seen. The sculptor has
followed the Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa in depicting this scene and hence there is no serpent. Panels depicting the fight between Vāli and Sugrīva, the death of Vāli killed by Rāma’s arrow, Rāma consoling the bereaved Tārā, and Hanumān being sent as Sītā’s quest by Rāma, and other episodes appear in the temple. These episodes are sculptured in the other temples too. The sculptural depiction of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes in this temple ends with panels depicting Hanumān receiving the chūḍāmāṇi from Sītā and handing it over respectfully to Rāma later. It has been suggested that the Penukoṭḍa panels appear to have been partly inspired by the Tāḍāpātri panels.

While they are all engaging, they are lacking in variety, as pointed out earlier.

**Balarāmāvatāra**

In the order of the Daśavatāra the Balarāmāvatāra precedes the Kṛiṣhṇāvatāra. But he never acquired the kind of importance or influence or popularity that the avatāras, preceding or following, achieved. Very rarely he is worshipped in separate and independent shrines. In the Jagannātha temple in Puri (Orissa) Balarāma finds a place in the sanctum along with Kṛiṣhṇa and Subhadra. In the temples of South Indi, he is always represented along with Kṛiṣhṇa, supposedly his younger brother, who might he said to have almost eclipsed him. In mythology, Balarāma is regarded as the incarnation of Śeṣa himself, the great serpent who forms the conch of Viṣṇu, and who is also said to bear the burden of Mother Earth. An incident narrated in the Harivanaśa, which is regarded as an Appendix to the Mahābhārata, associates Balarāma with the world of the Nāgas and serpents. In mythological narratives he is always seen in the company of Kṛiṣhṇa standing by him and supporting him in many of his encounters with the asuras. In two episodes however, namely the destruction of Dhūṇukāsura and the annihilation of Pralāṅkāsura, Balarāma plays the leading role. Once Balarāma, Kṛiṣhṇa and their associates went to a rich palm-grove where Dhūṇukāsura lived, to taste the palm-fruits. In the ensuing fierce encounter with the asura who had the form of a huge monstrous donkey, Balarāma caught hold of him by his four legs, spun him round and round, and threw him dead on the palm trees. In a like episode, in which Kṛiṣhṇa remained in the background, Balarāma killed Pralāṅkāsura. This sinister asura disguised as an innocent cowherd by joined Rāma, Kṛiṣhṇa and others in an exciting sport. He carried Balarāma away high into the sky where he revealed his real mountainous form. Balarāma, inspired by Kṛiṣhṇa,
increased his own weight to such an extent that Pralamba was unable to bear it collapsed on the ground. Then Balarāma trampled upon him to end his life once for all.

Various texts have described Balarāma’s appearance and how he should be represented. According to the Agnipurāṇa, for examples he should be shown as well-built, carrying in his right hand a haleta (plough-share; and hence he is also called Haladhara) and a gada in his left. If he is represented as a four-handed figure, he should hold a conch and a pestle in his other two hands The Bṛhat Saṁhitā and the Viśnudharmottara also have then descriptions of Balarāma, which slightly differ. But all of them invariably make him hold a haleta in his right hand.

Scattered images of Balarāma found in some parts of North India are now preserved in the museums at Lucknow, Gwalior, and Allahabad reminiscent of the Dhenukasarurava episode. In a few temples of Rayalaseema there are a few sculptural representations of Balarāma. On a pillar of the high-pillared vihāra of the mahāmaṇḍapa of the Soumyanātha temple at Nandalū in Kapada district (pl.143), there is a beautiful carrying a Balarāma. He is seen standing in samabhāṅga carrying a plough-share (haleta) in his right hand. His left hand hangs down loosely. He wears hāras, graiveyakas, udarabandha, kēyūras, makuta, purupraka, and rājaṃpatvīta. Two samples of Balarāma are found on the pillars of the kalviṇa-maṇḍapa and the maṇḍapa of the Chennakēśava temple in Somapalėm (Chittoor district). In the mukhamaṇḍapa of the Naṭyāyanavanam temple (Chittoor district) there is a figure of Balarāma who stands with his feet apart and holds a plough in his upraised right hand as if he is in the act of using it as a martial weapon against an adversary. The image of Balarāma in the Daśavatāra sculpture in the Raṅga-maṇḍapa of the Tirumala temple shows him as standing in dvībhāṅga. He is two-armed and hold the haleta in his right hand. His left hand is placed at kati, instead of the gada as prescribed by the Agnipurāṇa. He wears the usual princely ornaments beginning with kirītiamakuta, graiveyakas, armlets, girdle with a lotus design on it etc. In the small shrine of Kṛiṣṇa in the Padmāvatī temple at Tiruchanur (Chittoor district), in which there is also an image of Balarāma seated virāśana, facing the idol of Kṛiṣṇa.

The Buddha figures as the ninth avatāra of Viśnu in the Daśavatāra group. Opinion is divided about his claim to be an avatāra among different sects of the Hindus. The Purānas themselves are not unanimous regarding Buddha’s avatārahood.
The Bhāgavata-purāṇa includes him among the Daśāvatāra of Viṣṇu. The Chālukyas and Hoyasalas regarded him as an avatāra and so he appears in all their Daśāvatāra figures. In the study region there is a solitary instance of the Buddhavatāra carved as a pillar in the mukhamandapa of the Kōndālanāṇa temple at Chandragiri (Chittoor). Here Buddha is seated in padmaśana with his right hand placed in vyakyāna-mudra and his left hand is placed on his lap in yōga-mudra. His hair is gathered into a tuft above the head. Usually Buddha is depicted as a seated yōgin rapt in dhyāna, with his hands placed in his lap in yōga-mudra.

Kṛiṣṇāvatāra

The Kṛiṣṇāvatāra is without a doubt the most fascinating of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu. In popularity this avatāra and the previous Rāmāvatāra, seems to view with each other, such being their appeal to and sway over the minds of people all over the country for centuries. Both are purāṇavatāras. Like all the avatāra of Viṣṇu, the Kṛiṣṇāvatāra too taken place in active response to an earnest appeal made to Viṣṇu by Mother Earth (Bhumā) to rid the world of wickedness and wicked people. It is said in the Agnipurāṇa that Hari was born as the son of Deva to relieve the earth oppressed by Deva. The Harivaṃsa, the Viṣṇupurāṇa, the Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa, and the Śrīmadbhāgavata give detailed accounts of the lives of Kṛiṣṇa and his brother Balarāma. The tenth skanda of the Bhāgavata describes why the Kṛiṣṇāvatāra took place. Unable to endure the atrocities of the Daityas who were disturbing the everyday life of the pious and the good, Mother Earth in the form of a cow approach the four-faced Brahma for succour. Brahma Śaṅkara, and Indra and all the gods all together went to Viṣṇu in Vaikuṇṭha, to seek his help. Having listened to their tale of woe and appeal, Viṣṇu promised that he would be born soon among the Yādava to rid the world of evil-doers. During his in incarnation as Kṛiṣṇa, Viṣṇu gives the resounding assurance to all mankind that he would be born again and again to protect the pious and virtuous and to annihilate the wicked (The Gita, IV, 8).

The Kṛiṣṇāvatāra distinguishes itself from all the other avatāras of Viṣṇu in some respects. Kṛiṣṇa’s personality has several dimensions, and appropriately many and varied are his roles and activities. His range of influence is much vaster than that of any other incarnation. His life is very closely and intimately allied with the lives of ordinary people in their everyday lives. But what is most distinguishing about him is
that not only does he combine the divine and human in himself, as most incarnation do, but he is, unlike Raṅga (Vālmīki visualised him) fully and always aware that he is Viṣṇu / Nārāyaṇa who is on earth to play certain roles and fully certain specific purposes. His appeal has been to the young and old, men and women of all age groups, because there is completeness about his life. In the words of Champakalakshmi, “A continuous picture of playfulness (ilas), of supreme wisdom revealed in an effortless way and of preflect detachment in the middle of a typical human life, is afforded in this incarnation. This explains the fear appeal that Kṛṣṇa has to the common man and the saint both of whom picture him in as many forms as his mysterious ways depict him- the mischievous playful child, the sporting youth, the great teacher, and the highest goal or Bhagavat”¹¹¹.

The figure, the person, and the Divine incarnate that devout worshippers, poets, painters, sculptors and others have known was the result of a synthesis of several strands of myths, legends and ideas over a period of time. It is not quite certain when exactly the worship of Kṛṣṇa began. It is conjectured that it “must have been prevalent a couple of centuries before the beginning of the Christian era”. What is certain, however, is that Kṛṣṇa too like Raṅga before him was “a deified hero... round whom several legendary tales were woven”. The origin of the Kṛṣṇa myth is traced back Kṛṣṇa-Āṇgirasa, a renowned seer in the Rig-veda. In the Chandogyanpanishad Kṛṣṇa is mentioned as the pupil of Ghora Āṇgirasa¹¹². It is view of A.D. Pusalkar, to which Champakalakshmi alludes, that “it is only in the Mahābhārata Kṛṣṇa Dēvakiṣṭu emerges, first in the role of a human hero, religious teacher and counselor of the Punjabhas, and is later gradually raised to the level of a divinity and even identified with Brahman”¹¹³.

The myths and legends about Kṛṣṇa are legion. His boyish pranks and his feats as cowherd all seems to have emerged when he was transformed into an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Beside the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and Puranic works narrate his stories. The Matsya-purāṇa, Agnī-purāṇa, Viṣṇupurāṇa, and the Bhāgavata-purāṇa “not only narrate the stories but give important iconographic details”. The figure of Kṛṣṇa pervades the Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. Together all the Purāṇas treat the life of Kṛṣṇa exhaustively¹¹⁶. It is no wonder that the believing and devout creative artist, the sculptor in particular, has endless scope
and inexhaustible material to work on. Beginning from his birth in prison as the child of Dēvuki and Vāsudeva, his being transported to Gokula a cowherd settlement to be brought up with loving care by Nanda and Yaśoda, through the many stages of his long enchanting and eventful life many facets from infancy onwards, during which his human and divine attributes all became manifest, till he chooses to end his earthly life, all have been given expression to in poetry, painting sculpture and other arts all over India.

"Through the cult images of Kṛiṣṇa make their appearance very late, Kṛiṣṇa-vatīrṇa itself seems to have been popular from the Gupta Period, just as it happened in the case of Rāma," observes Kalpana Desai. What is unique about Kṛiṣṇa is that his feats and exploits as an infant still in the cradle, as child, and as cowherd boy playing tricks and pranks on others are given "prime importance". Interestingly the Mahābhārata, which dwells at great length on Kṛiṣṇa’s life and activities, does not dwell as "Krishnālīla", whereas the Harivāṅga gives a detailed account of it. The Bhāgavatapurāṇa follows it greatly in this respect. When it came to sculptural representation, not all the childhood stories of Kṛiṣṇa and his brother Balarāma were chiselled, only those episodes regarded as important and favoured popularity were chosen and represented. For example, in the famous Dāśāvatāra temple at Deogarh (Jhansi district), "there are nearly eight panels which are the earliest sculptural evidence of the popularity of the Kṛiṣṇa story". One panel shows Dēvaki handing over her new born son Kṛiṣṇa to Vāsudeva who in turn hands over the infant to Nanda. In the other panels one finds Nanda and Yaśoda founding the infants Balarāma and Kṛiṣṇa, the child Kṛiṣṇa killing Sakatāsura, the growing boy Kṛiṣṇa killing Kāṃśa, and similar episodes depicted. Onwards, during which his divine and human attributes all become manifest, till he chooses to end his earthly life, all have been represented in sculpture and painting, all over India.

