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Dr. D. Suresh



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H. No. 5-11-559, Srinagar Colony, Naimnagar,

Hanmakonda, Warangal- 506009, Telengana State (India)

Website: [www.spwingo.org/www.spwijournal.com](http://www.spwingo.org/www.spwijournal.com)

Email: [spwi.ngo.2014@gmail.com](mailto:spwi.ngo.2014@gmail.com) / [devathsuresh@gmail.com](mailto:devathsuresh@gmail.com)

[editor@spwijournal.com](mailto:editor@spwijournal.com) Ph: 9959026635

[spwijournalforsocialwelfare@gmail.com](mailto:spwijournalforsocialwelfare@gmail.com)



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H. No. 5-11-559, Srinagar Colony, Naimnagar,

Hanmakonda, Warangal- 506009, Telengana State (India)

Website: [www.spwingo.org/www.spwijournal.com](http://www.spwingo.org/www.spwijournal.com)

Email: [spwi.ngo.2014@gmail.com](mailto:spwi.ngo.2014@gmail.com) / [devathsuresh@gmail.com](mailto:devathsuresh@gmail.com)

[editor@spwijournal.com](mailto:editor@spwijournal.com) Ph: 9959026635

[spwijournalforsocialwelfare@gmail.com](mailto:spwijournalforsocialwelfare@gmail.com)



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**ANCIENT HINDU DEVOTIONAL PLACES IN  
TELANGANA STATE – A STUDY**

**Gughulothu Venkateshwarlu**

Research Scholar,

Potti Sriramulu University,

Hyderabad, TS

**Abstract:** Temples are considered one of the most important places in Hinduism. They are seen as a sacred place where Hindus can go to worship and connect with their gods. Temples hold an important place in one's mind and are often seen as a symbol of hope. For many Hindus, a temple is a place of refuge during difficult times. While some temples in the country are extremely popular, several others are not so popular. Either way, temples across the country are visited widely. Data shared by India in Pixels states that there are about 6.48 lakh temples in India. Every place of worship across the country has a unique aspect to them which pulls millions of people from near and far. Apart from the peaceful and tranquil environment surrounding these holy institutions, the destinations are also rich in heritage. The temples in Telangana evoke such architectural wonder that amplifies its beauty. The state has many places of worship to its name and to make your travel itinerary more diverse we have churned out a tailored list that contains some of the renowned places for pilgrimage. In this paper, I explain the major 30 ancient temples of Telangana State.

**Keywords:** Telangana, Ancient Temples, History of Temples.

**Introduction**

The land of spiritual bliss, splashed by the waters of holy rivers, Telangana State is the place, which was once inhabited by the lords themselves, who left behind their imprints and a sense of their divine presence. This region exhibits several holy temples that are known for their architectural magnificence and intriguing historical tales.

The temples, like the rest of India, seem to have been constructed according to *Vasthu Sashttras* on the banks of rivers, on mountain tops or in forests and towns. Strong

mythological beliefs have rendered this place one of the religious hubs of the country. The number of festivals and fairs organized near these temples are attended by devotees in huge numbers. Indians are enormously deep-rooted about their religion and quite evidently, these temples are thronged by pilgrims, owing to the rich heritage and cultural significance these places carry.

Historically early temples start from the Gupta Period (5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup>CE) and the Deccan Region, particularly in Telangana, temple building activity was traced from 6<sup>th</sup> CE during the period of *Chalukyas* of Badami and continued during the period of *Rashtrakutas*, *Chalukyas* of Kalyani and *Vemulawada*, *Kakatiyas*, *Kanduru Chodas*, *Velama* Chiefs, *Mansuri Nayakas* and *Vijayanagara* period. Though many dynasties ruled the state, most of the temples are constructed during the period of *Kakatiyas*. The *Kakatiyas* who were the first independent rulers of the region established new towns, constructed rulers of the region established new towns, constructed irrigation tanks, and built temples for the economic development and welfare of the people. Hence, they are fondly remembered by the people even today.

The present study focused on the *Laxmi Narasimha Swamy* Temple, Yadagirigutta; *Sita Ramachandra Swamy* Temple, Bhadrachalam; *Saraswati* Temple, Basara; *Bghadrakali* Temple, Hanmakonda; *Navabrahma* Temple, Alampur; *Thousand Pillar* Temple, Hanmakonda; *Ramappa* Temple, Palampet; *Raja Rajeshwara Swamy* Temple, Vemulawada; and *Ghanpur Group* of Temple, Ghanpur (Mulug) etc., are some of the famous temples in Telangana State.

### **Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple**

Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Yadagirigutta, Nalgonda District, which is dedicated to Lord Shri Narasimha Swamy situated on a hillock. The sanctum sanctorum or *Garbhagriha* is in a cave, under a huge slanting rock, which covers half the adobe. Glowing bright atop the *Shikharam* of *Garbhagriha* of this cave temple is the golden *Sudarshana* Chakra, the adornment as well as the weapon of lord Vishnu and is said to possess mystic powers. It is believed that it turns on its own at times, as no human hand can do so.

As per the legends in *Treta Yugam*, sage *Yadarishi*, son of the great sage *Rishyasrunge* and *Santa Devi* did penance inside a cave with the blessings of lord Hanuman on this hill. Pleased with his deep devotion, Lord *Narasimha* appeared in front of him as *Jawala Narasimha* appeared in front of him as *Jwala Narasimha*. Sage *Yadarishi* could not withstand the intensity of this apparition and requested the lord to appear in a peaceful form, the lord honoured the request by appearing in the form of *Yogananda Narasimha*. However, sage *Yadarishi* was not content seeing the lord alone and prayed to see the lord with his consort. Honouring the request made by his devotee, the lord appeared with Lakshmi in the form of *Lakshmi Narasimha*.

To see these three forms, one must go through an entrance that narrows itself into a dark cave. One can see two rocks fastened to each other and forming a vertical cup of

about one foot between them. On the other side of the rock, one can see the image of a serpent head. This is said to be the aspect of God known as *Jwala Narasimha*, the first manifestation of the lord. On the opposite rock, there is another image of a lord seated in meditation as *Yogananda Narasimha*. The third manifestation as *Lakshmi Narasimha* is also on the same rock. There are two more forms of the lord – the *Ugra Narasimha* and the *Gandabherunda* (Garuda bird or the eagle). The *Ugra Narasimha* is the wide entrance of the cave itself and the *Gandabherunda* is the 5<sup>th</sup> form of the lord, which is believed to have been found sculpted on the rock underneath the *Anjaneya Swamy* statue. Due to the presence of 5 forms of lord *Narasimha*, the place is also worshipped as the *Pancha Narasimha Kshetram*.

The origin of this temple is mentioned in the *Skanda Purana* and it is reputed to be a *Rishi Aradhana Kshetram* (Center of worship for sages). The *Aradhanam* and *Puja* in this temple are performed according to *Pancharatra Agamam*. The *Puja Vidhanam* (procedure) was set by the late *Shri Vangeepuram Narasimhacharyulu*, who served as *Sthanacharya* of this temple.

