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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

**TEMPLES AND LEGENDS
OF
ANDHRA PRADESH**

N. Ramesan

GENERAL EDITORS

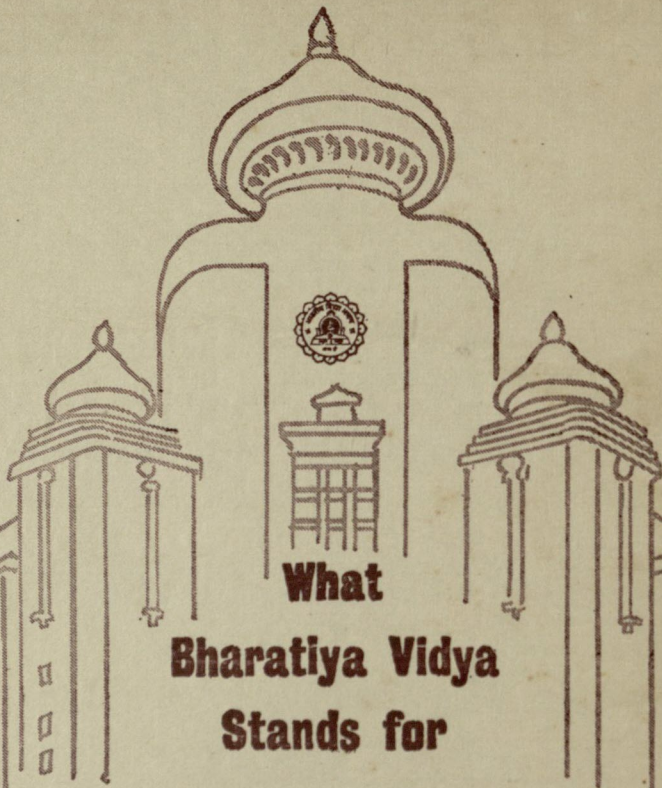
K. M. MUNSHI

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KRISHNA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideoforms, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.



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Temples and Legends
of
Andhra Pradesh

BY
N. RAMESAN



1962

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY : BOMBAY

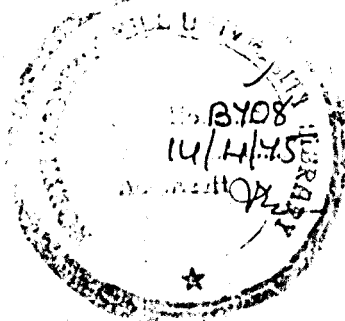
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan — that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay — needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order, we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspirations which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books from other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, besides the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who does not know it does not know the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas the climax of which is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
October 3, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

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Map of Andhra Pradesh showing the Temples *Frontispiece*
 Ground Plan of Srisailam Temples *Facing p. 18*