In the Andhra country sculptural representation of the Kṛiṣṇa there appeared first in the 7th A.D. Temples at Alamāpur of that time carry Kṛiṣṇa reliefs, and can be seen even today.

There are in Rayalaseema a number of temples in which there are sculptural depiction of figures of Kṛiṣṇa episodes from his life, too many to be counted. Among
them are the temples at Tirumala, Tirupati, Tiruchanur, Srínavsā Maṅgāpuram, Chandragiri Fort, Śrīkālahasti, Nārāyaṇavanam, Nāgalāpuram, Kārvētnagaram, Pūtalapattu, Oṅṭimitta, Attūla, Puṣṭhapagiri, Siddhavatam, Vallīr, Sānnapālem, Tādipatri, Penukonda, and others. A majority of the panels are concerned with 'bālālas', episodes in Kṛṣṇa's childhood and boyhood. They appear in both Vaishnava and Śaiva temple, though naturally more in the former. They are found mostly on pillars in the temples. It is somewhat unusual that while Kṛṣṇa as an āvātāra of Viṣṇu is universally worshipped and devotion to Kṛṣṇa is very extensive, there are few shrines in the study area chiefly dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, where Kṛṣṇa is the main deity in the sanctum. In the neighbouring Tamil Nadu there are numerous temples dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, of which the most outstanding are the Pārthasārathī temple in Trichinopoly in Madras (now Chennai), and the temple of Śrī Rājagopala in Mannargudi (Tanjavur district). In the study region, there is an impressive and important temple dedicated to Vaiṣṇavī, a form of Kṛṣṇa, in Kārvētnagaram (Chittoor district). This seems to be the only temple of this kind in this area. A peculiar type of Kṛṣṇa with only two hands in vāradi pose, seated on a pedestal along with Balarāma by his side is worshipped at Tiruchanur near Tirupati. The Pārthasārathī shrine in the Gōvindarāja temple in Tirupati appears to have been the chief shrine in the temple complex at one time before the shrine of Gōvindarāja was added and became the most important shrine there. As a result the shrine of Pārthasārathī has become now secondary. Moreover, for some reason, if had been closed for a considered time till it was reopened in recent years for public worship.

There is a conspicuous difference believe the panels of Rāmāvataīar and Kṛṣṇāvataīar in the study area regarding their depiction. While the sculptural representations of the Kṛṣṇāvataīar outnumber those of Rāmāvataīar, most of them are stray figures and episodes drawn from the Bhāgavata stories. No attempt seems to have been made to represent successive episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life from first to last. Their focus, as noted earlier, is on the early life of Kṛṣṇa. In the case of the Rāmāyana panels, at least two temples (Tādipatri and Penukonda) are outstanding in that they attempt a sequential narration of the entire story of Rāma through depiction of successive episodes from Rāma's birth to his coronation. For their very reason, in the earlier pages of this chapter while considering the Rāmāyana panels in the study
area, the temples depicting them were taken one after another for comment. First the stray panels in them were examined. Afterwards the sequential narrative panels of Tādipatri and Penukonda temples were taken up. In the case of the Krīṣṇa panels, it seems more convenient to consider them figure/ situation/ episode-wise, rather than temple-wise for reasons already explained. Most of them seem to have been chosen at random for their popular appeal rather than for any connected narration. The inspiration for the depiction of all of them is of course devotion to Krishna, the Supreme Divine.

The following are the figure, situations, and episodes about Krīṣṇa depicted in the several temples of Rayalaseema: The infant Krīṣṇa in the -cradle, Krīṣṇa as Vaṭapatrasāyi or Saṇṭhānagāpāla, the child Krīṣṇa on all fours moving on his hands and knees, Pūranavadhā, child Krīṣṇa as thief of butter (Navaṇīchārōha), dancing in delight (Navaṇīnātāya), and sometimes teasing a Gōpika. While she is at the churn, Yamalarjunabhāṅga, Saṅaṭēṣuravadha, Vaṭśāṣuravadha, Bakāṣuravadha, Kāliyamardana, Krīṣṇa with the gōpikas and Kāśālī, Gōpikāvastrāpaharana, Gōvardhana-mūyiridādana, Kuvālayāpādana, Kuhjavimōchana, Chandramardana, Krīṣṇa as Veṇugōpāla or Gana-gōpāla, etc. These and others are considered one after another in the following pages as they are depicted in the several Rayalaseema temples.

Figures of Krīṣṇa in his infancy and early childhood are carved in abundance in the temples of the study area. Usually they are found on pillars, walls, adhishāna, door-jambs, and inside niches. To begin with infant Krīṣṇa in the cradle, there is a figure carved on a pillar in the mukhamāṇḍapa of the Koṇḍaṇḍarāma temple in Tirupati. The infant Krīṣṇa is seen lying on his back in the cradle. His right leg is bent at the knee, and placed on his left thigh. His right arm rests on this right leg while his left arm supports his head resting on a pillar. Two women, probably mother Yaśōḍa and a Gōpika, stand on either side of the cradle holding its chains and rocking it. Their hair-style and dress are appropriate to their status.

The Vaṭapatrasāyi form of Krīṣṇa, known widely since the time of the Ālvārs of Tamilnadu, who adore extensively this form in their hymns, is remarkable for its association with the form of Nārāyaṇa /Viṣṇu lying on the milky ocean. As child
Krishna is worshipped in this form also to obtain children and prosperity, he is also known as Santanagopala. Vaṭapratrasāyi is represented as a nude baby lying in his back on a huge banyan leaf, leaf of the sacred Aśvattha tree, sucking his right big toe. Carvings of Vaṭapratrasāyi are found on a pillar of the Chitrakūṭa-mandapa of the Govindaṇaṇa temple, a pillar of the mahāmaṇḍapa of the Koḍandaraṇa temple, and on the door-jamb of the entrance gopura of Alipiri, all in Tirupati. They are also found on a pillar of the mukha maṇḍapa of the Soumyanātha temple at Nandallūr, and on a pillar of the mahāmaṇḍapa of the Koḍandaraṇa temple at Oṭṭumitta. There is a remarkably beautiful painting of Vaṭapratrasāyi on the ceiling of the nātya maṇḍapa of the Virabhadra temple in Lepākṣi. In this painting child Krishna is seen lying on a vaṭapatra, exuberantly adorned with strings of pearls on all parts of his body. The complexion of the child’s body is sky-blue, to his name. The eyes of the infant are so bewitchingly painted that he seems to be looking at the viewer no matter from what direction he looks at the painting.

There are several figures of Bālakrishna (as district from the infant in the cradle or Vaṭapratrasāyi) in the temples of Rayalascema. In quite a few of them the child Krishna is shown crawling on all fours and sometimes carrying a ball of butter in his right hand, sometimes dancing with joy for having secured a ball of butter, and in one or two instances standing. In the Tirumala temple on a pillar in front of the Sanātanaḥnabhaṇḍara there is a figure of Bālakrishna carved, in which the child is plumb and burly and has a mischievous smile. He is beautifully ornamented, and his hair is done up with a row of floral pendants. A more or less similar sculpture is found on a pillar on the mukha maṇḍapa of the Koḍandaraṇa temple of Tirupati. In the Vēdanaṇāyanana temple at Nāgālāpuram (Chittoor district), there are two figures of Bālakrishna. On the outer south gopura of the temple there is a beautiful image of Bālakrishna on all fours. The child Krishna’s left leg in this depiction is raised backward indicating the child’s movement. Therefore probably there is no ball of butter in his hands. The other Bālakrishna figure in this temple is found on a pillar of the northern corridor around the garbhagriha. In this figure the child is slightly grown up. He is nude, and stands on samabhāgīta, and is seen holding his ears with his hands, probably as punishment for some mischief of his. His head is adorned with a small bun-shaped hair-knot above. In the Lākṣmī Narasimha temple at Kādiri (Anantapur District), there are two carvings of Bālakrishna on fours on the different
pillars in the mukhamandapa of the temple. In appearance and ornamentation they are similar to the depictions elsewhere. In one of them Kṛṣṇa is seen with a ball of butter in his right hand and in the act of eating it. On the same pillar a couple of feet above this figure, there is also a depiction of the infant Kṛṣṇa in the cradle flanked by two women. On another pillar is Balakṛṣṇa on all fours, and carries no ball of butter (pl.144).

One of Balakṛṣṇa’s earliest feats which demonstrate that he is no ordinary human child but super human is his killing of Pūtana (Pūtana-vadha) when he was still a suckling child. This Bhāgavata episode is well-known. Sent by Kaṁsa, Pūtana (also called Pūtaki), a she-demon and a notorious infanticide to kill his arch enemy child Kṛṣṇa, comes to Nanda’s house disguised as a beautiful damsel. Under the pretext of fondling the baby Kṛṣṇa in the cradle she takes him to her poisonous breast as a wet nurse would, to suckle him to death. But instead of being poisoned to death, the child Kṛṣṇa saps away the demoness’s very life. Caught in the throes of death Pūtana reveals her identity as a ghastly she-demon. Panels of this episode are found in the Gōvindaṭṭa temple in Tirupati, and the temples at Tirumala, Tadipatri, Oṇṭimitta and Penukonda.

In the Gōvindaṭṭa temple (Tirupati) there are two representations of the Pūtana episode. One panel is found on the interior door-jamb of the entrance gopura of the temple. Pūtana is shown in her true colours, huge, ugly and grotesque with sagging breasts to suggest that her life is being sapped away. The panel depicts vividly the busy and disheveled hair of Pūtana, and also the terror and agony of approaching death. The second representation of this episode is found on the stone basement of the second entrance gopura of the temple. The depiction is very similar to the first panel. In either panels, the child Kṛṣṇa is seen lying comfortably on Pūtana’s lap sucking away her life.

On a pillar of the mandapa near the entrance gopura of the Tirumala temple there is a representation of the Pūtana-Kṛṣṇa episode. The demoness in the panel is seen with a smile as she has successfully tricked the infant Kṛṣṇa episode to her bosom. Kṛṣṇa too is seem reclining on her left lap holding her breast with his hand, and smiling mischievously as if he has seen through her sinister designs. But the she
demon’s body, as depicted here, is all skeleton and her hair all raffled probably this is intended to suggest what becomes of Pūtana once the boy sucks away her life.