Major festivals celebrated at this temple include *Brahmothsavam*, which is performed during the months of Falgun (February-March) for 11 days and *Jayanthi Mahotsavam*, performed for 3 days from *Vysakha Sudha Dwadasi* to *Chathurdashi* every year. Apart from these major festivals, there are routine festivals conducted as per the temple timetable. Every day, many pilgrims visit this temple for performing *Pujas*, *Saswata Kalyanam*, *Abhishekam*, tonsuring and completing other vows. On weekends, public holidays and festival days, the congregation goes up many folds.

### **Shri Hemachala Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple**

*Shri Hemachala Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy*, one of the most ancient temples, is in the Mallur Ghats in the Mangapet Mandal of Warangal district. The hillock, in the shape of a crescent moon, is adorned with many temples and is known for its herbal and medical plant protection centre.

According to legends, these hills were gifted by *Ravana*, the demon king, to his sister *Shurpanaka*. Lord Rama, along with *Lakshmana* killed all the demons headed by *Khara* and *Dushana*, who inhabited this area. It is also believed that the great sage *Agastya* established the shrines and named this place *Hemachalam*. There are many stories of miracles associated with the deity and the temple. It is believed that the devotees who offer their prayers to the deity and visit the other temples are saved from all troubles and tribulations. The *Chintamani* flows through the forest area of the Hemachalam as a stream all through the year and is the source of water for the people. It is believed that its water has medicinal properties.

Every day at around noon. The traditional *Abhishekam* takes place, after which, the temple priest decorates the idol, which is carved on the hill wall with special oil

brought by the devotees or the priest himself. The priest shows something very amazing. He presses his forefinger onto the chest of the idol and one can see the finger pressing into the rock without resistance. As he takes out his finger, the trough formed by pressing slowly, fills up, leaving an impression on the chest. The Navel Portion (*Boddu*) of the idol secretes a fluid (*Cheemu*) at regular intervals of time, which is distributed to devotees on specified days. It is considered an elixir to treat various ailments including infertility and mental imbalance.

Other temples in this area are *Shri Veeranjaneya*, *Shri Bhavani Shambhu Lingeshwara Swamy*, *Shiri Ramalayam* and *Shri Venugopala Swamy* Temples.

The *Thirukalyanam* and the *Brahmostsavam* of the presiding deity are celebrated on *Vaishakha Shuddha Chaturdashi* (April-May) every year with great devotion and fervour. The temple is thronged by devotees throughout the year.

### **Shri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple**

The Shri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple, one of the most famous temples in the country, dedicated to Lord Rama, is situated on the banks of River Godavari at Bhadrachalam in Bhadrachal Kothagudem district. Attracting lakhs of devotees from all over the world, this temple town has a documented history of the construction of Lord *Sri Rama* temple during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century CE.

The name Bhadrachalam is derived from *Bhadragiri* or the mountain of Bhadra, a *Rishi* born to Mount *Meru* and *Menaka*. According to legends, *Bhadra Maharishi* undertook intensive *Tapa* in this area, which was known as *Dandakaranya* and wanted lord *Rama* to reside on the hillock. Lord *Rama*, who was in search of his consort, *Sita*, promised to fulfil the *Rishi's* desire upon his return, after finding *Sita*. However, he flew back to *Ayodhya* after annihilating *Revana* and never returned to *Dandakaanya*. The sage, however, continued his severe penance even after the culmination of *Tretha Yuga*. As the promise made to his devotee during *Ram Avatara* was not fulfilled, *Maha Vishnu* manifested himself as *Vykuntha Rama* for his devotee, signalling his arrival by blowing *Shankh*, accompanied by *Sita* and *Lakshmana*. Thus, the idol of lord *Rama* has four hands *Shankh* on the right, *Chakra* on his left and bow and arrow in the other two hands. The place where the deities rested is *Bhadra – Chalam* (hill of *Bhadra*).

*Rama* was an inhabitant of *Bhadrireddypalem*, a mile away from this holy place. One night, she saw lord *Rama* in her dream and was told by the lord that, the saints and sages are worshipping my embodied deity settled on *Bhadragiri*. He asked her to trace them, perform *Puja* and attain salvation. The next morning, she started searching for the deities peeped into an anthill and found the deities hidden in it. She poured hundreds of pots filled with Godavari water on the anthill, which tardily dissolved it and gave way to show the hidden deities. Since then, she used to perform *Puja* daily while offering *Naivedyam* with fruits fallen from near the *Palmyra* tree and constructed a *Mandapam* with the help of local villagers.

*Kancherla Gopanna*, popularly known as Bhakta Ramadas was the *Tasildar* of Bhadrachalm. A staunch devotee of lord Rama, he constructed the temple using the revenue collected from the public. He was imprisoned in a dungeon at Golconda Fort for misappropriation of government funds. Lord *Rama* and *Lakshman* are believed to have appeared before the Sultan and paid the money due from *Gopanna* and got him released from prison. His compositions in praise of Lord *Rama* are very popular.

Rama *Navami* and *Kartik Purnima* are the major festivals celebrated here. This holy town with beautiful landscapes provided by River Godavari attracts several devotees throughout the year from all parts of the country. Launch trips, on the scenic route, between Bhadrachalam and Rajahmundry on the River Godavari are breathtaking.

### **Shri Ramalingeshwara Swamy Temple**

*Shri Ramalingeshwara Swamy* Temple is located on a small hillock and dedicated to lord *Shiva* at Keesaragutta, in Ranga Reddy district. This temple traces its antiquity to *Thretha Yuga*.

Legend has it that *Shri Rama* installed the *Shivalinga* here alone for the sin of killing *Ravana*, a *Brahmin* by birth. He selected this beautiful valley surrounded by hills and verdant greenery for the purpose and ordered *Hanuman* to bring a *Shivalinga* from *Varanasi* for installation. As *Hanuman* got late, lord *Shiva* himself appeared before *Shri Ram* and gifted a *Shivalinga* for installation. Hence, this manifestation of lord *Shiva* was named *Ramalingeshwara* as lord *Shri Rama* had installed the *Lingam*.

When *Hanuman* returned with 101 *Lingams* from *Varanasi* for lord *Rama* to choose the most appropriate one, he felt aggrieved that a *Lingam* was already installed. It is said that he scattered them all over the area. To mollify *Hanuman*, *Shri Rama* ordained that preference be given to him for worship at the temple. He also said that the hillock where the *Lingam* was installed would bear his name *Kesarigiri* to denote Hanuman, the son of Kesari. Over a period, due to regional language influences the name is now known as *Keesara* and the hill as *Keesaragutta*. *Keesaragutta* was once the capital city of the *Vishnukundin* dynasty.

There is also a temple of lord *Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy* built during the time of the Qutb Shahi period. There is a *Veda Pathasala* run by *Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams* established here.

Certain exploration and excavation missions conducted by the Archaeological Department in and around the *Keesaragutta* temple brought to light several brick temples, cells and other structures encompassed by brick *Prakara* wall along with coins, beads, stucco figures, Garbhapatra, Pottery, Brahmi label inscriptions datable to 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> CE. On top of one of the rock-cut caves, an early Telugu label inscription reading as *Thulachuvanru* can be noticed. Based on palaeography, the inscription is dated to the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE.