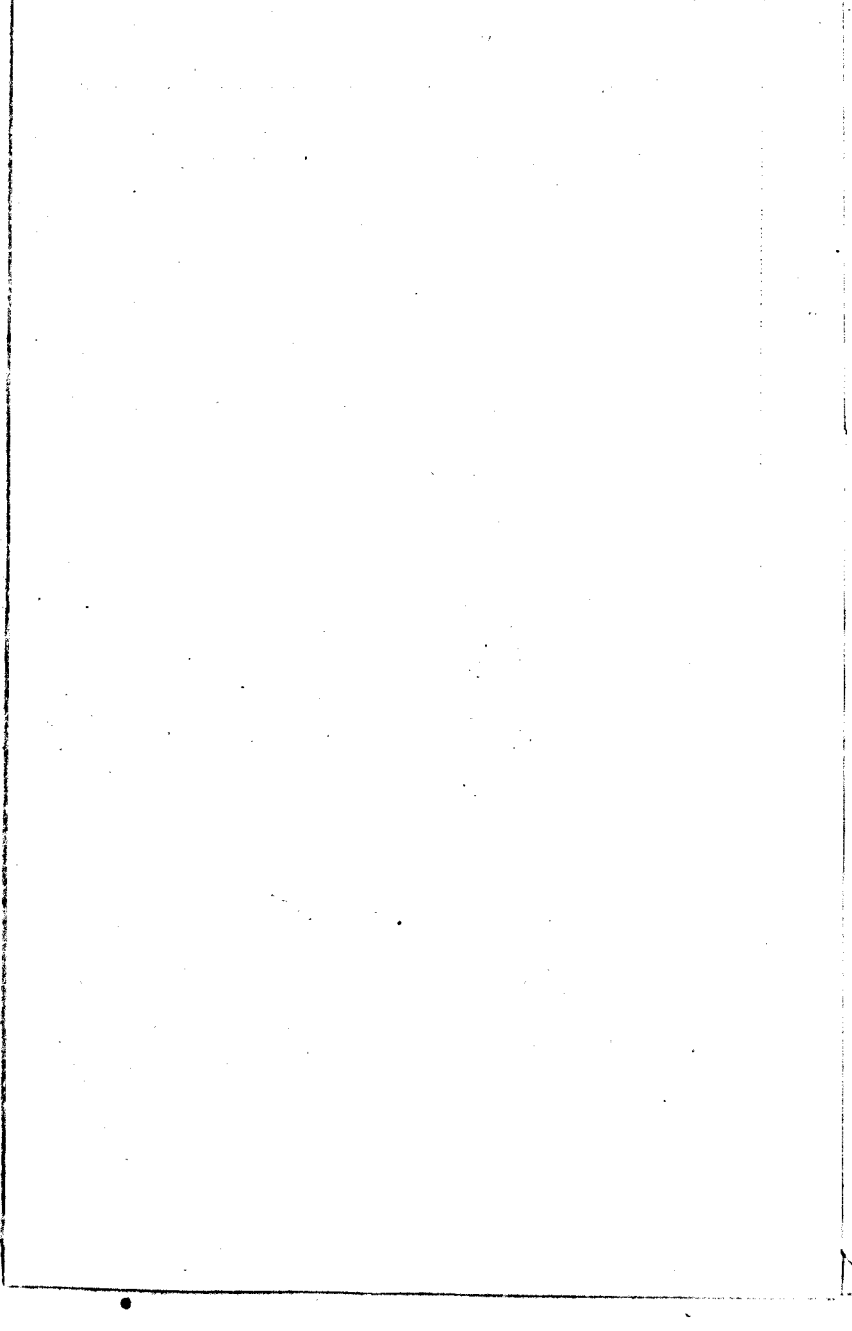
This book is respectfully dedicated to
Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathy Swamy of
Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitam,
By whose grace, I am what I am.

समर्पणम्

व्यक्तो ऽ व्यक्तः परात्मा सगुण इति तथा निर्गुणो वेति सन्तः
वेदान्तैस्संबदन्ति ; प्रियगुरुकृपयाऽऽक्रान्तचित्तस्य पुंसः ।
सर्वं तत् व्यर्थमाभात्ययमनुभवति ब्रह्मभावं गुरौ यत्
दीव्यत्यानन्दवार्यैः; परमगुरुकृपाशक्तिरेषा हि लोके ॥ १ ॥

पापं मज्जन्म लेभे विजयमसदृशं कामकोटीयतीन्द्रम्
लेभेऽहं दैवतं यत्; जननमरणतो यत्कृपा मुक्तिदात्री ।
मद्दिवं मद्गुरुः मच्छरणं अयमहं चार्पयन् माममुष्मै
धन्यं मन्ये जनुर्मे यदिह गुरुकृपा दैवशक्तेर्हि शक्ता ॥ २ ॥

आन्ध्रियां देवदेवालयकथनकृतिं जीवते दैवताय
श्रीकाञ्चीकामकोटीयतिवरगुरवे भक्तिपूर्णाऽर्पयामि ।
सत्याद्वैताध्वदृष्ट्या चरमचरमिदं ब्रह्मरूपं यतोऽस्मात्
मूर्तिर्वा सत्पुमान् वा न भजति हि भिदां अस्मदद्वैतमार्गे ॥ ३ ॥



CHAPTER I

ON TEMPLES

ARYAVARTA is a land of holy temples and shrines and sacred rivers and mountains. The people inhabiting this hallowed land are religious by nature and have given expression to their religious emotions in various ways. The "Hindu Dharma" or the "Sanatana Dharma" is the eternal law of these people. The earliest scriptures called this law of life as "Rita" as opposed to "Anrita."

The Hindus owe allegiance to the Vedas, which are their holy scriptures. The Vedas present a complete and panoramic view of life in all its facets. They contain within themselves, not merely the philosophical conclusions of the great Vedic rishis but also a detailed record of conduct for ordinary man.