The Chintala Veṅkaṭaramaṇa temple (Tāḍāpātri), famous for its Kṛmaṇya narrative panels, also has a number of Kṛṣṇalīla panels, too. In the Pūtanavadha panel on this temple, the demoness is seated on a puṭha suckling the baby Kṛṣṇa who is comfortably placed in her lap. The intense agony and terror of approaching death Pūtana experiences as her life is sucked away by there divine child is vividly brought out in the sculpture. Her raised forehead suggests her agony. The Kṛdaṇḍaraṇa temple, which also has a series of Kṛmaṇya panels, has some Kṛṣṇalīla panels too. In the well-chiseled Pūtana-Kṛṣṇa panel in this temple, Pūtana disguised as a very beautiful and charming woman with the baby Kṛṣṇa in her arms, is seen standing at the extreme left. At the other end the infant Kṛṣṇa is sucking away the life of the she-demon who row is seen in her time form. In between stands a woman, probably anxious Yaśoda, who terrified by the development, is trying to seize the child away from Pūtana. This panel is found on the southern wall of the garbhagṛihā. The panel on this episode in the Kṛdaṇḍaraṇa temple in Oṭṭināṭṭa (Kadapa district) found on a pillar in the mukhamanḍapa, shows Pūtana seated on a puṭha and baby Kṛṣṇa avidly sucking away at her breast, which he grasps with his hands. Pūtana’s head is seen thrown backward and her eyes appear wide and terrified. She still seems to retain outwardly her disguised form of a respectable woman.

Kṛṣṇa’s love of freshly churned butter, which he would not hesitate to steal it need be, and dance with joy is proverbial. And hence he is known as “Navanīta Kṛṣṇa” “Navanītachātra and Navanīta-narāyaṇa Kṛṣṇa” several of his pranks in his early life are associated with his incorrigible love of milk, curd and butter and the tricks he places on Yaśoda and other mischievous. This aspect of Kṛṣṇa appears to have fascinated the temple sculptors of the study area. There is a hardly a temple which does not have a figure of Navanīta Kṛṣṇa sculpted. In fact some of them have more than one.

The Śrī Veṅkaṭeswara temple at Tirumala has a few interesting Bhāgavata panels. But there does not seem to be a sculpted figure of Navanīta Kṛṣṇa. In the sanctum however there is a marvelous image of Navanīta-Nāyika-Kṛṣṇa is seen as a
three-year old dancing child with his left leg bent slightly as the knee and resting on a lotus pedestal. His right leg is raised to an angle and gracefully bent at the knee. He has a ball of butter in his right hand. His left hand stretched out parallel to the floor below, suggest together the ecstasy of a dancing child. He is also adorned with a number of jewels all over.

The Gōvindarāja temple as Tirupati has five sculptural panels of Navanīta Kṛiṣṇa on the interior hall of the second gopura gateway is representation of Kṛiṣṇa stealing butter. He is seen standing on a mortar to reach the pot of butter suspended from the ceiling with ropes. While he is at it a few milkmaids (gōpikas) stand near by observing him unnoticed by him. There is a second panel on the adhiṣṭāna of the second gopura of this temple. Here the naughty child Kṛiṣṇa is seen being punished by Yāsoda for stealing butter. She holds a rope to bind him. Her right hand is in tarjani or sīchī. Mischievous Kṛiṣṇa holds his ears and his knees are bent a little as part of his punishment. A third panel found on a pillar of the kalyāṇa-manḍapa of the same temple shows the Naranīcchāra seated on a pedestal trying to steal butter from a pot. His left hand is thrust into the pot. He appears calm and unperturbed though engaged in stealing. Yet another panel on a pillar in the same kalyāṇa-manḍapa, shows Kṛiṣṇa Kneeling and eating butter with his right hand which is applied to his mouth. His left hand holds the pot firmly. He appears a little anxious lest he should be caught while stealing. A slightly different panel of Navanīta Kṛiṣṇa is sculptured on the inner wall of the entrance gopura of the Gōvindarāja temple. The panel presents a churning scene in Gōkula. A Gōkula is seen working her churn with ropes, whom child Kṛiṣṇa is seen of obstructing by holding firmly the churning stick. He appears to be demanding some fresh butter from her. Another gōpika is seen behind the churning woman. Behind these for woman are seen a woman milking a cow, and a cow and a calf.

The Kōdaṇḍarāma temple in Tirupati has an instance of Kṛiṣṇa stealing butter depicted on a pillar of the mahāmanḍapa. The child Kṛiṣṇa is seen standing on an elevated pedestal and reaching out to the ropes which serve as a sling and hold the bowl of butter. While gripping the ropes he also looks back anxiously if any one is watching him. The Padmāvathi temple at Tiruchanur has two panels of Navanīta Kṛiṣṇa depicted on two different pillars of the kalyāṇa-manḍapa. In one of them
Krishna is seen seated, and eating butter with the right hand and holding the butter pot with the left. There is a contented look on his face. In the other example, it is the Navanita nritya Krishna that is depicted. He is seen dancing ecstatically. A ball of butter is in his rind and his left hand is stretched parallel to the floor. As in dance his right leg in raised to the level of the knee and the left leg is firmly placed as the ground. He is adorned with two hair knots, one above the other.

The Kalyana Venkatéswara temple at Śrīnivāsa Maigāpuram in the neighbourhood of Tirupati, has three figures of the child Krishna eating butter. One of them is depicted on the southern wall of the prakāra of the temple. Here Krishna is seated comfortably and eating butter with his right hand. He is adorned with elaborate locks of hair. Yāsodā too is seen in the panel as if she is warning the mischievous boy. On a pillar of the mahāmanḍapa of the temple is depicted another figure of the child Krishna. He is seated on a pedestal, and seen eating butter with his left hand and holding the butter pot with his right hand. On another pillar of the same manḍapa one finds one more example of Navanīta Krishna seated on a pedestal. His left hand is put inside the butter pot while the right hand is ready to receive the ball of butter taken out. His hair locks appear disheveled, probably because of his energetic activity.

The Kapiléswara temple in Kapilathīram near Tirupati, a Śaiva temple, has on a pillar of its mukhamanḍapa, a figure of Navanītanrīta Krishna. The dancing figure is ecstasy very much similar to the one at Tiruchanur. The Bhimeswara temple at Putalapattū (Chittoor district), also a Śaiva temple, has an example of the butter-loving dancing Krishna. As elsewhere he carries a ball of butter in his right hand while his left hand is stretched parallel to the ground, indicating a dance posture. He wears a number of ornaments generally worn by children.

The Vedanārāyanā temple at Nagalāpuram has on pillar of its northern corridor encircling the garbhagriha, a figure of butter stealing child. Here the nude child Krishna is seen in the act of stealing butter from a pot, anxiously turning his face backwards to see if any one is watching him. Another Navanītachōra Krishna is depicted on a pillar in the mukhamanḍapa of the Soumyanātha temple in Nandalur (Kaṭapa district). The panel shows Yāsodā at the churn, operating the ropes of the churn with both her hands. While her attention is fixed on churning, Krishna is seen
stealing taking some butter from the pot nearby. Yasoda wears ornaments appropriates to her status. Her hair is gathered into a knot and fixed to the right of her head.

The entrance mandapa of the Chandragiri fort (Chittoor district) there is an interesting carving of Balakrishna standing and eating a lump of butter into his left hand, while a gopika standing near by watching him in action. The Achyutarayamandapa of the Saivite SriKalahastisvara temple has one of its pillars an even more interesting carving of Navanitha Krishna. It shows a milkmaid (gopika) with a pot of butter and curd on her head walking briskly while the boy Krishna is trailing her from behind begging and coaxing her to give him some butter.

In the Kōdanḍarāma temple of Oṃśimitta (Kadapa district) there are three figures of butter - taking Balakrishna on its pillars in the mukhamandapa. In two of them Krishna is seen seated though the posture are different. In one of them he is seated on a piṭha with his left less folded and the right dangling a little. He is seen eating butter with his right hand. This left hand rests his left thigh. The other figure shows the child seated on an elevated pedestal and supporting himself against the wall. His left leg is raised and folded at the knee behind which is his left hand. His right leg is slightly dangling and his right hand rests his right thigh. One gets the impression that this Krishna is resting having gorged butter.

The third figure of Krishna appears between two pillars. It is beautifully carved three-year-old Balakrishna, bonny and chubby, ornamented with necklaces, waist-bands, arm-bands, anklets etc, hands with his feet firmly planted on the ground as in dance, and a ball of butter in his right hand but at the elbow. His left hand hands loose gracefully.

The Kōdanḍarāma temple at Penukonda, known for its successive and serial Rāmāyaṇa panels, has a Navanithachōra panel different from the others described above. The panel presents a scene in which child Krishna and a few of his friends actively engaged in stealing butter, while an elderly woman looks on. With her outstretched she appears to be warning the butter thieves led by Krishna. Krishna himself is seen standing on the back of a boy who lies on all fours, to reach the
hanging butter pot, and handing out lumps of butter taken out of it to other urchins standing nearby (pl.145).

Three figures of Nṛitya Kṛiṣṇa may be noticed before moving on to considering a panel of Navaṁālakāra Kṛiṣṇa found in the Chintala Veṅkaṭāranaṇa temple in Tāḍāpatri. One of them may be seen is the Oṁḍiṭṭha temple (pl.146) itself. Kṛiṣṇa in this sculpture resembles his image standing between two pillars, noticed earlier. The dancing child here is as richly ornamented in the earlier instance. The disposition of his feet and hands together suggest a dance posture. His hair is gathered to form a not at the centre of his head. There is a Nṛitya Kṛiṣṇa figure carved on a pillar in the verandah of the very ancient Śiva temple at Guḍimallam (Chittoor district). There seems to be nothing in particular to distinguish it, but deserves attention because of its very antiquity. On the door jamb of the entrance of gopura of Alipiri (in Tirupati) there is a figure of the dancing Kṛiṣṇa. He stands on a pedestal. The disposition of his feet and hand indicate that he is dancing in ecstasy.

The Tāḍāpatri panel of Kṛiṣṇa mentioned above is depicted in two stages. In the first Yasodā, grim and serious catches red-handed Kṛiṣṇa while stealing butter, pulls him up by his left hand and threatens to punish him with a club. The mischievous looks up at her as if he is innocent, and the throws down the butter in his right hand. That he attempts to free himself from Yasodā’s hold is suggested by his bent legs. In the second stage of the panel, Yasodā still holds him and shows him the butter for to prove his mischief. The mischievous urchin is seen falling at her feet either for pleading his innocence or seeking her forgiveness. He squats on the ground and touches his mother’s feet with his right hand. Yasoda begins to relent and that is suggested by the changing expressions in her face.