## Jogulamba Temple and Navabrahma Temples

Alampur town known as the City of Temples, is in Jogulamba Gadwal district. The principal deities at Alampur are the goddess *Jogulamba* and lord *Balbrahmeshwara*. Alampur is also referred to as *Dakshina Kashi* since it is the confluence (*Sangam*) of the Rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra, another popular name for this place is *Nava Brahmeshwara Theertha*.

The *Jogulamba* temple is in the southeast corner of the village on the banks of river Tungabhadra. The old temple of *Jogulamba* was destroyed by Bahamani Sultans in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The idols of *Jogulamba* and her two *Shaktis Chandi* and *Mundi* were hidden in *Balbrahmeswara Swamy* temple until 2005. The new temple was constructed at the same place and the goddess was reconsecrated. The temple is surrounded by a water pool. The local people of Alampur attribute an interesting reason for it. It is believed that the goddess *Jogulamba* is an *Ugra Rupa* (highly energetic form) and this water pool keeps the atmosphere cool so that people can easily worship her.

*Shakti Peethas* are the most divine seats of the mother goddess. The *Jogulamba* temple is one of the *Ashtadasa Shakti Peethas* (18 holy adobes of the mother goddess). Here, *Shakti* is worshipped as *Jogulamba Devi* or *Yogamaba Devi* and lord *Shiva* as *Balbrahmeswara Swamy*. It is believed that *Oordhav Danta Panki* (upper jaw with tooth) of *Shakti* fell here. *Jogulamba* is derived from the word *Joginula Amma*, which means *Mother of Jogins/Yoginis*. The term *Jogini/Yogini* refers to a woman, who has given up all material pleasures. *Yogini* also means a dancer, whose life is dedicated to God.

The idol of the goddess *Jogulamba* is in a sitting position. She has a huge amount of hair with lizard, scorpion, own and human skull depicted on it. The panel of *Saptamatrikas*, *Vighneswara* and *Veenapani Veerabhadra* are also present in the temple.

## Navabrahma Temples

As the name indicates, 9 temples are dedicated to lord Shiva in this town. These temples date back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Badami Chalukyas, who ruled for about 200 years beginning from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, built these temples.

The *Navabrahma* temples are *Bala Brahma*, *Tharaka Brahma*, *Swarga Brahma*, *Padma Brahma*, *Garuda Brahma*, *Kumara Brahma*, *Arka Brahma*, *Vira Brahma* and *Vishwa Brahma*. These temples are all enclosed in a courtyard on the left bank of the river *Thungabhadra*. The *Bala Brahma* temple is the principal shrine of worship. It dates to the year 702 CE as per the inscriptions found here. *Shivaratri* is celebrated in great splendour here. The *Tharaka Brahma* temple is partly in ruins and has no image in the sanctum. It bears Telugu – Kannada inscriptions from the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The *Swarga Brahma* temple with an imposing tower is among the finest in Alampur and is an excellent specimen of *Chalukyan* architecture and sculpture. It contains several sculptures in bas-relief and dates to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The *Padma Brahma* temple too is partly in ruins and



contains a *Shivalinga* of clear stone with a mirror-like finish. The *Viswa Brahma* temple is among the most artistic of the *Nava Brahma* temples. The sculptural work here depicts scenes from Hindu epics.

### Shri Bhadrakali Temple

Considered to be one of the oldest temples dedicated to the goddess *Bhadrakali*, this temple is located on a hilltop against a picturesque setting on the banks of the *Bhadrakali* Lake between the twin cities of Hanmakonda and Warangal.

According to folklore, *Pulakasi* II (CE 609-654) of *Badami Chalukyas*, on his expedition to *Vengi*, along with his brother *Kubja Vishnu Vardhan*, halted at Warangal and worshipped goddess *Bhadrakali* for success in the war. He constructed a temple, as he was victorious over the *Vengi Kingdom* in 625 CE. It is believed that the goddess is self-manifested and later the temple was renovated during the early *Kakatiya* Period.

Two inscriptions recorded on the pillars of *Mukha Mandapa* mention *Erra*, probably the son of *Mantri Vitthana* and *Panchakshari (Namah Shivaya)* and *Meesaraganda* son of *Vittalmatya*. The existence of the temple was recorded in the post-Kakatiya literature as well. After the fall of the *Kakatiyas*, the temple lost its importance and was disturbed by the treasure hunters. It came into focus again in 1950 with the magnificence of *Shri Manganlal Samej* who planned to re-develop the temple inspired by the deity in a dream. It was thus rededicated on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1950.

The temple is a *Sandhara* type of temple having inner *Pradhakshina Patha* consisting of *Garbhagriha* and pillared *Mandapa* facing west. The goddess is seated in *Padmasana* on a corpse having 8 hands carrying *Khadga* (Sword), *Churi*, *Rosary*, *Damarukam* on the left side and bell, *Trisula*, Severed head of a demon and *Pana Pathra* in the right hands.

Other attractions include an artificial lake of a 2 ½ kms radius near the temple and many natural rock formations in the surroundings. These add to the spiritual charm of the temple. Some of the uniquely shaped rocks are said to possess immense spiritual powers.

The best time to visit the famous *Bhadrakali* temple in Warangal is the Telugu month of *Sravana* (August-September) during which a festival is organized and the deity is aesthetically decorated in various forms. People who visit *Bhadrakali* temple also visit the Hanmakonda fort, the *Sideshwara* temple inside the fort, the *Thousand Pillar* Temple, remnants of the *SwayambhuShiva* temple and the *Keerthi Thoranas* in Warangal Fort.

### Shri Raja Rajeshwara Swamy Temple

*Shri Raja Rajeshwara* temple at Vemulawada town in Sirisilla Rajanna district is one of the ancient and famous temples of Telangana. In the inscriptions, *Vemulavada* is referred to as *Lembulavataka*, *Lembulavada* and *Lembalavada*. It was the capital of the *Chalukyas* of Vemulavada who ruled from 750 to 973 CE. This place is closely associated

with the famous Kannada poet *Pampa*, the author of *Bharatha* or *Vikramarjunavijaya* during the period of *Arikesari II*.

Drawing many devotees throughout the year, it is popularly known as *HaritharaKshetram*. Though the presiding deity is lord *Raja Rajeshwara* in the form of *Neela Lohitha Shivalingam*, there are two *Vaishnava* temples dedicated to *Shri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy* and *Shri Sita Ramachandra Swamy* within the main complex.

A unique feature of this temple is the presence of the *Garbhagirha* has *Shri Lakshmi Ganapathi*, lord *Raja Rajeshwara* in the form of *Neela Lohitha Shiva Linga*, goddess *Shri Raja Rajeshwari* and *Nandi* facing the lord. Many pilgrims take a sacred bath in the holy tank, *Dharma Gundam*, before proceeding for *Darshan*.