The Vedas are divided into four parts viz., the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The Samhitas are hymns sung in exquisite poetry, in praise of the Vedic Gods, like Indra, Agni, Varuna etc. The Brahmanas are the liturgical portion of the Vedas, and contain details about the yagas and sacrifices to be performed by every one. Aranyakas are the mature thoughts of persons, who having tasted life in all its aspects, and not being satisfied with the transient pleasures of the senses, seek the salvation of the spirit, in the quietude of the Aranyas or the forests. The Upanishads, otherwise called the Vedanta, represent the quintessence and acme of the philosophic thinking, and mystic realisation of the ancient seers. All these four portions, put together, present a pattern of life, to

CHAPTER II

SRISAILAM

SRISAILAM is situated in the thick and inaccessible forests of the Nallamalai hills, in the north eastern portion of the Nandikotkur taluk of Kurnool District. It lies on a straight line west of Vijayawada, right as it were in the centre of South India. It is 73 miles north of Nandyal Railway Station. On leaving Nandyal, one has to proceed to Atmakur which it at a distance of 38 miles by road, and from Atmakur to Nagaluti which is 10 miles off. There are two routes to reach Srisailam from Nagaluti. One goes via Pedda Cheruvu, and across the hills, and through dense forests by foot-path, and the other by road to Dornal, and from Dornal to Srisailam, by the recently opened ghat road. The road from Nagaluti to Pedda Cheruvu is paved with a remarkable series of stone steps, and the forest scenery, and the ravines of the rock are magnificent and hallowed.

This important and religious shrine is situated, on what is called the 'Rishabhagiri' hill, on the southern bank of the sacred river Krishna, and is famous as Srisaila or Sri-parvata, which is one of the several aspects of the Lord Shiva. The sanctity of this place is claimed both by the Hindus as well as by the Buddhists. In the samkalpas, i.e., the recitations on the occasion of religious baths, the name of this sacred place is mentioned along with the other holy places of India. In almost all the Hindu puranas, mention is made of this ancient place.

Srisailam is a sacred place of pilgrimage which has been known from ancient times in India. A reference to this place in Mahabharata in the Vanaparva is as follows:

CHAPTER III

AHOBALAM

AHOBALAM is a religious centre of very great antiquity. It is situated at a distance of thirty miles from Nandyal Railway station of Kurnool District. There are good bus connections from Nandyal and some other district centres of Andhra to this place.

There are three routes reaching Ahobalam. Pilgrims from the north can get down at Nandyal which is a Railway junction from Kurnool, and travel by bus to Allagadda and Ahobalam which is only thirty miles from Nandyal. The second route is from Dhone which is another railway station and from which one can reach Ahobalam via Banganapalli and Koilakuntla. The other and easy route is to get down at Cuddapah which is a district headquarters and an important railway station in the Madras-Bombay route. From Cuddapah one has to travel to Allagadda which is forty miles over and from there by bus to Ahobalam.

This place is also known as Singavel Kundram, and is dedicated to Lord Narasimha, i.e., the lion aspect of Lord Vishnu, which he took on, in order to kill the demon Hiranyakasipu. There are a number of places in which the Narasimhavatara of Lord Vishnu is worshipped, but it is only at Ahobalam that all the nine forms of the Lord Narasimha i.e., the Nava Narasimhas are worshipped.

As soon as the foot of the hills is reached there is the temple of Prahladavarada Narasimha, i.e., the aspect of Lord Narasimha as blessing Prahlada. This temple lies in the centre of three prakaras which are built in the Vijayanagara

CHAPTER IV

ALAMPUR

NEAR the sacred confluence of the Tungabhadra and the Krishna, and situated on the border between Kurnool and Mahaboobnagar Districts of Andhra Pradesh, is Alampur which houses a number of sacred shrines like those of Sangameswara and the Nava Brahma temples.

The Alampur temples are situated on the western bank of the Tungabhadra river. Alampur can be reached from Hyderabad by railway on Hyderabad Bangalore route. By road, one has to go to Raichur from Hyderabad and then go by the newly opened bridge over Tungabhadra. From the Alampur railway station to the town proper, is six miles, and though transport facilities are a little difficult, still the beauty and the sanctity of the place are well worth the difficulties. Alampur is still a place of sacred worship.

The principal temple is a cluster of shrines dedicated to the Nava Brahmas. It is situated in a fortress and bears a striking resemblance to the Papanatha temple at Pattadakal. The sikharas of these shrines have a curvilinear form outwardly, and are decorated with a network of miniature architectural devices such as Amalakas etc. The Amalaka decoration occurs at the angles of the towers of Alampur and has a beautiful effect, since it naturally blends with the crowning masonry of the tower.