Before moving on to considering the panels on the Yamalarjuna episode, one last example of Navaṁālakāra may be noticed. It is found on the exterior wall of the mukhamandapa of the Ugra Narasimha temple at upper Ahohilam (Kurnool district). In this panel the butter-theft stands on a shoot on his right leg, places his left leg for support on one of the pots which are piled up one above the other, and reaches the pot- at the top which contains butter. He has some butter in his right hand, and not content with it, he takes out some more from the same pot with his left hand.
The knocking down of the Yamalarjuna (Yamalarjunabhaṅga) is one of the Kṛiṣṇa’s childhood episodes when he still moved on fours. According to the Bhāgavata, Yāsoda, unable to restrain naughty Kṛiṣṇa who pestered her when she was at work and would not see reason, tied him to a heavy stone mortar and went about to attend her daily chores. But the naughty child pulled the mortar along through the narrow space between a pair of Arjuna trees (Yamalarjuna) with such force that the knocked them down uprooting them. The trees soon after their fall attained their former form as the two soon of Kubera. Redeemed from the curse they had been in. This episode too is depicted frequently enough in the temples of the study area. The Kṛiṣṇarāma temple in Tirupati has two sculptures of this episode depicted on different pillars of the mahāmāṇḍapa. In one of them child Kṛiṣṇa is seen on all fours dragging along the stone mortar with the very rope he has been tied to it. The mortar and the binding rope are clearly seen in the panel, but not the trees. In the other example of the episode, a tree is seen by the side of Kṛiṣṇa on all fours. It must be assumed that he would soon pull the mortar against the tree. A pillar of the corridor māṇḍapa in the Tirumala temple has a panel depicting this episode. It differs from those mentioned earlier in its style. Moreover, Kṛiṣṇa is seen fully and richly ornamented and the tree which his foot touches is depicted in small size.

A bas-relief of Kṛiṣṇa in all fours dragging the mortar is sculpted on a pillar of the māhāmāṇḍapa of the Srinivāsa Mahāpurāṇa temple. In this figure Kṛiṣṇa has a ball of butter in his right hand. A couple of trees are seen behind him. He wears a bushy coiffure full of curls. The necklace he wears is prominently depicted. The Padmavathi temple in Tiruchanur has two depictions of this episode, one on a pillar in the kalyana-māṇḍapa and the other on a pillar of the mukhamāṇḍapa. In both, trees are seen touched by the feet of the crawling child, and in both Kṛiṣṇa holds a bowl of butter with the difference that in one of them he holds it in his right hand and in the other with his left hand. And child Kṛiṣṇa in both is adorned with dharmilla type of hair-dress.

The Vēdanārāyaṇa temple in Nāgalāpuram has three sculptures of Yamalarjunabhaṅga. On the door-jamb of the main gopura of the temple is seen one in which the child Kṛiṣṇa dragging the mortar between the two Arjuna trees is clearly depicted. And there is a smile on his face as if to suggest that he knows what
he is doing. The second sculpture is seen on the southern wall of the garbhagriha. This panel shows Yasoda tying the mischievous to a mortar. Her hair is gathered and tied in the shape of a bun behind her head. On the western wall of the same place is the third carving which actually depicts the second half of the episode. Here Krishna is seen going on all fours between two trees, pulling mortar with him to which his right leg is tied fast. The sons of Kubera, Nalakubera and Mapigriva, redeemed of the curse, are also seen in their original form. The panel in the Ugra Narasimha temple in upper Ahobilam (Kurnool district) shows Krishna on all fours. Above him the heads of the redeemed sons of Kubera are seen, implying that the twin trees have been knocked down.

The depiction of the Yamalarjuna episode in the temple at Ongiinita on one of its pillars strikes one as unusual. As in the other panels of this episode, here too Yasoda ties fast Krishna to mortar, which he pulls along. But the child Krishna instead of knocking down the two trees by dragging the mortar between them, is seen pulling down one of them with his hands and push the other with his back. The two trees are shown on either side of the child and connected by a creeper at the top. This unusual panel is unfortunately defaced and therefore other details cannot be observed.

In the Chintala Veikatarama temple (Tadipatri) (pl.147) panel of this episode, found on the exterior wall of the sanctum Krishna moves on all fours pulling the mortar behind him. To his left stand two men, the redeemed sons of Kubera. The Kodañdaraina Temple at Penukondh shows child Krishna, as in the other panels of this episode, tied to a mortar which he drags along with him. But it differs from others in that Krishna is richly ornamented. He wears many jewels: necklaces, armlets, wristlets, ear studs, anklets, and also a thick chain around his waist.

The killing of Sakañsura (Sakasurasvaradhha) is also one of Krishna’s feats in his infancy, in which he kills one of the rakshasas sent by Kansa, disguised as a cart. According to the Bhagavatam of Poitana, on a certain morning when child Krishna is asleep in the cradle and Yasoda is away, a rakshasa deputed by Kansa shows up at under the guise of a huge cart (and hence is called Sakañsura), comes rolling down on his own and dashes against Krishna in the cradle. Balakrishna wakes up crying and in the guise of throwing up his hands and feet, he shatters the cart to pieces and
the thus kills the demon. In another version of this episode, Balakiśñña is said to be lying under a cart instead of the cradle. The Gõvindarâja temple in Tirupati has two illustrations of this episode. One of them found on the door-jamb of the second entrance gõpura of the temple, shows Kriśñña holding the cart with his left arm and kicking it with his left leg, raising it to the level of his chest. The second illustration found on the adhîstâna of the second gõpura entrance, shows the child holding the cart firmly and kicking it with his raised right leg. The asura is seen fallen dead under the cart.

The Padrâvaths temple at Tiruchanûr depicting this episode shows Kriśñña holding the huge cart firmly with his left hand and kicking it with his left foot. His right leg is firmly planted on the ground while his right hand is raised high, as one does while kicking an object forcefully. The Śakaṭasurasvâvadha panel in the Kôdanḍârama temple at Öntumita (pl.148) is slightly different from the other panels of this episode mentioned above. Kriśñña here is seen seated on the floor and kicking the cart with his left leg while his right leg is bent. The asura is shown as two wheels with a human head emerging at the top. The child Kriśñña holds firmly in his left hand the asura’s hair. The panel on the Śakaṭasura theme depicted on a pillar in the mukhâmaṇḍapa of the Chintala Venkataramana temple (pl. 149) at Tâdipatri is different from all the other like panels on the theme. In the panels noticed earlier child Kriśñña is either lying in his cradle or setting. But here in this well-chiselled sculpture of Tâdipatri or Kriśñña looks not like an infant but a boy with a well-exercised body. He stands on a pedestal and kicks the cart with such force and sureness that its wheels and chases are broken into pieces to fly in different directions. This panel is depicted on a pillar inside the temple. On the outer walls of the Kôdanḍârama temple at Pennukuḍa is a panel on this episode which shows infant Kriśñña lying in the cradle very much like Vâtapatrasâyi. A toy is suspended above form a pole to attract the child. A toy is suspended above from a pole to attract the child. A four-wheeled cart is shown below the cradle, from which Śakaṭasura is seen falling down.

The Vastasurasvâvadha in the Bâgavatam is just one more instance of an asura sent by Kâṁsa to kill both Kriśñña and Balarâma, and his eventual end at the hands of Kriśñña. It also shows the courage and process of Kriśñña and his superhuman stature. The story is simple. When Kriśñña and Balarâma were playing on the banks of the
Yamuna on a certain day whole their cattle were grazing, the asura assuming the form of a calf (vatsa) can be there and mingled with the herd so that he could easily kill the brothers. Kiṣṇa detecting the presence of the asura, in the form of a calf caught hold of the calf by its hind legs and tail, swung it round forcibly and threw of on to the top of a nearby tree. The demons who son his life felt on to the top of a nearby tree. The demons who son his life felt from there to every one astonishers. There is only one panel depicting the Vatsasurasavadha episode on the inner wall of the second entrance gopura of the Govindaśāja temple in Tirupati. There are two sections in the panel. One of them shows Kiṣṇa the whirling the calf to throw it. The second section shows the asura falling down from the top of the tree.

In the Bhāgavata, Kaṁsā never tired of sending asura after asura to kill Kiṣṇa, through in vain. The Bakāśuravadha is one more of several instances of Kaṁsā’s sister but futile designs. The asura sent by Kaṁsā assuming the form of a mountainous crane snoop down upon Kiṣṇa and devours him he along with other cowherd boys goes to the banks of the Yamuna to water the animals. Unable to retain him inside who is like burning fire, the asura throws him out, and tries to pierce him with his sharp beak. Kiṣṇa however holds him by his beak and tears him into two. The Govindaśāja temple in Tirupati has two examples of this episode sculpted on two pillars of the porch in front of the Puṇḍarikavalli shrine. In one of them Bālakrishṇa is seem placing his right leg on the chest of the bird and holding the two halves of the beak with his hands and pulling them apart. Kiṣṇa appears richly ornamented, but he does not have a headgear. In the second example Kiṣṇa does not his foot on the crane’s chew. Instead he stands with his leg apart, and holds the two halves of the beak with his hands to fear them apart Kiṣṇa in this panel appears a little older than the Kiṣṇa in the other instance. The crane appears a little shrunk in size. Kiṣṇa in the instance wears karandamakuta along with other ornaments.

There are three examples of the Bakāśuravadha in the Veḍanārāyaṇa temple at Nāgarāpuram. One of them appears on the door-jamb of the south gopura and other figures on a pillar in the porch of the mahāmanḍapa of the temple. The third instance appears on the door-jamb of the gateway of the second gopura. In the first the boy Kiṣṇa, who is adorned with a hair not, has his right leg placed firmly on the body of the crane, and holds apart the two halves of its beak wide apart. In the second
example Kríshña appears elderly, is four-handled, and wears in his upper right and left hands chakra and sáṅkha respectively. He also wears a kirītāmakāṭa and a number of ornaments. In other words, he appears as his Divine self. He keeps under the pressure of his left leg the crane and with his lower hands he tears apart the two halves its beak. The crane itself has a long neck and long beak. In the third instance of Bakāśuravadha in the temple, both Kríshña and the crane resemble those in the first example except that the depiction of the crane's tail is stylised.

In the Śrīnivāsa Maṅgaṇuram example of the Bakāśuravadha, Kríshña the boy is seen using all his strength and vigor to hold with his hands the two halves of the crane's beaks wide apart, to kill it thus. His left leg is thrust against the chest of the bird, and his right leg is firmly planted on the ground. The boy Kríshña has a big hair knot on his head. The Vēnugopala temple at Kārveṭiṇagaram (Chittoor district) too has a solitary panel of this episode. The boy Kríshña here is bulky and heavily busy, and presses down the bird with his legs, and is seen exerting to take apart the two halves of the bird's beak which are held together. This aspect of the example distinguishes it from the other panels of this episode.

There is a well-defined sculpture of Bakāśuravadha on a pillar of the mahaṅgaṇāpa of the Chintala Veṅkataraṇa temple of Tādipatri. (On the same pillar also is found a depiction of Kāliyamardana which will be commented upon later). In the Bakāśura panel the crane is seen lying on the lap of Kríshña seated on a pedestal. What is more, the bird has turned turtle, and Krishna is seen tearing its abdomen with his hands like Narasiṁha tearing the bowels of the demon Hiranyakāśipu. Kríshña's feet are turned in opposite directions.

Two more depiction of the Bakāśura episode, one in the Onṭimiṭṭa (pl.150) the temple and the other in the Chandragiri Fort, may be noticed before moving onto considering to Kāliyamardana episode. The Onṭimiṭṭa panel found on a pillar of the temple shows the boy Kríshña seated. He holds the crane pressing it between his right leg and body and takes wide apart the two parts of its beak. He wears some necklaces and ornaments around his arms. His hair is gathered into a bun-like knot at the top of his head. The panel depicted on a pillar in the entrance maṅḍapa of the Chandragiri Fort is faded somewhat. The little boy Kríshña is seen standing, with his legs slightly
apart, and his hands parting widely the two parts of the crane’s beak. The crane too is seen standing rather helplessly yielding under Krishṇa’s pressure.