Another unique practice at Vemulawada is the *Kode Makkubadi*. People perform Puja to a Bull, representing *Nandishwara* for fulfilling their wishes as a token of thanks giving to the lord. As per *Bhavishyothara Purana*, lord *Surya* recovered from disability by praying at this shrine. It is therefore referred to as *Bhaskara Kshethram* also. Indra, the King of Devas was cured of *Brahmahatya Dosham* by worshipping here. *Raja Narendra*, the grandson of *Parikshit*, who in turn was the grandson of *Arjuna*, is believed to have been cured of leprosy, by taking a bath in the *Dharma Gundam* (scared tank). It is said that lord *Shiva* with his consort appeared in a vision to bless him and directed him to retrieve a temple for its installation.

*Mahashivarathri* is a major and notified festival celebrated in this temple. Lakhs of pilgrims from all corners of the state and other states visit this shrine during the festival. *Shri Rama Navami* is another major festival during which *Kalyanotasavam* is performed for *Shri Sita Ramachandra Swamy*. Another important monument in Vemulawada is the *Baddegesvara* temple now known as *Bhimeswara* temple built by *King Baddega* (850-895 CE).

### **Kulpakji Jain Temple**

Kolanpaka temple, also known as Kulpakji, is a Jain temple located in the village of Kilanpaka in Yadadri Bhongiri district. The village was also known as Kllipaka in the inscriptions of the 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Century CE and was ruled successively by *Rastrakutas*, *Chalukyas* of *Kalyani* and *Kakatiyas* of Warangal. During the 11<sup>th</sup> Century CE, this village was a prominent religious centre for *Jainism* just like *Ellora* and *Patancheruvu*.

The temple houses three idols, one each of lord *Rishabha*, lord *Neminath* and lord *Mahaveer*. This temple is said to be more than two thousand years old. In its present form, it is more than 800 years old. It is believed that *Jainsim* was prevalent in Telangana before the 4<sup>th</sup> century and *Kolanpaka* was one of the prominent centres of *Jainsim* from early times. There are 8 idols of the other *Thirthankars* on both sides of the main temple. The statue of lord Mahaveer is 130 centimetres tall and is said to be made of a single piece of jade. Idols of lord *Simandar Swamy* and goddess *Padmavathi* are installed on either side of the main temple.

The temple was recently renovated by employing more than 150 artisans from Rajasthan and Gujarat. It is an important pilgrimage centre for *SvethambaraJains*.

### **Shri Someshwara Swamy Temple**

The *Someshwara Swamy* temple is in Kolanupaka village very close to the *KulpakjiJain* temple. Adorned with beautiful carvings and sculptures the temple is built in *Chalukyan* style and is a treat to the eyes. Inscriptions found here date the temple back to the 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> Century and narrate the stories of it being patronized by the *Chalukyan* kings.

The main deity of the temple is lord *Shiva* in the form of *Swayambu* or *Someshwara Swamy* and his consort goddess *Shakthi* or *Chandika*. It is believed that this is the birthplace of *Renukacharya*, the great *Veera Saiva* saint, who was born in the *Swayambu Linga* at this village and absorbed into it after preaching *Veera Saivam*. A statue of *Renukacharya* is present in the *Garbhagriha* along with *Swayambu Linga*.

### **Shri Chennakesava Swamy Temple**

Gangapur is a village situated in Mahbubnagar district. Gangapur is an important religious centre from the *Kalyani Chalukyan* times. Of the several inscriptions found here, one belongs to the time of *Someshvara*, four belong to the time of *Vikramaditya VI* and three to the time of *Bhulokamalla Someshvara III*. The inscription of the time of *Vikramaditya VI* dated 1091 CE gives information about the existence of the temple and refers to the gods *Sagaresvardadeva*, *Kesavadeva*, *Komaresvaradeva*, *Somanthadeva*, *Salesvaradeva*, *Bhimeshwara* and *Shri Pojjishvaradeva*.

The principal deity in the *Chennakesava* temple is lord *Vishnu*, standing in *Samabhanga* posture. The deity has four hands, carrying *Padma*, *Shankh*, *Chakra*, and *Gada*. This form of *Vishnu*, according to iconographical texts is known as *Keshava*. Since this image is so beautiful, it is known as *Chennakeshava Swamy*.

The temple has entrances on the east, south and north. Each entrance is preceded by a porch and leads into the hall of the temple. The temple consists of a hall, an *Antarala* and a *Garbhagriha*. The superstructure is of the stepped pyramidal variety with a dome-like crowning member and finial. The style of the temple is *Kalyani Chalukyan*. In the temple complex, there is a beautiful step well (*Koneru*) along with four minor shrines on four corners of the main temple.

### **Shri Padmakshi Temple**

Shri Padmakshi Temple is in Hanmakonda city in the Hanmakonda district on the top of a beautiful hillock. According to a stone inscription pillar (1117 CE) *Mailamma*, the wife of the Minister *Beta* of the *Chalukya* king *Vikramaditya VI* built a Jain temple named *Kadalaya Basadi* and made endowments of land for its maintenance. This *Jain Basadi* is the *Padmakshi* temple of the present day.

The main deity of this temple is the goddess *Padmakshi*, who is fondly called *Amma* by local people. The meaning of *Amma* in the local language, Telugu is mother. She is considered a *mother of mothers*.

On the boulder of the hillock *Jain Theerthankars*, *Mahaveera* and *Parshvanatha* are depicted in different postures. *Betha* and his wife *Mailamma Devi* are depicted by the side of lord *Mahaveera*.

On the boulder of the hillock *Jain Theerthanks*, *Mahaveera* and *Parashvanath* are depicted in different postures. *Betha* and his wife *MailammaDevi* are depicted by the side of lord *Mahaveera*.

The carvings of book-rests (*Vyasa Pithas*) on the hillock prove beyond doubt that *Padmakshi* (Hanmakonda) hillock was a place of learning and sacred *Thirtha* for Jains like *Shravana Belagola*.

A stone pillar inscription, a stunning quadrangular column made with granite black stone, is located at the entrance of this temple. The four pillars are marvellous and impressive. There are four gateways to the temple, one at the entrance and three at the end. These *Thoranas* or gateways are very old and inspired the later Kakatiya kings to construct the *Kirthi Thoranas* at their fort in Warangal in a magnificent way.

### **Shri Chaya Someshwara and Pachala Someshwara Swamy Temples**

Panagal is a village situated close to Nalgonda town of Nalgonda district. In the inscriptions, the village has been referred to as *Panugallu* and *Panungallu*. The place has been important since the time of *Chalukyas of Kalyani*. The *Chodas of Kanduru* ruled over *Kandurunadu* with *Konduru* and *Panugallu* as their capitals from 1060 to 1160 CE, it continued to be an important place under *Kakatiyas* also. There are three important temples in *Panagal* namely – *Pachala Someshwara Temple*, *Chaya Someshwara Temple* and *Venkateshwara Temple*.