The inner plan and decoration of the Alampur temples bear no affinity to the temples of Orissa, though they bear striking exterior resemblance. On the other hand, they have a close similarity to some of the rock-cut temples of Western India.

CHAPTER V

LEPAKSHI

LEPAKSHI is a small village which lies nine miles east of Hindupur in Anantapur District of Andhra. Hindupur is a railway station on the main metre-gauge line between Hyderabad and Bangalore, and from Hindupur there is a good metalled road to Lepakshi on which several good bus connections exist. There is a dak bungalow at Hindupur, as well as at Lepakshi, where pilgrims can conveniently stay. Lepakshi is famous for its temple of Veerabhadra, and is also a renowned place where the best specimens of the mural paintings of the Vijayanagar kings are available.

This temple is a notable example of the Vijayanagar style of architecture, and is built on a low rocky hill which is called Kurmasaila so called because the hill is like a tortoise, in shape. An inscription on the exit of the outer wall of the temple records that it was constructed by one Virupanna in the 16th century.

In Lepakshi we have Lord Papanaseswara, Lord Rama, Lord Veerabhadra and Durga all being worshipped in the same place. In the Skanda Purana, there is a reference to Lepakshi as one of the hundred and eight important Siva kshetras.

The temple is said to have been established by saint Agastya himself. This shrine was later developed into the present exquisite temple, by the pious zeal of Virupanna who was the treasurer of the Vijayanagar kings. In the temple, a shrine of Lord Siva faces that of Lord Vishnu, while in the centre is the Lord Veerabhadra. Thus these three form a

TADPATRI

TADPATRI of Anantapur District, is a railway station on the Raichur-Madras line and is 47 miles from Guntakal, which is an important junction on it. One can reach Tadpatri from Guntakal either by road or by train. There are two important and famous temples at this place, namely, the Bugga Ramalingeswara temple and the Chintala Venkataramana temple. These are famous temples, famous both for their sanctity, as well as for their architectural importance. At the Ramalingeswara temple, the entire Siva Purana is carved in stone on the walls with delicate skill and in elaborate detail.

Both these temples are situated on the banks of river Pinakini, which at this place takes the northern course, or becomes Uttara Vahini, and hence is considered as very sacred at this spot. The Siva temple facing west is more ancient. It is stated that the area in which this place is situated was formerly known as Bhaskara Kshetra, to the south of which, there existed a thick forest consisting of plenty of palm trees. Hence it was called Tamlapalli (Tati Vanam). During the time of one Pemmasani Ramalinga Naidu, who was a local chieftain, under the great Vijayanagara king, Proudha Devaraya, this place was renamed as "Tadpatri" and hence the name Tadpatri still stands.

The local legend has it, that, at the very same spot, where the Ramalingeswara temple stands, Lord Parasurama lived and performed penance and Tapascharya worshipping Lord Siva in his Lingakara. There is in the temple a perennial

CHAPTER VII

MAHANANDI

‘ओं नमो नन्दिने’

THE Eastern Ghats stretching along the eastern side of the Deccan abound in many important and sacred shrines like Tirupati, Ahobalam, Srisailam and Simhachalam. The common feature of these temples is the thick forests in which they are situate and the peaceful and calm surroundings in which the devotee can worship the Lord with one-pointed concentration. Across the Kurnool district the ghats run in two parallel ranges. The range that lies towards the east is called the Nallamalai, and Mahanandi is situated in one of these hills. It can be approached from Nandyal, which is a railway station in Kurnool District, by a good motorable road, as it is only ten miles from Nandyal. The place lies in a natural gorge of ravishing beauty surrounded on all sides by green foliage of thick forest and served by a sacred tirtha.

The temple is situated at the foot of the hill from under which perennial mineral springs flow out into the fields. There are as many as five such springs, which flow from beneath the Linga of the temple into the tank in front of it. The sacred shrine is surrounded by Mantapas on all sides.

The temple is unique in many respects. The Vimana over the Garbhagriha is built purely in the Nagari style, which is characteristic of North India. Like the several Jain temples it has a Sikara at the top, shooting up to the skies in vertical lines. The popular legend is that a Rasa Siddha of the north built the Vimana and to pay the wages for the labourers, he made the workers put up sand mounds and by his Mantra sakthi produced wealth equal to the ser-

CHAPTER VIII

TIRUPATI

TIRUPATI is the most sacred Vaishnavite temple of Andhra Desa. It has a reputation not only in Andhra but all over India and the presiding deity Lord Venkateswara is worshipped by North Indian pilgrims as 'Balaji.'