Balakrśiṣṇa vanquishing the serpent king Kāliya is one of his most favoured feats depicted all over India. The Rayalaseema temple fall in live with them. The episode is described in the Harivaṃśa and the Bhāgavata this episode also, illustrate like all the others that every one of Krishṇa’s feats and exploits are for the welfare of his people and the world in general. Kāliya was a serpent king living in a deep lake according to the Bhāgavata and in the river Yamuna according to the Harivaṃśa. In either case he was a great menace to the people, animals and birds living nearby, because this poison he spouted had poisoned the waters of the lake/river causing deaths to many. Krishṇa, always a savior of his community plunged into the waters and after a fierce struggle subjugated the serpent king. In the sculptural depictions of this episode, Krishṇa is how as dancing upon the huge serpent’s body holding its tail in one of his hands, and in some as dancing on the hood/hoods of the serpent.

The Govindarāja temple (Tirupati) has six depictions of this episode, the highest number in a single place in the study area. There are two carvings on two different pillars in the kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa. One of them shows Krishṇa placing his leg on the body of the snake and his right leg on its hood. He grips it tail with his left hand while the right hand is held in tarjani. In the other depiction in the same maṇḍapa Krishṇa dances on the serpent, keeping his left leg on the serpent’s body and the right leg on its head. Interestingly he has four hands, and his upper right hand holds chakra and the corresponding left hand śankhā. He holds with the lower left hand the serpent’s tail. As the right hand is broken there is no may of knowing what it holds. It however asserts the divinity of Krishṇa. A niche in the Lakṣmīdevī-maṇḍapa of the temple has a carving of Kāliyamardana. Another found on the door-jamb of the third gopura entrance of the temple is slightly different in that Krishṇa here has four hands and stands on the hoods of the serpent with his lower left hand he holds the tail of the serpent. The second gopura entrance of the temple has an example which shows Krishṇa who has only two hands, who holds the tail of the serpent with his left hand and placed his left leg on the hood of the serpent. A beautiful example of this episode found on a pillar of the Chitrakūṭa-maṇḍapa shows a dynamic Krishṇa. He grips the serpent in the middle with his right, and with the
other its tail. His right leg is placed on its head and the other on its body. As a result the serpent is completely immobilised.

The famous Tirumala temple has a carving in its dhvajastambha-mandapa. It is different in some respects from the panel’s notices above. Kṛiṣṇa is seen here dancing with one of his legs, on the serpent’s head and the other on its body. Interestingly he holds tail of serpent within left hand, and in the right hand he has a ball of butter, as if his love of butter is incorrigible and he must have it even during a dangerous feat as the fight with a deadly serpent.

There are two examples of this episode in the Vēdanārāyaṇa temple as Nagalāpuram. In both Kṛiṣṇa is seen dancing on the serpent holding its tail with his left hand. In the disposition of his right hand the two figures differ. In one of them, in which Kṛiṣṇa stands on what looks like a pūrṇa, his right hand is in the varada pose as it to suggest to Kaliya he would come to no harm if he removes himself and his people from the deep lake.

The Kalyāṇa Veṅkaṭāsvara temple at Srinivāsa Maṅgapuram has a panel on its entrance gopura which shows Kṛiṣṇa dancing on the serpent. On the adhiṣṭāna of this entrance gopura of the Padmāvathi temple at Tiruchanur also presents the figure of Kṛiṣṇa slightly different from the other similar figures. Here the dancing Kṛiṣṇa is seen lighting the serpent with his left hand by its tail. He has his left leg firmly on the ground but not on the serpent’s hood. Further, as in the Tirumala example, he holds a ball of butter in his right hand. The Nārāyaṇavananam temple has an example on the door-jamb of its second gopura gateway. As in some other instances of this episode here too Kṛiṣṇa holds the tail of the serpent with his left hand. His right leg is placed on the serpent’s head and his left leg on its hood. Further he is adorned with kirītāmakūṭa.

There is a Kaliyamardana panel on a pillar of the vihāra-maṇḍapa of the Vēṅgūpāla temple at Kārṇēṭinagaram. It distinguishes itself by the fact that the serpent on the body of which Kṛiṣṇa dances has magnificently portrayed seven hoods.
The Chintala Veikataramana temple of Tadiipatri, known for its sculptural excellence has two depiction of the Kaliyamardana both deserving attention because they are well chiselled and distinct from all the examples noticed so far. One of them is found on a pillar in the mahamantapa, along with depiction of the Bakasura episode, as pointed out already. The serpent in this example is lean and long and appears to be two-headed. And the boy Krsna dances ecstatically trampling on its heads. The disposition his outstretched hands, the slightly bald legs and the raised left leg bent at the knee and the raised left leg bent at the knee all seem appropriate to triumphant dance. Of course Krsna wears the ornaments he is usually decorated. The other example is found on an exterior wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. (Adjacent to this panel there is a depiction of the Vastrapakarana episode which will be noticed later). The serpent he dances on here is long and lean as in the other example. It has only lone head Krsna looks a little older. He holds the tail of the serpent with his raised right hand the dispositions of his legs and hands appear similar those in the other panel, and suggests his ecstatic delight and sense of triumph. A respectable woman, in all likelihood Kaliya’s wife and queen, stands in anjali to the right of the dancing Krsna, she seems to be appealing to Krsna to forgive her husband (pl.151).

The Ugra Narasimha temple at Upper Ahobilam has a depiction of this episode on the exterior wall of its mukhamantapa. The Kaliyamardana Krsna dances on is lean, long and single-hooded. He wears what looks like shorts, and also many kiras. He has tuft on his head and strikes a tribhanga pose. In the Kodanadaraina temple as Othinimta is found on a pillar an instance of Kaliyamardana. As in the examples of Tadiipatri the serpent here too is lean and long. Krsna who looks who a young had dances joyously holding the serpent’s tail with his right hand and placing his left hand on its head. He is dressed in loin-cloth, and wears two-stranded necklace, armlets and wristlets.

There are two examples of the Kaliyamardana in the Chandragiri fort, one in its entrance mandapa on a pillar and the other in its second mandapa on pillar and the other in the second mandapa. They are carved differently. In the first the child Krsna is seen dancing and trampling on the snake. He grips its tail in his raised left hand and his right foot tramples on its body. He has a bun-like-head gear and wears the usual ornaments attributed to him. The sculpting of the figure seems unrefined.
Much the same thing has to be said about the other representation of the Kṛṣṇa. In the Kāliya episode, Kṛṣṇa in this depiction appears richly ornamented there is a circular disc-like carving behind his head suggesting a halo. In other words, Kṛṣṇa who subjugates Kāliya is seen as divine. He holds firmly on his left hand the tail of the serpent.

In the Soumyanātha temple of Nāndalūr (Kadapa district) on a high pillar in the high four-pillared mandapa, is an example of Kāliyamardana. It is much better carved than the Chandragiri examples. Once again one sees the dancing Kṛṣṇa who is decorated with various ornaments and also a karanḍamakūṭa. Kṛṣṇa holds firmly the tail of Kāliya and tramps upon its body with his left foot firmly planted. And his right hand shows an abhaya-hasta, giving assurance to the aggrieved. The Pattābhīrāma temple of Vāyalpādu has a bas-relief of Kāliyamardana Kṛṣṇa on the dhvajasthambha of the temple. It is also in laid with a bronze plate. Its details are vividly seen. In this example one sees Kṛṣṇa trampling triumphantly the serpent. With his left hand he holds firmly on the long tail of the serpent. Planting his left foot firmly on the body of the serpent, he tramples upon its seven hoods all of which are distinctly seen. He is heavily ornamented. He wears a karanḍamakūṭa and ardhamūrka.

Kṛṣṇa playing with the gopikas, teasing them and practicing mischief on them, as a child, boy and adult has been a fertile themselves to exploit for poets, painters and sculptors, all over India. The Alvars of Tamilnadu are never tired of dwelling on them in their hymns. The Bhāgavata delights to narrate them in detail. The Rayalaśecma temples have some representations of them. These depictions may be broadly grouped into three: those which show Kṛṣṇa’s mischievous pranks; those which represent Rasalīlā, and the ones which sculpture Gopikāvastrāpaharāṇa.

A panel on the door-jamb of the second gopura gateway of the Goveṇdrāja temple in Tirupati shows the mischievous Kṛṣṇa with three gopikas on either side. One of them is seen in añjali-mudra as of she is appealing to Kṛṣṇa to desist from mischief. On the door-jams of the entrance gopura of this temple there are two depiction one above the other. The upper panel shows the child Kṛṣṇa wearing a chain of little ornamental bells round his waist. A gopika is seen admiring the plaited
hair of the child. She appears to be dancing. The lower panel shows Krishna as a grown up boy in the company of a gopika. On the door-jamb of the entrance of the northern gopura of the Naganapura temple shows a similar scene. The gopikas holds a pot in her right hand she wears a bun-shaped knot behind her head. A similar scene appears on a pillar of the vahanamandapa of the Kalyana Venkateswara temple in NarayanaVanam. An example found in the Venugopala temple in Karvehnagaram depicts Krishna mischievous disturbing a gopika while she is at the churn.

Rasalila is one of the popular aspects of Krishna's life which has inspired artists of different kinds. Rasalila is actually a kind of dance, a sportive and circular dance, practiced by Krishna, the cowherds and cowherdresses (gopis) in Brindavan to which the cowherd community migrated to be safe from the menace of Kamsa and his agents. In this sportive dance of Rasalila it is the adult Krishna rather than the boy Krishna who figures. There are just a couple of examples of Rasalila in the Rayalaseema temples. To the devotee of Krishna the avatar, this dance has a deep spiritual meaning. Each of the gopis, regarded as the type of a true bhakta, who is in love with the Divine lover, believes that Krishna is dancing with her alone. But He, who is omnipresent, dances with every one of them at the same time. This aspect of Rasalila is depicted well in the Kandadharach temple at Penukonda. In this example, Krishna is seen dancing with three gopikas at the same time, trebling himself. The Museum in the Chandragiri Fort has a beautifully depicted panel of Rasalila. It is a lengthy panel. It shows Krishna multiplying himself, as it were six times and dancing with six gopikas at the same time, so that each gopika has the feeling that He is dancing with her alone on the banks of the Yamuna in Brindavan, on a moonlit night. All of them are neatly dressed and bejeweled as if for a festive occasion. In the background are seen creepers and flowers. The expression on the faces of the dancing gopikas suggests their ecstatic absorption in the ecstacy of the occasion.

There are interesting carvings on the door-jamb of the second gopura of the Gopinatha temple of Tirupati which depict the Holi festival in Brindavan in which Krishna and several gopikas participate. There is not another panel of this kind in the Rayalaseema region. It is a sportive occasion and mischievous Krishna makes the most of it. He is seen chasing gopikas with a syringe and spraying coloured water. One of the gopikas in the panel in front of him is seen appealing to him with folded
hands to top spraying on her. There is another interesting panel in the Rama temple at Penukonda which deserves notice. It is also only one of its kind in Rayalaseema. The panel shows some married woman of Brindavan bringing food and serving it to Krishna and Balarama without the knowledge of their husbands. The two panels noticed in the paragraphs do not fit into three groups of panels mentioned earlier.