#### ***Pachala Someshwara temple***

According to a stone inscription the *Pachala Someshwara Swamy* temple can be dated back to 1124 CE. It is a unique temple in Telangana as it has four shrines with excellent sculptures on walls and pillars, depicting stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Some of the erotic images on the walls are like the ones found in *Khajuraho* among another important pillars such as *Shiva* as *Gajasamharamurthy*, *Revana Shaking Kailasa*, *Narasimha* killing *Hiranyakasipu* and battle scenes of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The outside walls are decorated with carvings of the gods. Besides, one can also see a huge *Nandi*, the *Ashta Dikpalakas*, a dancing *Ganesha* and lord *Vishnu* in the form of a boar.

#### ***Chaya Someshwara Temple***

This temple is a triple shrine (*Thrikotalaya*) derived from its name because of the mystifying shadow of a pillar shape falling on the *Shivalinga* all through the day. One architectural and stylistic ground of this temple may be assigned to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple

*Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy* temple situated on the banks of River Godavari, Dharmapuri of Jagityal district is an important religious place, owing to the temple dedicated to *Narasimha Swamy*. The river flows North to South at Dharmapuri as opposed to its East-West flow at all other places, thereby earning the name of *Dakhina Vahini*.

The name of the village Dharmapuri is mentioned in the *Kurkiyala* inscriptions of *Jinavallabha* datable to 945 century CE as *Dharmavura* or *Dharmapuramu*. There are two temples of lord *Shri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy* namely *Pata* and *Kotta*.

Old *Narasimha Swamy (Pata)* temple consists of a Garbhagriha and 48 pillared Mandapa. The idol of lord *Narasimha Swamy* in the *Yogi* form is housed in the Garbhagriha. The new temple (*Kotha*) has two *Simha Dwarams* (main entrances). The main entrance of the temple complex is the *PeddaGopuram* or *Pedda Devalaya Simhadwaram*.

### Shri Lakshmi Narayana Swamy Temple

The *Jinad/Jainath* village of Adilabad district is situated at the northern tip of Telangana state. A broken inscription written in *Devanagari* script, in *Sanskrit* language recovered from a nearby area records the achievements of *Paramara King Jagaddeva*, a subordinate of *Chalukya King Tribhuvanamalla* of *Kalyana*, who ruled *Kolanupaka* from 1104-08 CE and foundation of an *Agrahara* and erection of a temple of *Nimvoaditya* by *Padmavathi*, wife of *Lolarka* in the city.

The principal deity of the *Lakshmi Narayana* temple, lord *Vishnu*, can be seen standing in *Samabhanga* posture. He has four hands carrying *Shankh*, *Padma*, *Gadha* and *Chakra*. This form of lord *Vishnu*, according to iconographical texts is known as *Narayana*.

The temple faces east. It is erected on a high platform known as *Jagathi*. The platform serves as an open promenade and *Pradakshinapatha* around the temple. The compartments of the temple namely *Mukha Mandapa*, *Antarala* and *Garbhagriha* are interconnected. They are planned on one single axis, which runs west. The temple was constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE in the *Hemadpanthi* style.

The entrance to the temple is marked by a wide, painted arch, which has been built recently. There is a *Dwajasthambh*, a tall iron pillar inlaid with gold-plated layers right in front of the temple. There are about 16 steps leading to the central hall. The deity is in the hall and wide stones are laid leading to the sanctum sanctorum. The sanctum area has four stone pillars with intricate engravings on them. Another idol here is of the reclining *Mahavishnu*, which has intricate figures of the *Devaganas* and sages standing in reverence.

The exterior of the temple exhibit figurines that display the kind of dresses and mannerisms that had been in use. There is a figure of a maid who poses with a mirror in her hand. The sandals that she wears are comparable to the kind of utility footwear being used in the present day. The hair has been made up which, displays the care

taken of physical hygiene in those days. On another face is the display of the churning of the nectar of gods by Asuras on one side and the Devas on the other. Apart from the temple structures being made from slabs of granite, the other structures and the walls surrounding the temple have been made from slate.

The *Navagrah* idols representing the nine planets are placed on a raised slab near a huge banyan tree. Also, in the temple is a big *Shivalinga* with intricate carvings.

The *Laxmi Narayana Swamy Brahmotsavam* is celebrated from *Karthika Sudda Astami* to *Bahula Saptami* (October-November) attracting many devotees as well as tourists from all over the country.

### Thousand Pillar Temple

Thousand Pillar Temple is located in Hanmakonda City of Hanmakonda district. According to an inscription setup in the premises, the temple was built by *Kakathi Rudradeva* Maharaja, who was ruling from *Anumakonda* Pattana, consecrated on Megha Su 13, Chitrabhanu, S' 1084 (19<sup>th</sup> January 1163 CE) to the god *Rudreswara*, after his own name as well as the gods *Vasudeva* and *Suryadeva* and granted the village of *Maddicheruvula* for their worship.

This is the earliest *Trikuta* temple built on star-shaped Jagathi facing South having three shrines consisting of *Garbhagriha* and *Antarala* on the West, North and East enshrining *Shivalinga*, *Vasudeva* and *Surya* with square *Ranga Mandapa* in the centre. The *Ranga Mandapa* is open at the corners allowing better lighting. Now only the *Shivalinga* on the western side of the shrine is worshipped. The remaining two shrines are empty, similar images of *Shivalinga*, *Vasudeva* and *Surya* along with Ganesha can be seen on four sides of the inscription setup by King *Rudradeva* in the temple premises.

The *Ranga Mandapa* pillars, ceiling, and lintel of the three shrines are adorned with Puranic scenes. The ceiling of the central apartments of the hall are not circular, they are 8/16 sided. The temple is on a high *Adhistana*, which not only provides strength to the main structure but also enables the visitor to walk around the temple. In front of this temple (on the southern side) is a *Kalyana Mandapa* (which is under reconstruction by the ASI) and *Nandi* pavilion in between. At the northeast of the temple, there is a tank (*Pushkarini*).

This temple is locally known as *Veyisthambhala Gudi* (Thousand Pillared Temple) as the shrines and *Kalyana Mandapa* consist of Hundreds of pillars and pilasters.

As per the traditional belief, when King *Prathapa Rudra* was born to *Prola Raju II*, the King consulted the astrologers regarding the future of his newborn. It was, as the story goes, predicted that he would kill his father, but would become a great ruler if he was permitted to live. The ministers of the king's court wanted the king to kill the child but *Prola Raju* took his son to *Swayambhu* temple (at *Ekasila Nagaram*) in the dead of night and left him there. The chief priest of the temple, *Rudrajiya*, took the abandoned

and unidentified child in his cart and named him *Rudradeva*. He raised the child with great care and trained him to be a warrior.

*Prola Raju* used to visit the *Swayambhu* temple during the early hours every day as a matter of routine. Years passed by and *Prola Raju* was blessed with another son. During one of his visits to the temple in the early hours, he found the young and charming *Rudra* asleep on the temple premises. Overcome with his paternal love, he embraced *Rudra*. *Rudra* however mistook him to be an enemy and stabbed the king with his dagger. All this happened in a sudden spurt. The king was wounded. He called for his ministers and ordered them to crown *Rudra* as his successor. *King Rudra* to atone for the sin of killing his father, constructed the Thousand Pillar temple.

