PREFACE

The present Andhra Pradesh comprising Telangāṇa, Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema is a land of temples. It is studded with the Early Chāḷukya, Eastern Chāḷukya, Raṣṭrakūṭa, Noḷaṁba, Chola, Kākaṭīya and Vijayanagara temples, which are rich in variety and artistic merit. Most of the scholars in Andhra Pradesh have worked upon the architectural and iconographical aspects of major Saivite and Vaishnavite deities only. The Saptamāṭrikas or Seven divine mothers (Brāhmaṇī, Mahēśwari, Kaumārī, Vaishṇavi, Varāhi, Indrāṇi and Chāmuṇḍa) either separately or in a group are found in abundance in the Early Chāḷukya, Eastern Chāḷukya, Raṣṭrakūṭa, Noḷaṁba, Chola, Kākaṭīya and Vijayanagara temples and Museums in Andhra Pradesh. The innumerable number of Saptamāṭrika panels and images found in the temples and Museums of Andhra Pradesh reveals that the cult of Saptamāṭrikas was popular and widely prevalent in Āndhradēśa during the early medieval and medieval periods. Excepting a few scholarly articles on Saptamāṭrikas by Dr.P.N.Naidu and a brief notice of the Saptamāṭrikas in the works of Douglas Barret, C.Sivaramamurthi, M.L.Nigam, K.Krishnamurthy and Prof.M.Krishna Kumari, no other scholars have studied the origin, antiquity and growth of Saptamāṭrika cult in Āndhradēśa and also the stages in the evolution of the iconographic features and the iconographic peculiarities of the sculptural panels and images of the Saptamāṭrikas found in the temples and Museums of Āndhradēśa. As such there is a need for a comprehensive work on 'Saptamāṭrikas in the temple art of Āndhradēśa' and therefore this topic has been selected for my research work. The origin, antiquity, descriptions of Saptamāṭrikas in Literature and the iconographic features of Saptamāṭrikas in the temple art of Āndhradēśa (from the Early Chalukya to the Vijayanagara period (6th to 17th century A.D.) are studied in this thesis in a systematic and detailed manner.

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