An aspect of the devotion of the gopikas of Brindavan to the all-knowing and omnipresent Krishna is his stealing their sarees when they are bathing nude in the river nearby and their appeal to Him to return them. This episode is depicted in a few temples of Rayalaseema. This episode is generally known as Gopikāvastrapaharaṇa. It has to be seen with the eyes of devotion to understand properly its significance. It is said that Krishna plays with the sarees of the gopikas to dispel their illusion about their perishable bodies and think of their souls which are enduring and everlasting. There are a few depiction of this episode in the temples of Rayalaseema. On the exterior walls of the sanctum of the Chintala Veikataramana temple at Tadipatri (see pl. 151) there is a panel which can easily be viewed as obscene. Krishna is seen sitting on the forked branch of a tree. He is nude and has no ornaments but for a chain around his waist. Under the tree are four young women, gopikas, all nude standing in different postures suggesting their embarrassment rather than immodesty. Krishna has snatched away their clothes and seems to be tantalizing them. One of them standing to the extreme right is seen raising her hands and praying to Krishna to return their clothes. Another second from the left is trying to climb the tree looking at Krishna to fetch her clothes. The gopika at the extreme left and another second from right are seen making vain attempts to cover their modesty. Their embarrassment suggests their attachment to their attractive and youthful bodies. Krishna, in snatching away their vastras, may be testing their attitude to their bodies. Of the person in the panel are seen literally, Krishna would appear to be an irresponsible and insensitive person, and the gopikas no better than young women displaying their physical charms. It seems significant that on the sanctum walls, this panel and the Kaliyamardana panel are found side by side but for two pillars between them.

The Vastrapaharaṇa panel found at the entrance mandapa of the famous Tirumala temple, is much simpler. Two gopikas in the nude stands beneath the tree on which mischievous Krishna sits on the tree and holding their sarees. One of the
gōpikas is seen embracing the trunk of the tree, while the other is kneeling with her raised hands in anjali. The gestures of the gōpikas suggest their total surrender to the god of their worship. The Gōvindarāja temple in Tirupati has two panels of the Vastrāpaharaṇa, one on the door-jamb of the entrance gopura, and the other on the door-jamb of the second gopura. In the first, Kṛiṣṇa is seen on a tree dancing at the cleft. There are two gōpikas under the tree. All of them are without clothes. Kṛiṣṇa holds their sarees in his upraised hands as if to keep the sarees of the gōpikas beyond their reach, who are seen praying to him. One of the gōpikas is seen kneeling and lifting up her hands in anjali. The other appears standing with upraised hands held in anjali. Looked at from a realistic point of view the figures in the panel appears unnatural. For the gōpikas appears almost as tall as the tree itself on which Kṛiṣṇa stands, and Kṛiṣṇa himself would appear to be no more than a child. But viewed with the understanding concept in mind, everything falls into place. In the other panel in the Gōvindarāja temple, there are seven gōpikas, all nude as their sarees have been taken away by Kṛiṣṇa who is on the tree dancing, as in the other panel, at the cleft of the tree branches. One of the gōpikas is seated behind the tree to cover her modesty and demanding her sarees from Kṛiṣṇa. All the others are seen standing. Two of them with upraised hands in anjali seem to appeal to Kṛiṣṇa to be considerate. The remaining appears embarrassed. The gōpika figures in the panel appear abnormal and out of proportion of one looks for realistic portrayal.

The panel in the Vēṇugopāla temple of Kārvēḻinagaram, has a stylized depiction of the Vastrāpaharaṇa episode. Kṛiṣṇa is seen dancing with the sarees on the stylized tree. Under the tree there are five nude gōpikas. Two of them embrace the trunk of the tree closely to cover themselves. One of the gōpikas is seated. Another stands in anjali with upraised hands. The last covers the middle of her body with her hands. The example of the episode depicted on the outside wall of the mukhamandapa of the Narasimha temple in Upper Ahobilam, is faded. Only partly can it be seen. There seem to be northern to distinguish this panel. The Kedandarama temple in Penukoṇḍa has a large panel of the Vastrāpaharaṇa, which appears more detailed than the others described above. Unlike all the other panels of this episode, Kṛiṣṇa in this panel is seen standing on a tree with the sarees of the gōpikas in his hands. Below him under the tree there are seven gōpikas, three to his right standing on a raised platform and four others to his left in different poses of prayer to him. The gōpika at
the entrance left stands slightly bending with her hands raised above her head in anjali. Next to her stands one on the ground begging Krishna for her clothes. The third gopika, shy and reluctant stand as it would expose her being without any cover to her body, raises her right hand to pray to Krishna for her clothes. The Fourth gopika close to the tree trunk looks up to Krishna above and pleads for her clothes. To the right of the tree stands an embarrassed gopika covering her face with her right hand and conceal her nudity with her left. And the seventh gopika turns towards Krishna and facing him prays to him with both of her hands for her clothes. As observed already the panels of the Vastrapaharanā episode have to be viewed and interpreted not literally but with the eyes of religious devotion, as they are meant to be. Otherwise they would not make sense.

Almost every feat and miracle performed by Krishna, whether as an infant in the cradle, or as a boy or adult, was meant for the welfare of others and the community. Krishna lifting the Govardhanagiri as an umbrella to protect the cowherd community and their cattle is one such superhuman feat. This role of Krishna as Govardhanadhari as a protector is consistent with the concept of God as kind, generous and benevolent, and is largely responsible for the wide and lasting popularity this theme has enjoyed since the Gupta period. The legend behind this episode is narrated in the Harivamśa, the Vīṣṇupurāṇa, and also the Bhāgavata. The Tamil Alvars, Tirumalisai and Tirumangai, refer to it. The occasion for Krishna lifting the huge hill is the conflict between the rain god Indra and Krishna over the offerings made to the former by the shepherd community. The enraged Indra, it is said, caused torrential rain for seven days continuously causing great distress and damage to the cowherds and their cattle. Deeply moved by their distress Krishna tore off the Govardhana hill from its roots and held it high over the cowherd's settlement and their cattle like an umbrella to protect them, as long as there was rain. In the legend the episode closes with Indra and Krishna reaching an amicable understanding.

This episode of Govardhanoddharaṇa is fairly well depicted in the Rayalaseema temples. In the Chitrakūṭa-maṇḍapa of the Govindarāja temple in Tirupati, there is a bas-relief of this episode carved on a pillar. The panel is simple. There are not many details in it. It shows Krishna standing dvībhāṅga, lifting the Govardhanagiri effortlessly with the forefinger if his right hand. Though it is strange,
none of his companions of the cows for whom he lifts the huge hill are seen. Their presence the viewer is expected to take for granted. The Govardhana hill itself looks like a mere umbrella which can be easily lifted with a finger. This depiction seems to be intentional to suggest that for Kṛṣṇa, the huge hill is no bigger and heavier than a mere everyday umbrella.

On a pillar of the mukhamandapa of the Tiruchanūr temple has a carving of the episode, which differs from the above instance. Here Kṛṣṇa has four hands holding śankha and chakra in his upper left and right hands respectively. In other words he shows himself as his Divine self. He lifts the Govardhanagiri with the forefinger of his left hand. He wears a kirtīamakūṭa and other ornaments appropriate to him. The presence of the cowherds and cows is to be imagined by the viewer, because it is assumed that he would be familiar with the story.

The example in the Kōdaṇḍarāma temple at Onṭimīṭa (pl.152) depicts this episode in a way different from the other two mentioned above. Here Kṛṣṇa stands in his characteristic pose- with his right leg planted firmly on the ground and his left leg slightly bent and crossing the right foot. His right hand is raised aloft and it forefinger pointing above suggesting the presence of the mountain at its tip. His left hand is in kati-hasta. There are cows and calves near his feet. Though he is only two-handed that he is divine is amply suggested. He wears a kirtīamakūṭa, and ornaments appropriate to him.

On the exterior wall and antaraṭa of the Chintala Veṅkaṭaramaṇa temple at Tādipatri, this episode is depicted. Here Kṛṣṇa stands in tribhāṅga and lifts the Govardhana hill with his right forefinger. The mountain he holds is depicted as a heap of rocks. On either side of him stand a gopu and a cow (see pl.147).

On a pillar in the Achutadevaṛāya-mandapa of Śrīkāḷahastīvara temple (Śrīkalahasti) (pl.153), a famous Śaivite temple, is found a depiction of Govardhanagiridhāra Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa stands in his characteristic posture of the left foot crossing the right foot which is firmly planted on the ground. His left hand rests at the waist in katiḥasta. His right hand is raised aloft and his right forefinger supports the hill effortlessly. There is a cow standing behind him licking as it were his left foot.
Krishna himself appears leaning on it. His hair is gathered into a huge bun on his head, and he wears the usual ornaments. He appears very much the human being though the feat he performs is superhuman. The expression on his face suggests a sense of achievement. The presence of the mountain is suggested by a heap of stones.

The entrance mandapa of the Chandragiri fort has on a pillar an example of Gñärdhanagiriñdiräri, which is slightly different from those noticed above. Krishna is seen standing with his right leg crossing the left. His left hand appears to hold a staff or flute. The forefinger of the raised right hand has at its tip the mountain which looks like a hanging cloud. A calf stands to his right and looks up at his right hand and the mountain held as an umbrella. The expression of Krishna’s face suggests a calm of mind as it he has not done anything extraordinary.

Venugopäla also known as Ganagopäla, is a popular form of Krishna. The name ‘Venugopäla’ means a ‘gopala’ or cowherd who plays on the flute. The other name associates him in general with music in general. The name connects him intimately with his life as a cowherd among cowherds. The may visualize, as the early Alvars did, Krishna the cowherd driving the cattle with a stick for grazing, and summon them later on in the evening to return home. The magical spell of Krishna’s flute on men and animals is proverbial all over the country. This name of Krishna is not connected or associated with any particular feat or miracle or episode. However Krishna as Venugopäla has been a favourite theme for sculptors to depict, and many an aspiring artist has found this form of Krishna giving “ample scope” for displaying his devotion and artistic skill. As Gopinatha Rao observes, however one may depict the image of Venugopäla, “the rapture of music has to be clearly depicted”. Further, “Venugopäla is generally surrounded by cowherds and cowherdesses. This image of Krishna is made to stand erect with the left leg resting on the floor, and the right leg is thrown across or behind or in front of the left leg so as to touch the ground with the toes. The flute is held in both the hands, and the one end of it is applied to the mouth. It is said that the complexion of such images of Krishna should be dark in hue so as to resemble the rain-cloud in appearance. The head should be ornamented with a bunch of peacock’s feathers. There should be three bends in the body 129. Sometimes the figure of Venugopäla may be accompanied by two of his chief consorts, Rukmini and Satyabhäma.
The Rayalaseema temples have abundant sculptures of Venugopala. But they do not always conform to the description given above. Moreover, none of them shows Venugopala with a bunch of peacock feathers on his head, as the following analysis would show. Further, when he is clearly depicted as an avatara, and not a mere flute-playing cowherd, he is represented as four-handed. There are rare depictions of eight-handed (ashtabhuja) and six-handed (shadbhujya) Venugopala too. In the Tirumalara~ya-mandapa of the Tirumala temple there is on a pillar a rare instance of Shadbhujya-Venugopala. In his uppermost hands he holds chakra and śānkha. The lower pair of his arms hold his flute near his mouth. The expression on his face is that of one who is rapt in the ecstasy of his music. The remaining two pairs of hands carry a bow and other weapons. He stands in his characteristic posture, the right leg slightly bent at the knee, crossing the left leg and touching the floor with its toes. Close to his feet stands a cow looking at his flute-playing face, lost in rapture of his music. It is probable that this image of Venugopala is intended to suggest his cosmic form (Viswarāpa). He wears a tall crown (makuta) and his bejeweled with precious ornaments.