Tirupati lies in the midst of the Seshachalam Hills at a distance of seven miles from the Tirupati East Railway Station. To reach it, one has to branch off at Gudur, which is the last but one main station before Madras on the Delhi-Madras route, and take a train to Renigunta and Tirupati and then go by road from the foot to the top of the Tirupati Hill, which is called Tirumalai. Direct buses from Madras and other centres also ply to Tirumalai. Till ten years ago, the pilgrims had to walk up to the top of the hill, by means of steps, but now a regular ghat road has been laid round the hills, and one can reach the top of the hill directly by road.

The Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam is one of the richest Devasthanams of Andhra, as Lord Venkateswara, who is the presiding deity of the shrine at the top, attracts thousands of pilgrims, who pay large sums to the deity as their offering. Any number of Chatrams and Choultries are available, both at the foot of the hill and on the top of the hill, for the convenience of the passengers. In addition, the Devasthanam authorities also encourage the construction of self-contained cottages on the top of the hill, so that people who seek solitude may live in complete solitude and in peace. If any devotee contributes six thousand rupees, the Devasthanam will pay an equal amount and a cottage con-

CHAPTER IX

KALAHASTI

KALAHASTI is a town in the Chittoor District of Andhra, and it is a Railway Station on the Renigunta-Gudur section. It has a temple dedicated to Lord Siva, and is famous throughout Andhra as a sacred place and a place of pilgrimage. This religious centre, which is situated between two steep hills, called Sripuram and Mummidicholapuram, is said to have formed part of Seshasaila or Mount Meru, in the ancient days.

The temple and the town are situate in beautiful natural surroundings. The river Suvarnamukhi flows on one side of the town, which on the other side is bounded by hills. The temple is a huge and a beautiful one, with magnificent Gopuras.

The Siva Linga of Kalahasti is one of the five supreme Lingas representing the five great Elements. These are installed in five great Kshetras. These Kshetras are dedicated to the five Elements, namely, Water, Fire, Air, Ether and Earth. The Vayu Linga is said to be installed in this Kshetra. In proof of the above, it can be seen that in the Garbhagriha of the temple there is a light which to this day is flickering even though there is no loophole for the air to enter the temple.

The Linga here is said to have been worshipped in the ancient days by a spider, a snake and an elephant. The spider worshipped the Lord by spinning a web over it, the snake by placing a gem over it, and the elephant by washing the Linga with water. These three are said to have

CHAPTER X

CHEZERLA

THE village Chezerla is situated at a distance of 15 miles west of Narasaraopet in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. There is a good metalled road for a part of the way and for the rest one can reach the village only by Jeep and that too only in fair weather. The village stands in the plains and is surrounded by a low range of rocky hills and is covered by scrub jungle. The temple here is dedicated to Lord Siva. The deity is called Kapotheswara, after the famous story of Sibi mentioned in the Mahabharata, where, he is said to have sacrificed a part of his own body, as an offering to an eagle, which was pursuing a pigeon or a Kapotha, in order to save it from destruction.

This story is a renowned one not only in Hindu mythology, but also in the Buddhist Jataka tales, which give us the lives of Siddhartha, the Buddha, in his previous Janmas. The Sibi Jataka is as hoary and sacred to the Buddhist, as an embodiment of 'Saranagata vatsala,' as Sibi Chakravarthi is to the Hindu, as a supreme symbol of 'Raja dharma' which enjoins a king to protect the refugee even at the cost of his own life. This is probably the only temple in the whole of India dedicated to Lord Siva as Kapotheswara.

Till very recently there used to stand outside the south wall of the courtyard of the temple, an enormous Boabad tree, which was 56 feet round the trunk, and which was very hollow inside. The tree collapsed in 1917, and formerly it was much venerated by the pilgrims who visited the temple.

CHAPTER XI

AMARAVATI

AMARAVATI has made Andhra sculpture a byword among the plastic arts of the world, since the Amaravati Buddhist sculptures are world famous as the most perfect example of what is called the Andhra or the Amaravati type of sculpture. This place, which is situated in Sattenapalli Taluk of Guntur District, is also famous as the seat of a temple to Lord Siva worshipped here as Lord Amareswara. Amaravati is situated twenty miles northwest of Guntur and is connected with it by a good motorable road. One can reach Guntur by getting down at Vijayawada which is a main junction in the Madras-Delhi and Madras-Calcutta line and from which excellent buses take one to Guntur. There are good bus connections from Guntur to Amaravati. At Amaravati, there is a Public Works Department Travellers Bungalow, some choultries and sheds for pilgrims' stay.