### Ramappa Temple

*Ramappa Temple* located at *Palampet* Village of *Mulug* district, popularly called *Ramappagudi* or *Ramappa* temple is an archaeological wonder. It is regarded as the brightest star in the galaxy of Medieval Deccan temples. It is the most elaborate and striking example of the intricate carvings which bring out the dexterity of the *Kakatiyan* sculptors, depicting legendary tales, dance forms and a variety of musical instruments.

An inscription on the four faces of a polished column within the *Mandapa* of the temple records the funding of the city and a lake at *Palampet*. The construction of the lake and the temple is attributed to the efforts of *Recherla Rudra*, an able and loyal general of *Ganapatideva Maharaja*, an able and loyal general of *Ganapatideva Maharaja* in 1213 CE. Though the temple houses *Rudresvara Swamy* as the presiding deity, in a rare and very unusual manner, the temple is named after *Ramappa*, who was a great planner, head sculptor and a great devotee of lord Shiva. The adjoining lake is also named after him.

The main temple facing East has a pyramidal Shikhara, which is unlike other temples of *Kakatiyas*, having flat roofs. The Shikhara is made of bricks in four tiers (*Chatustala*). A unique feature of the Shikhara is that it is made up of featherweight spongy bricks to reduce the weight of the superstructure. These bricks have a specific gravity of about 0.9 grams/cc and hence, they float on water. The front hall has numerous beautifully carved pillars, which have been positioned to create an effect that combines natural light and space wonderfully. Apart from the engineering feat and technological marvels that are showcased in this complex, the temple depicts the love of art, music and dance patronized by the *Kakatiya* kings. The dexterity of master sculptors is for everyone to feel and see.

The scenes from mythological episodes such as *Samudra Manthan*, *Gopika Vastraharanam*, *Tripura Samharam*, *Daksha Samharam* and *Girija Kalyanam* are like breathing sculptures. The *Dwarapalaks* and lord *Krishna* playing flute as *Muralidhara* are splendid specimens of mirror art over the dolerite stones. The *Nandi Mandapa* merits special mention. Installed on a high platform as the main sanctum sanctorum, facing his lord,

the *Nandi* (the *Vahana* of lord *Shiva*) is majestic and life-like. One can even discern the veins under the skin of this stately bull. The most interesting thing to note here is the bracket figures of twelve females which are life-size. These are arranged in pairs under the eaves on the northern, eastern, and southern sides.

Other temples within the compound include a *Kaateshwaralayam* in the Northwest and *Kameshwaralayam* in the southwest directions.

### **Shri Ganapeshwaralayam and Mukkanteshwarayalam Temple**

*Shri Ganapeshwaralayam* and *Mukkanteshwarayalam* Temple are situated at *Kusumanchi* village of *Khammam* district. The temple is dedicated to lord *Shiva*. Here the deity is worshipped in the form of *Linga*. This *Shivalinga* is very big, intact, beautifully polished and carved with *Brahmasutras*.

*Ganapeshwaralayam* temple is constructed on a high *Adhithana*. The platform of this temple resembles those of the *Ramappa* and *Thousand Pillar* temples. In plan, it is a single shrine facing towards the East. An *Antarala* and pillared *Ranga Mandapa* are in front of it, with entrances from North, South and East. Based on the stylistic grounds and inscriptional evidence, this temple can be dated to around 13<sup>th</sup> CE.

*Mukkanteshwaralayam* is a triple shrine temple; all three shrines being juxtaposed. Each shrine has a *Garbhagriha* and *Antarala* with a common 16 pillared *Mandapa* in front. Of the 16 pillars, the central 4 pillars in front of the central shrine are highly polished and depict sculptural motifs of swans. On stylistic grounds, this temple can be dated to around 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> CE.

Both *Ganapeshwaralayam* and *Mukkanteshwaralayam* are located on the North-West side of the village, about two kilometres from the road point. Both these temples are just a few meters apart from each other.

### **Ganapeshwara Group of Temples**

The *Ganapeshwara* group of temples are in the *Ghanpur* Mandal of *Jayashankar Bhupalapally*. It is locally known as *Kota Gullu*. It is believed that *Ghanpur* got its name from the illustrious king *Ganapatideva* who ruled between 1199 – 1260 CE. Exposed to the vagaries of nature and continuous battles, the temple complex still speaks volumes of the architectural proficiency of the *Kakatiyas*. The *Ghanpur* group of temples, comprising of 22 temples constructed within a double walled stone enclosure contains a veritable museum of *Kakatiya* art and architecture.

Among the group of temples, the main temple dedicated to lord *Shiva*, which faces East, is the most attractive. The main attraction is the *Sabha Mandapa* porches. Mythical figure brackets such as *Gaja Kesari*, a half human half lion riding on an elephant, and a horse head with a lion's back on an elephant are arranged under the eaves of some porticos. To the North of the main temple is another temple dedicated to lord *Shiva*,



which is a replica of the main temple. To the South of the main temple is a 60-pillared *Natya Mandapa* whose central ceiling is decorated with different kinds of motifs. There are 19 sub temples each consisting of a *Garbhagriha* and *Antarala*, placed around the main temple. Luxuriant vegetation serves as a beautiful backdrop to these temples.

### **Shri Kaleshwara and Mukteshwara Temple**

*Shri Kaleshwara* and *Mukteshwara Swamy* temple is located at Kaleshwaram of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, which is the merging point of river Godavari and its tributary, *Pranahitha*. People believe that there is another river named *Saraswathi* flowing under *Godavari* and *Pranahitha*, thus, the meeting point is called *Triveni* (three) *Sangamam* (Confluence).

*Kaleshwaram* has been a noted *Shaivite* centre since early times. During the period of *Kakathi Ganapathideva*, *Dharma Sivacharya* son of *Veshveshwara Shivacharya* and constructed temples here.

Dedicated to Lord *Shiva*, the temple is unique because there are two *Shiva Lingams* installed on a single base side by side. There are supposed to represent lord *Shiva* and lord *Yama*. The *Shiva Lingam* here is one of the three *Jyothirlingams* of lord *Shiva*, which constituted the three concerns of the Andhra Desha, the other two being at *Shrisailam*, *Kurnool* and *Draksharama* in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, which is concerned as the largest of the *Mahapuranas*. It is believed that lord *Shri Rama*, during his exile and in his expeditions in *Dandakaranya* stayed in this place for some time.

A unique feature of this temple is the *Mukteshwara Lingam*, which has two holes that can never be filled with water. It is believed that the *Abhishekam Thirtham* of the *Shiva Lingams* mysteriously appear at the confluence of the rivers.

The walls of this temple are replete with rare sculptures of *Surya*, *Matsya*, *Brahma*, and others. The intricate detailing of these engravings is truly a pleasure to behold. Another interesting sculpture is of a fish. Though the origin of this sculpture is unknown, it is remarkable for its structure and style.

Being in the middle of dense forests, with the backdrop of the confluence of the three rivers this place is an ideal tourist destination, in addition to its religious significance.