A second example of Ashtabhuja-Venugopala is found on the adhiṣṭāna of the second gopura of the Govindarāja temple at Tirupati. It resembles the Tirumala figure in most respects. But Venugopala here wears a karaṇḍamakuta in the place of a kirīṭamakuta, and has two cows standing on either side, and listening to his divine music with raised heads. The same temple has an example of Shadbhujya-Venugopala (six-handed) on a pillar of the kalyāna-mandapa. This is the only one of its kind in Rayalaseema. Venugopala here holds in his hands in addition to his chakra and śānkha, a sword and what looks like a sugar-cane bow. This form of Venugopala is also known as Madanagopala. His lower hands hold the flute near his mouth, from which flows his music. Venugopala here wears a jatamakuta, which is rather unusual.

There are quite a few examples of the four-handed Venugopala (Chaturbhujya-Venugopala) in the study area. There are ten such figures in the Govindarāja temple, one of them is found on a pillar of the kalyāna-mandapa. There is nothing to distinguish it, except that the left leg of Venugopala crosses the right leg, touching the floor with its toes. As usual the upper hands hold chakra and śānkha. The other example of Chaturbhujya-Venugopala is found on the door-jamb of the second gopura.
gateway of the temple. It is a more interesting instance. In addition to showing the flute-playing and four-handed Krishna flanked on either side by his consorts (probably Rukhmini and Satyabhama), and cows with raised heads on both sides enchanted by the melody of his flute, this depiction also shows the surrounding trees suggesting a pastoral environment.

Panels of seated Venugopala are rare. The Nagalapuram temple has four such instances, in one of them Venugopala is four-handed and in the other three, he is two-handed. In each instance he is seated in virasana. The four-handed Venugopala appears on a pillar in the mukha-mantapap of the temple. While the upper two hands bear chakra and sankha, the lower hands hold near his mouth his flute. He is seated on a pedestal and wears kirtimukuta. Of the three two-handed figures of Venugopala, one is seen on a pillar of the western corridor of the temple. He is in virasana, seated on a pedestal playing on his flute. He appears rather dwarfish; there is a cow behind him. The other two examples are found on the pillars of the mahamantapa of the temple. In one of them Venugopala wears a kirtamukuta and in the other he has matted hair (jatabhara).

The temple at Srinivasa Mangapuram has on a pillar of its mahamantapa a depiction of standing Chaturbhujavenugopala. He carries invariably in his upper hands chakra and sankha, and a flute placed near his mouth by his lower pair of hands. His left leg is slightly bent at the knee crosses the right foot, and touches the floor with his toes. The Kalyana Venkatasesvara temple at Narayanaivanam and the Venugopala temple at Karveinagaram have on a pillar of their respective vahanamantapas figures of the four-armed Venugopala which resemble like figures elsewhere. In the Karveinagaram image however the cow is seen licking the foot of Krishna. In the sanctum of the temple there is a beautiful image of Venugopala to whom the temple is dedicated. In the Kapileswara temple at Kapilatirtham in Tirupati, which is a Siva temple, there is a separated shrine for the four-armed Venugopala. The deity stands in vyatayastapada, and holds chakra and sankha in his upper pair of hands, the lower pair of hands have the god’s flute which they place near the deity’s mouth. He is richly ornamented with kirtamukuta, makarakundalas etc. At right angles to Him are the figures of his consorts Rukhmini and Satyabhama, each one side. Both the wives hold a nilotpala in one arm, and let the other gracefully hanging.
On the eastern wall of the garbhagriha of the Parasurameswara temple in Attirāla (Kadapa district) there is a sculpture of the four-armed Veṅugopāla. Listening to the music of his flute with rapt attention are four cows, to each side of Kṛṣṇa. Who stands in tribhanga with his right leg behind his left in the vratystapada pose. His hair is so dressed and arranged that it looks as though he wears a karanḍamukūṭa. The tree with its branches in floral design depicted to his left bends with the severe pastoral atmosphere. In his upper hands are chakra and śaṅkha, and the lower hands hold the flute.

The Soumyanātha temple at Nandalūr (Kadapa district) has on a pillar of its mukha-mandapa an instance of standing Chaturbhujaa-Veṅugopāla, playing on his flute wholly absorbed in his music. His right leg bent at the knee seems to a touch the floor with its toes. There are two cows on each side flanking him. His hands carry his usual paraphernalia. He wears many ornaments. The Santhānamallīswara temple at Pūṣphagiri (pl.154) (Kadapa district) has an interesting panel of Veṅugopāla on the exterior wall of its garbhagriha. It is a two-handed flute-playing Kṛṣṇa who plays on his flute standing, his right leg bent at the knee and resting on a pedestal like thing. His leg is placed on the floor. “As in other figures, he is absorbed in his music. An attractively ornamented cow and a calf with raised heads listen to his music enchanted by it. Veṅugopāla wears a conical-shaped crown as well as wristlets, arm-hands and waist-bands. To his right stands a bearded sage on an elevated pedestal, his left hand raised high. He too is spell-bound by Kṛṣṇa’s music. A sage is shown standing by the side of Kṛṣṇa. On a pillar of the mandapa inside the fort of Siddhavaṭṭam (Kadapa district), there is a carving of Chaturbhujaa-Veṅugopāla. As in other like figures, here too he carries chakra and śaṅkha in his upper hands, while the lower hands have the flute. He wears usual ornaments. A cow listening to his music and licking his left foot is also depicted. The carving of Veṅugopāla is framed within an attractive floral design. The Kāndarāma temple at Oṃtimitta (Kadapa district) has a panel of the Chaturbhujaa-Veṅugopāla with his consort by his side. The depiction is similar to the one in the Soumyanātha temple at Nandalūr, noticed earlier.

The Chintala Venkaṭaramaṇa temple at Tāḍipātri is unique among the Rayalaseema temples for its flare for depicting the Rāmāyana and the Bhāgavata panels. The temple is so filled with these and other carvings that it looks as through
the exuberant sculptors intended to use all the space available for their purposes. There are two examples of Venugopala in this temple, one being an Ashthabhujasvinaugopala, and the other a two-handed Venugopala. The former is found inside the main gopura of the temple carved along with several other miscellaneous figures. This eight-handed Venugopala is seated, his feet resting on a foot-rest. The right leg crosses the left, its toes touch in the footrest. The left foot is firmly placed on the footrest. In addition to chakra and sankha, and a flute, he holds in his hands several weapons including a tall bow which does not appear to be strung as yet. The expression on his face is one of calm absorption in the music of his flute. The figure as a whole perhaps is intended to remind one of Krishna's cosmic forms (Viswarupa).

A most significant event in Krishna's childhood is his revealing to his foster mother Yasoda in seeming innocent playfulness the entire cosmos in his tiny mouth and thus reveals his identity. When Krishna's playmates complained to Yasoda that Krishna was seen eating clods of the soil, she took him to should open his mouth to prove his innocence. When the boy Krishna did so, she was overwhelmed to see the entire revolving universe there. She realised that Krishna was no mere mischievous boy but the Master of the universe, providence, who was all-in-all. The Chintala Veikataramana temple is unique in that it is the only temple in Rayalaseema to depict this episode. It is found in its mukhamandapa. It is delineated in two parts. In the first, Yasoda is seen holding the chin of the boy and commanding him to open his mouth for her to see. In the second part she is seen covering her eyes with her right hand as if she is blinded by the sheer brilliance of what she saw, while Krishna stands there with his mouth wide open. A round object is seen there, suggesting the universe. Yasoda holds continues to hold the boy's hand, as though she is supporting herself with it.

One of the several rakshasas sent by Kamsa to Gokula kill Krishna and Balarama, even in their early childhood and boyhood because he fears danger to his life, is Kes. One day, disguised as a terrifying horse Kes gallops again Krishna and hits him on his chest with his fore legs. Undeterred Krishna meets the enemy, fights with him, and finally by thrusting his hand into his mouth and annihilates him. This episode is found depicted on the door-jamb of the south gopura gateway of the Nagalapuram temple (pl. 155) and another example is found at Tadipatri. It is said Krishna came to be called Kesava for having killed this rakshasa.

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Pralambasura is another rākṣasa sent by Kāṁśa to Gokula to kill Kṛiṣṇa and his brother Balarāma. It is Balarāma who crushes him to death. The Chintala Veṅkaṭaramana temple of Tadipatri and the Kōḍandarama temple of Penukonda are the only in Rayalaseema to depict this episode of Pralambasuravadha.

The Trinavarta episode, in which this henchman of Kāṁśa’s gets killed by Kṛiṣṇa, actually takes place during the latter’s childhood, soon after Śakāṭāsuravadha. It is rarely represented in temple sculptures. It is to the credit of the Chintala Veṅkaṭaramana temple that it happens to be the only temple in Rayalaseema to have depicted it. It is found on the outer walls of this temple along with the Krishna panels. When Kṛiṣṇa was still a child, Trinavarta sent by Kāṁśa appeared in the form of a whirlwind and swept the child Kṛiṣṇa got the better of him who fell dead to the ground. The sculptor of this episode in the temple has very imaginatively recreated the situation. The whirlwind is depicted as a series of coils spiraling up into the sky. At the tip of the spiral the asura appears in his time form. Kṛiṣṇa seizes the right hand of the flying demon with his left hand and hits him on his chest with the right hand. In the panel the child Kṛiṣṇa appears with a tuft on his head, and a mere loincloth round his waist. He wears the usual ornaments that children are decorated with.