Amaravati and Dharanikota which is adjacent, were the seats of the ancient Andhra Emperors and the place is full of antiquities of the greatest archeological value. The lofty temple of Amareswara stands on the bank of the holy river Krishna, and is situated at a spot on the river Krishna where it takes a north to south course, while the main river flows from west to east. Such spots where the river takes a different course for short distance are considered to be very holy places, where temples are normally built.

The origin of the temple is shrouded in mystery, though there are many legends, Puranic and historical, about it. But the sanctity and the holiness of the place attract even now thousands of pilgrims.

CHAPTER XII

MANGALAGIRI

MANGALAGIRI is situated on the Bezwada-Guntur road and is about 8 miles by road from Vijayawada. On the top of the Mangalagiri hill there is a famous temple called the Panakala Nrusimhaswamy temple, which has been attracting pilgrims from a very long time, and from all parts of the country.

The nearest railway station is Mangalagiri on the Guntur-Vijayawada line but to visit the temple, the better course would be to get down either at Vijayawada or at Guntur and take bus connections.

There are three choultries of this temple in addition to a local fund choultry, a vaisya choultry, a Madhva choultry and a Brahman choultry. The pilgrims are given all facilities for comfortable stay here.

The Lord that is worshiped here is Lord Narayana in Narasimha Swamy incarnation. The peculiarity in this temple is that jaggery water, or what is locally known as Panaka, is given as an offering to the Lord. The jaggery water is actually poured into the mouth of the Lord, and Lord Narayana shows that he has fully satisfied himself, when half of the water is thrown back as a prasada to the devotees.

While the jaggery water is being poured into the mouth of the Lord a gurgling sound is clearly audible as if the Lord is actually drinking it, and the sound becomes shriller and shriller, as and when the Lord is drinking, till at last the sound stops, and the balance of the jaggery water is thrown

CHAPTER XIII

VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA is practically the centre of Andhra in all its aspects. It is an important junction in the Madras-Calcutta, Madras-Delhi routes, and probably the foremost town of Andhra. It contains three ancient temples viz., the Kanakadurga temple, the Malleswaraswamy temple and the Vijayeswaraswami temple. These are the three temples of Vijayawada.

Vijayawada is known in mythology as Vijayavata, and is mentioned in some inscriptions as Rajendracholapura also. It is a famous place of pilgrimage on the river Krishna, and has a temple dedicated to Lord Siva in his aspect of Malleswara or Jayasena. Sage Agasthya is said to have been the greatest devotee of this deity and admirer of the deity's several leelas.

The origin or installation of Kanakadurga Devi at Vijayawada is unknown. She is said to be Swayambhu or self-manifest. She also takes the aspect of Chandi or destroyer of the demon Durgama who was causing havoc among the peace-loving inhabitants of Dakshinapatha.

Mallikharjuna or the Malleswara as he is known in the Puranas, is said to have been installed by Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pancha Pandavas, as a token of their victory of the South. The temple historically was constructed by Thribhuvana Malla, Western Chalukya King of the 10th century A.D.

The installation of Vijayeswara is said to have been done by Arjuna, one of the Pancha Pandavas, to commemorate his victory with Lord Siva in the shape of Kirata or hunter.

CHAPTER XIV

AKIRIPALLI

AKIRIPALLI which is in Nuzvid of Krishna District is the seat of an important and sacred temple dedicated to Lord Sobhanachala Swami. The deity is Vyaghra Narasimha, who was incarnated in a cave on the top of the hill. Sri Malleswaraswamy was also incarnated at a flat portion on the top of the hill. To reach Akiripalli the easiest route is to get down at Vijayawada which is an important junction in the Madras-Delhi and the Madras-Calcutta lines and from there take bus. There are public choultries at the place, where convenient accommodation for pilgrims is provided.

The temple has also a tank called Varahapushkharini, from which Bindi tirtham is drawn for drinking and cooking purposes. The temple is an ancient and famous one. There are a number of popular legends and Sthalapuranas about it. The local zamindars are the hereditary trustees of this temple.