### **Shri Mallanna Swamy Temple**

The *Kommuravelli Mallikarjuna Swamy* temple, popularly known, as *Komuravelli Malanna* temple is in a cave on a hillock called *Indrakedadri* village in the Warangal district. The main deity is *Mallananna* or *Mallikarjuna Swamy* (lord *Shiva*), which is in *Vigraha Rupam* (statue) rather than the usual *Lings Rupam* (form), unlike most *Shiva* temples. The status is believed to be more than 500 years old and is made up of *Putta Mannu* (Anthill Earth) which is still intact.

It is believed that *Mallanna*, an incarnation of lord Shiva, married *Gollakethamma* from the Yadava community and *Medalamma* from the Linga Balija community and settled here. So, both goddesses are worshipped here. The people from both *Yadava* and *Balija* communities head all the important rituals. Lakhs of pilgrims congregate on the eve of *Makara Sankranti* when the *Brahmostsavam* starts.

### **Shri Kethaki Sangameshwara Swamy Temple**

*Jharasangam* is a quaint little town in Medak district. It is popular due to the *Sangameshwara Swamy* temple located here. Also known as the *Kethaki Sangameshwara Swamy* temple, it is dedicated to the lord *Thrimurthi*, the combined form of lord *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Shiva*.

There is an old legend associated with the creation of this temple, which is dated to *Krutha Yuga*. *Raja Kupendra*, a king belonging to *Surya Vamsam*, is believed to have been cured of his skin ailment with the water of a stream flowing through the *Kethaki Vanam*, a forest comprising *Kethaki* flower plants. On the same day, he had a dream in which lord *Sangameshwara* asked him to construct a temple for a *Shiva Lingam* located somewhere in that forest. The king did as advise. It is also believed that the Shiva Lingam was created by lord Brahma himself. The stream bearing the healing waters was turned into a *Pushkarini* and is known as *Asta Theertha Amrutha Gundam* consisting of 8 *Theerthas* namely, *Narayana*, *Dharna*, *Rushi*, *Varuna*, *Soma*, *Rudra*, *Indra*, and *Datha*. The lord is called as *Kethaki Sangameshwara* as he resides in the confluence of these 8 *theerthas*.

It is believed that lord Brahma after the creation of the world visited this place for meditation. This is the only temple where *Kethaki* leaves/flowers are offered to lord Shiva.

### **Shri Gnana Saraswathi Temple**

Shri Gnana Saraswathi temple is located on the banks of river Godavari at Basara of Nirmal district. It is one of the few Saraswathi temples in India. It is also believed that this temple is one of the three temples constructed near the confluence of the rivers Manjira and Godavari.

Multiple theories have been drawn about how this temple came into being. Some believe that Maharishi Veda Vyasa, the author of *Mahabharatha*, came to the forests of *Dandakarnya* to meditate on the banks of the river Godavari and found the place to be very peaceful. The divine mother is believed to have appeared before the sage and ordained him to build temples for *Maha Saraswathi*, *Maha Lakshmi*, and *Maha Kali*. The sage *VadaVyasa* did so by bringing three handfuls of sand and sculpting out the figures. This place was initially named after *Vyasa* and was called *Vyasapuri*, which was changed to *Vasara* and ultimately to *Basara*. Due to the presence of goddesses *Saraswathi*, *Lakshmi*, and *Kali*, *Basara* is considered the adobe of the divine trinity.

Another belief is that after his ablutions in the river Godavari, *Maharishi Vyasa* would bring three fistfuls of sand, place them in three small heaps and make images of goddess *Saraswathi*, *Lakshmi* and *Gowri* with his mystic powers for conducting his prayers. However, according to *Brahmandapuram*, *Adikavi Valmiki* installed *Saraswathi* and wrote *Ramayana* here. There is a marble image of Valmiki and a Samadhi near the temple. Some claim that *Bijjaludu*, a king from Karnataka, who ruled the province of *Nandagiri* with Nanded as his capital in the 12<sup>th</sup> CE constructed the temple at Basara. The image of goddess Lakshmi is beside goddess Saraswathi in the sanctum sanctorum and that of Kali is a little away.

Saraswathi is the consort of lord Brahma and is the goddess of wisdom and knowledge. She is the personification of knowledge, arts, science, and crafts. She represents creativity and inspiration. Akshara Ganana is a special ritual, in which devotees bring their children to the temple. The significance of the ritual lies in the fact that it marks the formal beginning of the child's education. The child is given a little turmeric paste to taste, believing that it will clear his/her vocal cords for better learning. The goddess of knowledge answers all the prayers of the committed devotees, filling their life with bliss and happiness.

### **Dichapally Ramalayam**

Being one of the oldest temples of Telangana, *Dichpally Ramalayam*, which is perched atop a hillock, is dedicated to lord *Rama*. The scenic local has an ineffable charm. Built of white and black basalt, the temple has an arch at the foot of the hillock, which beckons visitors. The exquisite carvings on the temple walls, ceilings and doorframes are a must-watch. Towards the south of the temple, there is an extensive tank amidst which stands a pillared *Mandapam*.

This temple was built around the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the *Kakatiya* kings. It is also called *Indhoor Khajuraho* or *Nizamabad Khajuraho*. It has 105 steps and a pedestrian subway connecting it to *Raghunandha* temple in the Nizamabad Urban.

### **Shri Venkateshwara Swamy Temple**

Shri Venkateshwara Swamy temple is located in Jamalapuram in Khammam district. This temple is also known as Telangana *Chinna Tirupathi*, *Swayambhoo* and *SwayamVyaktha*. The temple is believed to be over 1000 years old and is in a serene pleasant ambience surrounded by lush green hills.

This place consists of the historical Suchi Gutta where it is believed that *Jabali Maharishi* earned lord *Venkateshwaras'* blessings after penance.

### **Shri Bhadrakali Sametha Veerabhadra Swamy**

*Shri Bhadrakali Sametha Veerabhadra Swamy* is an ancient temple of lord Veerabhadra Swamy, situated in Zinnaram Mandal of Medak district which is existence from times before the Kakatiya empire.

According to popular folklore, after *King Daksha Prajapathi* was killed during the *Daksha Yagam*, his followers came to live in the area between river *Musi* and *Manjira*. They began to persecute the devotees of *Shiva*, who was *Daksha's* staunch enemy. Lord *Shiva* appeared in the form of lord *Veerabhadra Swamy* to end this persecution and decided to settle down at this place, which was then a dense forest with many *Bilva* trees, considered dearest to lord *Shiva*. As this place was full of trees and always dark, people felt it was like a black-haired caterpillar (*Bontha Purugu*) and named this place after the insect as *Bonthapally*. There is a dense forest adjacent to *Bonthapally* spanning over an area of 40 sq. kms known as Narsapur Reserve Forest. It is the largest forest close to the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

According to another story, a long time ago, there was only the small temple of *Shri Veerabhadra Swamy*. One night, a shepherd was passing in front of that temple. He heard someone calling and turned back and saw lord *Veerabhadra Swamy*. It is believed that the lord told him that he wanted to be shifted to another place. He asked the shepherd to carry him on his shoulder to another location until he got tired. The shepherd carried the lord on his shoulder, walked to about a kilometre, and placed him where the current temple is located. Then the lord asked the shepherd to go home without turning back and if he turns, he would freeze into a statue. The shepherd went accordingly, but after walking to some distance, due to curiosity he turned back. A statue, believed to be that of the shepherd is still there in this village. Lord then came in the dream of a priest and the village heads and told them to build a temple for him where the present big temple is located.