Having ascertained that his life is real danger because of Kṛiṣṇa and Balaraṇa who are now grown up, Kāṁśa plans to end their lives anyhow as soon as possible. Under the pretext of inviting them to Mathura to be present at various sports and entertainments, he plans to get rid of them once for all. The brothers see through his similar designs. Yet they go to Mathura confidently. On their way on the city, they are associated by the royal washerman who arrogantly refuses to give them well launched clothes. Provoked to indignation Kṛiṣṇa decapitates him on the spot. At the entrance of the antarāla of the Tadipatri temple there is a depiction of this incident. The panel shows Kṛiṣṇa knocking down the washerman’s head with a single blow of his right hand. Kṛiṣṇa is richly ornamented. The hair is combed backwards and arranged in a broad knot. Further on Kṛiṣṇa and Balarāma chance to meet Kubja, an ugly, dwarfish, hunchback, whose duty is to take fresh perfumes to Kāṁśa every day. Because of her ugly features, she is also known as ‘Trivakra’. She feels most neglected and uncared for. Kṛiṣṇa stops her seemingly out of curiously. He gladly
accepts the perfumes she gives him as devoted offering, and in return he transforms her into a beautiful young woman. This moving episode strangely is not frequently represented in temple sculptures of Rayalaseema. As could be expected, the Chintala Venkataramana temple (pl.156) has three examples of it in its precincts. One is found on the exterior walls of the sanctum and the antarājā. Here Krishna holds the chin of the hunchback and lifts up her face. A second instance of Kubja’s emancipation is found on a pillar of the mukhamandapa. It is depicted on two stages. In the first Kubja with her hunchback is seen standing in front of youthful Krishna and offering him a vessel of perfumes with her right hand. In the second stage Krishna who is pleased by her gesture presses down her left foot with his right foot and raises up her chin with his left hand. And then with his right hand he pushes her head backwards. At the centre of the same pillar is depicted the emancipated and transformed Kubja. One sees a young woman, normal and erect, standing, before Krishna expressing her gratitude to her savior. Krishna’s right palm is held pointing downwards, as it to suggest that there is nothing extraordinary in what he has done.

The Kōlandarāma temple at Penukonda has an instance of this episode depicted as one of the outer walls of the temple. Here Krishna and Balarāma are seen receiving perfumes from Kubja. In one of the mandapa of the fort of Siddhavatam, there is a depiction of this episode on a pillar. Here Krishna as seen holding with his right hand the upraised right hand of Kubja, and with his left her chin, and pressing her left leg which his left leg to remove the hunchback and straighten up her figure. In the sculpture one more right hand is added to Kubja’s figure, which is kept down, perhaps to suggest that she is cured of her disfigured body.

To eliminate Krishna even before he and Balarāma reached the wrestling stadium, Kamsa placed a very huge, strong, furious and uncontrollable elephant called Kuvalayapida at the very entrance, with instructions to the mahout to set it again the arriving young men. After a playing hide and seek with it for a while Krishna killed it, as if it were child’s play. The Gōvindarāja temple at Tirupati has a representation of this episode on the door-jambs of its second gopura gateway. In this panel Krishna is seen lifting the elephant by its front legs. The demon in the elephant is seen falling down beneath it. On the northern wall of the garbhagṛha of the same temple, there is another depiction of this episode. In this instance young Krishna plants his right foot
firmly on the ground and hits at the face of the ferocious elephant and thus kills it. The Soumyanātha temple at Nandālūr has a depiction of this episode on one of the pillars of the mukhamāṇḍapa. Here the mode of Kuvalayapīḍa's killing Kuvalayapīḍa is sculptured differently. He tears the elephant's mouth open into two halves, while it struggles hard to resist him by bending its hind legs and raising its fore legs. A similar figure is found at Chintala Venkataramana temple at Tāḍipatri. In this figure Kuvalayapīḍa hits Kuvalayapīḍa with his right leg (see pl.156). The Kodaṇḍarāma temple at Penukonda offers a more vigorous and detailed depiction of this episode on its outer walls. In this panel Krishna overpowers Kuvalayapīḍa by hitting it hard with his leg as he simultaneously pulling at its fearful and sharp tusks with his left hand and punching on its head with his right hand. How much the elephant staggerers under the terrible impact of Kuvalayapīḍa's blows is suggested by its folded hind legs, the shrinking movement of its front legs and its folded tail. Further the two mahouts on the elephant try hard and try in vain with their mace (gada) and goad (ūnikśa) to goad the animal to charge against Kuvalayapīḍa. Kuvalayapīḍa appears to handle the situation with great ease and confidence. Balarāma, who stands behind his younger brother, stands with his right hand in tārjani as it he is warning the elephant-drivers. Interestingly the hair-style of Kuvalayapīḍa and Balarāma in this panel is peculiar and differs from other Kuvalayapīḍa panels of the brothers. Instead of the usual tuft, they sport long matted hair, and a part of it is gathered into a knot at the tip of the left ear. A fillet-like ornament keeps their hair intact.

The last and desperate but vain attempt of Kaṁsa's to kill his sworn enemies, Kuvalayapīḍa and Balarāma, is to involve them in a wrestling match with Chanura and Mushtika, his state wrestles. The temple at Ouṭāmitta has a carving on one of its pillars, which shows two wrestlers, one tall, hefty and well-built and the other short and young. They are locked up in wrestling with their legs entwining each other. The taller wrestler grips the tuft of the other with his left hand, and pulls at the folds of the shorts of the other at the back, with his right hand. The younger wrestler tries to grip the waist of his opponent with his hands. The identity of the wrestlers is not clear. Perhaps the taller and other wrestler is Chanura and the other is Krishna who ultimately vanquishes his opponent and kills him. This interpretation of the figures is only a surmise. The Chintala Veṅkaṭarāmana temple at Tāḍipatri, as could be expected, has a representation of this episode in two panels, on the exterior walls of
its sanctum and antarāla. In each panel there are pair of wrestlers. The panels look alike. It may be surmised that they represent Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma wrestling with Chanura and Mushtika.

There is a panel in on a pillar in Kodandarama Temple at Ontimitta which depicts an unusual scene. It is not depicted anywhere else. It shows Kṛṣṇa a seated on a lion holding its upraised tail with his left hand, and an object which looks like a sankha in his upraised right hand. It is not clear whether Kṛṣṇa is merely riding the lion or trying to kill it. No literally source for Kṛṣṇa’s life and activities mentions his encounter with a lion. The contents of the panel may be an invention of the sculptor. However, it has been suggested that the episode may distantly allude to a popular anecdote narrated in the Bhāgavatam. Prasena, the brother of king Satrajit, father of Satyabhāma whom Krishna marries, is killed by a lion. The precious jewel called syamantakamanī worn by the dead Prasena, is taken away by Jāmbavan after killing the killer lion. Kṛṣṇa, who is baselessly accused of having stolen it. To redeem himself of the false accusation, Kṛṣṇa traces the jewel to Jāmbavan. Having defeated Jambavan in a duel, Krishna recovers the jewel. Even in this episode Kṛṣṇa does not ride a lion\textsuperscript{130}. The object in the right hand of Kṛṣṇa in the sculpture can only be very remotely linked with the jewel syamantakamaṇi. It is quite possible that this Kṛṣṇa-lion episode has a local literary or folk source.

The foregoing account of the panels in the temples of Rayalaseema depicting situation and episodes in Kṛṣṇa’s life shows, virtually all of them relate to Kṛṣṇa’s early life, to his līlas as an infant, child, boy, and young man. All of them demonstrate and establish his avatarahood and his divinity as an incarnation of Vishnu. Further, Kṛṣṇa is always aware of his identity. There are few or no representations at all of the episodes of Kṛṣṇa’s later life, which are no less important and significant, especially his role in the Mahābhārata. There are no representation either of the Rādha-Kṛṣṇa episodes which have been made popular all over the country largely by the Chaitanya and Bhakti movement. The much favoured Rukhmī-Śrī Kṛṣṇa kalyāṇam, so dear to the Andhras, is also conspicuous by its absence in the temples of the study area during the chosen period. The Pārthasarathi shrine of the Gēvindarāja temple shows him as seated in uktāṅkāsana and joga-mudra. It is explained that after
the Kurukṣeṭra war, having watched its holocaust, Kṛṣṇa is said to have fallen into this mood.

For these reasons, the Čhennakesava temple complex at Puṣṭapagiri deserves special mention not only for its narrative Kṛṣṇa panels, some of which have been pointed out, but also because there are panels of Kṛṣṇa as Gūḍapadeśamūrti, and Paṭhasārathi in the Kurukṣeṭra war. In the Gūḍapadeśa panel, Kṛṣṇa is seen seated in sukhasana. He is four-armed and holds chakra and śaṅkha in his upper arms. The palm of his lower right arm points at Arjuna, while his left arm is placed on his left knee. He wears kīrīṭa, kundala and other usual ornaments. Further he is seen earnestly explaining to Arjuna who stands in anjali on a pedestal nearby what his duty is in the present war. In another panel Kṛṣṇa is seen as Paṭhasārathi driving the chariot of Arjuna who stands with his weapon, arrow and bow in his right and left hands, ready for action. Here too Kṛṣṇa is four-armed (chaturbhuj) with chakra and śaṅkha. It has to be assumed that this divine form of Kṛṣṇa’s is visible only to Arjuna who knows now the real identity of Kṛṣṇa. In yet another panel Kṛṣṇa as Paṭhasārathi, Arjuna’s charioteer, appears, when presumably Arjuna is engaged in a fierce fight with the indomitable Karna.

Kalkyāvatāra

Kalki is the last of the avatāras. He is an unusual avatāra because he is yet to arrive. He is believed to appear at the end of the Kaliyuga. According to the Agnipurāṇa and other texts Viṣṇu would incarnate himself once again at the end of the present yuga when unrighteousness of all forms and kinds becomes pervasive and the established social and moral order of the universe would be disturbed. He arrives then as Kalki, the son of Viṣṇuyasas, with the sage Yajñavalkya as his priest, to re-establish order piety and dharma, by destroying vice and evil. They having ushered in the Kṛitayuga, he will re-ascend to heaven. The Agnipurāṇa describes two kinds of images of Kalki. According to one of them, Kalki is two-armed, rides a horse, and carries a bow and a quiver of arrows. According to the other, the god is four-armed. He rides on horseback, and holds in his hands a khaḍga, śaṅkha, chakra and bāna. On the Viṣṇudharmottara, Kalki is two-armed with a sword in his raised right hand, and he rides a horse in an angry mood. The Vaikhānasagama presents a slightly
different picture of Kalki. According to it, Kalki is four-hand and has the face of a horse and the body of a man. In his hands he carries śaṅkha, chakra, khalpa, and kheṭaka (a terrific-looking shield). There are no separate temples or shrines to Kalki, probably because he is yet to arrive. However there are stray figures of Kalki found in some temples. On a pillar in the mukhamandapa of the Chintala Veṅkaṭaramanā temple in Tādipatri, there is a sculpture of Kalki which in differs in some of its details from the description of the texts. Here the god is four-handed and rides a horse. In his upper right and left hands, he holds śaṅkha and chakra respectively. His lower right hand is in abhaya and the lower left hand is stretched to touch the head of the horse he is riding. He also wears kirītamakuta, makarakuṇḍalas, and other ornaments. In the Daśāvatāra group carved on a pillar in the Rūṇa-mahādāpa of the Tirumala temple is a figure of four-armed Kalki. In his upper right and left hands, he holds chakra and śaṅkha respectively. He carries no weapons in his lower hands. Instead, the lower right hand is in abhaya and the lower left is in varada. He wears, as could be expected, kirītamakuta, makarakuṇḍalas, a girdle with a lotus design, mañjiras etc.
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