Sri Sobhanachalaswamy temple is built at the top of the hill, amidst picturesque surroundings. From the bottom of the hill, there are regular and well-built steps going up the hill. Lord Siva is said to have incarnated himself as Sri Malleswaraswamy at a flat portion on the top of the hill. Lord Vishnu is said to have incarnated himself in a cave on the top of the hill, as Sri Vyaghra Nrisimha otherwise called as Sri Sobhanachalaswamy. There are the temples of the Goddess Rajyalakshmi and temples dedicated to all the Alwars or the Vaishnavite devotees. Down to the temples of Sri Sobhanachalaswamy, there is a temple of Sri Venkata-

DRAKSHARAMA

ओं नम उग्राय च भीमाय च नमः

DRAKSHARAMA is situated at a distance of four miles from Ramachandrapuram which is a taluk headquarters of East Godavari District of Andhra. One can reach it either from Rajahmundry or from Kakinada by road. There are excellent bus connections to this place both from Rajahmundry and Kakinada. The place is very famous as the seat of a temple of Bhimeswaraswami. The temple is noted not only for its architectural beauty and historical importance, but also for its sanctity and holiness, and attracts pilgrims in thousands every year.

The temple depicts in its architecture, a perfect and harmonious blend of both the Chalukya and the Chola styles of temple architecture. In its wealth of inscriptions on its walls, it stands unrivalled by any other place. The epigraphy on the walls of the temples is perhaps the richest amongst all the temples of Andhra. There are as many as 381 inscriptions ranging from Saka 1002 (1080 A.D.) to Saka 1356 (1434 A.D.). There are inscriptions here of the eastern Chalukyan kings, western Chalukyan kings, the Chola and Kalinga kings and queens, in addition to innumerable votive offerings of their own ministers and generals. 'This wealth of inscriptions helps us to solve many a knotty problem about the political history of the Godavari tract during the 11th and 12th centuries A.D.

The name Draksharama is said to be a corrupted form of 'Daksha' 'arama' or the garden of Dakshaprajapathi. The

KOTIPALLI

KOTIPALLI which is in Ramachandrapuram taluk of East Godavari District is famous as the seat of an ancient temple where Lord Siva is worshipped as Sri Someswaraswamy. The Goddess is Sri Rajarajeswari Ammavaru. The old Rajahs of Vijayanagar are the hereditary trustees of this temple also along with those of Simhachalam.

Kotipalli is situated on the banks of the sacred Godavari at a point where it joins the sea. It can be reached from Kakinada or from Rajahmundry which are important stations on the Madras Calcutta line and from which regular buses ply to Kotipalli.

There are three choultries at Kotipalli to cater to the amenities and conveniences of the pilgrims who visit the temple. Kotipalli is considered to be very sacred place as it stands more or less at the confluence of the river Godavari with the sea. Large number of pilgrims flock to this temple, especially during the Mahasivaratri day, which falls in Magha Bahula Amavasya in February or March when thousands of pilgrims visit this temple and have a bath in the holy Godavari.

Kotipalli, otherwise known as Kotitirtham, is an ancient place where Lord Siva is worshipped as Someswara. Popular legend has it, that whoever has his 'Punya snana' at this tirtham will get salvation immediately. There are a number of popular legends and sthalapuranas connected with this famous temple and tirtha. They are as follows.

ANNAVARAM

ANNAVARAM which is situated in the East Godavari District, of Andhra Pradesh, is famous as the seat of a temple, to the Lord Sri Veera Venkata Satyanarayanawami varu. The name of the Goddess is Anantalakshmi Satyavathi Ammavaru.

Annaram can be reached by the Southern Railway and the Grand Northern Trunk Road. The nearest railway station is Annaram which is two miles from the temple. The mail does not stop at Annaram, and the nearest mail halting stations are Tuni and Peddapuram, which are at a distance of eleven and sixteen miles respectively from Annaram. There is a regular bus service to this village. Buses running from Kakinada to Tuni, Rajahmundry to Tuni, and Yeleswaram to Tuni, pass through Annaram, touching the foot of the hill where the temple is situated. The distance from the foot of the hill to the temple is about four furlongs. From the foot of the hill, to the top of the hill, there is a proper path, well laid out with stone steps.

In popular esteem temples and tirthas that are famous for their holy antiquity are reckoned as manifesting the divine far more in abundance than places of recent origin. Yet the grace of the Lord is an ever flowing one, and its strength cannot be tested merely by the age of temple. Just like any other institution, a temple also appears to have a cycle of its own. There are temples which have a very hoary tradition, and which have sunk into oblivion, whereas

CHAPTER XVIII

SIMHACHALAM

SIMHACHALAM, also called Simhagiri, is about ten miles to the north of Visakhapatnam, which is a District Headquarters of Andhra. One can reach Simhachalam either by train which goes up to Simhachalam Railway Station, or more easily by bus from Visakhapatnam. Visakhapatnam is an important junction in the Madras to Calcutta line, and is also connected by air from Hyderabad.