### **Shri Brahmaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy**

The temple of lord *Mallikarjuna* is located close to Ameenpur in a village called *Beeramguda*. It is believed that this temple existed since the 13<sup>th</sup> century due to the efforts of two sages named *Bhoga Maharishi* and *Brugu Maharishi*. Devotes can find a *Shiva Linga* on travelling through an inner route of the temple. The people believe that the inner route leads to Srisailam. There was a four feet statue of lord *Veera Bhadra* earlier due to which the temple was called *Veerappa* or *Beerappa*. Now, the place is popularly known as *Beeramguda*. The temple was significant during the reign of *Kakatiyas* and was developed in the 1980s.

### **Chilukur Balaji Temple**

Chilukur Balaji Temple located in Chilukur village of Ranga Reddy district is dedicated to lord *Shri Venkateshwara* on the banks of *Osman Sagar*. The shrine is instrumental in the temple's popularity as *Visa God*. Set in sylvan surroundings, the temple attracts thousands of pilgrims every day and is an ideal place for retreat and meditation.

Believed to have been built during the time of *Akkanna* and *Madanna*, the uncles of *Bhakta Ramadas*, the style, structure, and appearance indicate its antiquity.

According to legends, a devotee who used to visit *Tirupathi* every year could not do so on one occasion owing to ill health. It is believed that lord *Venkateshwara* appeared in his dream and said, *I am right here in the jungle nearby. You do not have to worry.* The devotee at once went to the place indicated by the lord in his dream and saw an anthill there. When he started digging, accidentally, the axe struck Lord *Balaji's* idol below the chin and on the chest. When blood started flowing, profusely flooding the ground, and turning it scarlet, the devotee could not believe his eyes and was greatly perturbed. He heard a divine voice telling him to pour the cow's milk in large quantities into the anthill. When the devotee did so, a *Swayambhu* idol of lord *Balaji*, *Sridevi* and *Bhoodevi* were found. They were installed with the due rights and later a temple was built.

This temple does not accept any money and does not have a *Hundi* from the devotees. There are no green channels or privileges for VVIPs. Another similar temple is the Jalaram temple in *Virpur* (Rajkot), Gujarat State. This temple fought and won the right to stay out of government control. The only other temple is *Ramanuj Kot*, a temple in Jodhpur, Rajasthan state.

### **Shri Vidya Saraswathi Temple**

*Shri Vidya Saraswathi* Temple is located on a hillock, which has a unique rock formation and a valley around it. There is an ancient *Shiva* temple in the more renowned recently constructed *Saraswathi* Temple Complex. The *Shiva* temple is in a hollow below the ground level and one must crawl for a few feet to reach the main *Shiva Lingam*. Surrounding this temple were two ancient *Vaishnava* temples built before the *Kakatiya* rulers. There is a big victory pillar made of granite that is 30 feet high. The victory pillar has statues of *Sita Rama*, *Lakshmana*, and goddesses *Lakshmi*. Other important temples in the complex are *Lakshmi Ganapathi* Temple, *Shani* Temple and *Venugopalaswamy* Temple.

At the *Saraswathi* temple, *Dussera* and *Vasantha Panchami* are the major annual festivals for the goddess *Saraswathi*. Special *Pujas* are performed for *Shani* on every *Shini Tryodhasi* (the 13<sup>th</sup> lunar day coinciding with a Saturday) which attracts people from all over the country.

### **Shri Anjaneya Swamy Temple**

In the lap of beautiful hills, breathtaking valleys and refreshing water springs. One of the most famous and ancient temples in Telangana of *Shri Anjaneya Swamy* (lord *Hanuman*) is located on a hillock in the *Kondagattu* village of *Jagtyal* district.

As per local legends, the temple dates to more than 300 years. A cowherd named *Singam Sanjeevudu* came to this hillock searching for one of the cattle lost from his herd. Overcome by fatigue he soon fell into deep sleep after a tiresome search. It is believed that lord *Hanuman* appeared in his dream and told him where to look for his lost animal. He woke up and started searching in the instructed direction. He found his lost buffalo and a radiating idol of *Anjaneya Swamy*. He then built a small temple for

lord *Anjaneya* with the help of other cowherds. As per another story, a group of shepherds led by one *Singala Swamyji* discovered the statue of lord *Anjaneya* about 300 years ago in the hillock. Later, with the help of his shepherd mates, *Singala Swamyji* built a temple for the lord.

Popularly known as the *Kondagattu Anjaneya Swamy* temple, the temple has a *Dharma Gundam* (holy water tank) where devotees can take a bath. The temple is adorned with sculptures of various gods on its facades and walls. The 16-pillared porch graces the entrance to the temple. Three inner chambers are housing the idols of lord *Shiri Venkateshwara*, lord *Shri Anjaneya* and goddess *Lakshmi*. As the devotees approach the temple, they are awestruck by the huge larger-than-life statue of lord *Anjaneya*. Stairs have been provided to go up to view the statue from close quarters.

### **Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple**

*Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy* temple is in Medak district. *Nacharam Gutta* is the adobe of the most revered *Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy*. Believed to be more than 600 years old, it is a cave temple, situated on a beautiful hillock.

As per legends, after *Shri Narasimha Swamy* killed the *Asura King Hiranayakasipu*, he was in a very angry mood and roamed around in this area. As no one was able to pacify him, *Shri Lakshmi Devi* met him here and calmed him down. Inside the sanctum sanctorum, *Swayambu Narasimha Swamy*, along with his consort *Lakshmi* is beautifully carved in the rock and can be seen as a testimony to the above episode.

This place got its name *Nacharam* from a local devotee named Nachar. It is also known as *Nacharam Gutta* and *Yeluru Nacharam*. In ancient times, it was known as *Swethagiri* and *Gargeva Thapovanam*. The temple is along river *Haridra* across which there is a dam now. There are a few other temples around the sanctum sanctorum including that of *Shri Sita Ramachandra Swamy*, *Shri Anjaneya Swamy*, lord *Shiva*, *Shri Dattatreya Swamy* and *Navagrahalu*.

### **Conclusion**

Telangana state has an extraordinary, vast, and diverse pool of cultural heritage and ancient monuments in the form of temples and other archaeological sites and remains. The sheer number of these historic heritages is astounding. And the fact that these monuments are the reminiscence of the living witnesses of the golden historic era of over a thousand years and of the pre-independence battles, they carry a special and well-deserved respect in the eyes of the Hindus. They are the epitome of courage, stand testimony to evolution and are a symbol of cultural expression. What about temples like this, which are historically, architecturally, and spiritually important? Who cares about their preservation? Neither those who put up boards about their importance nor those who claim to have powerful places under their jurisdiction. The Gods themselves have been removed to safety many times but the administration remains unmoved. Hopefully, they will preserve something they can never replicate.

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