The shrine which is dedicated to Lord Narasimha or Vishnu in the aspect of a lion is built on the top of a hill which is about 800 feet above the sea level. A flight of steps runs all the way from the foot to the top of the temple, and a Ghat road is also under construction by which intending pilgrims can reach the temple by road also.

At the foot of the hill there are spacious choultries and sheds for the comfortable stay of the pilgrims, with all the amenities like water and lighting. Pilgrims may also have a bath in the sacred Pushkarani, which is about a furlong from the foot of the hill. The way up the hill to the temple runs through picturesque trees etc. Near the top of the northern side of the hill, in a wooded hollow surrounded by a wide circle of higher ground resembling an amphitheatre, is the temple of Lord Narasimha. This is a famous and rich temple of the Northern Circars.

The Puranic legend of the temple takes us to the time of Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada, who are famous figures in Indian mythology. It is said that Hiranyakasipu, the king of the Rakshasas, in order to punish his son Prahlada, who

CHAPTER XIX

ARASAVALLI

AT ARASAVALLI, which is practically the same as Srikakulam, the headquarters of the northernmost district of Andhra, there is a temple of Lord Surya. Temples dedicated to the worship of Lord Surya are rare in our country. Surya worship is not peculiar to the Hindus alone but is common even to the Buddhists who depict Marichi as an emanation of Dhyana-Buddha-Vairochana at the advent of early morning. Marichi is depicted as a standing deity, with three faces, symbolic of morning, noon and the evening, on a chariot drawn by seven boars, and driven by a Goddess without legs, which is very similar to the Sun God of Hindus, who rides on a chariot drawn by seven horses.

The worship is as old as the Vedas and the most sacred Vedic verse, Gayatri, is also addressed to the Sun God. Lord Narayana is often described as being seated in the midst of the disc of the Sun-- सवितु मण्डल मध्यवर्ति ।

In later times, this worship was merged with the worship of Lord Vishnu and most of the images of Surya are practically identical with those of Vishnu except for some slight variation in symbolism. In fact Lord Vishnu is also worshipped with the epithet of Suryanarayana, which is very significant.

The description of Lord Sun is given in great detail in the Viswakarma Silpa as follows:

एकचक्रं सप्तदशं सप्तारथमहारथम्
हस्तद्वयं पञ्चधरं कञ्चुकञ्छन्नवक्षसम्

CHAPTER XX

SRIKURMAM

SRIKURMAM is a famous temple situated at a distance of about twelve miles east of Srikakulam at the extreme south of the taluk and very near the coast. To reach the place, one has to get down at Srikakulam Railway Station, which is an important station on the Madras-Calcutta route, and from there take bus. There is a good metalled road from Srikakulam Railway Station to Srikakulam and from Srikakulam to Srikurmam also. There are choultries and pilgrim centres in the temple where intending pilgrims can stay.

The village Srikurmam derives its name from the temple which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the Avathara of Srikurmam viz., the Avathara of tortoise, and hence the deity itself is called Srikurmanatha. The temple has beautiful pillared mantapas and some of the pieces of sculpture done in granite are masterpieces of workmanship. The Vimana of the temple is built in the characteristic Chola type of architecture, though the outer gates beyond the prakara are much later.

The temple is said to have been originally a Saivite one which was changed into a Vaishnavite one, by Sri Ramanujacharya. References to this incident are available in the Sanskrit work Prapannamritha. Many interesting stories and legends are told in the place about a great debate between Ramanuja and the other thinkers of that time. Sri Ramanuja won in the debate easily. The temple is of very great sanctity, being the only important temple to Lord Vishnu in the Kurmavathara in the whole of India.

CHAPTER XXI

BHADRACHALAM

BHADRACHALAM is a famous temple dedicated to Lord Sri Ramachandra and situated on the banks of the sacred river Godavari. One can reach Bhadrachalam, from Burgampad, from the northern side of the river Godavari. From Burgampad, boats ply over the river to Bhadrachalam. One can also reach it from Rajahmundry which is an important railway station on the Madras-Calcutta line, and from which it would be 40 miles or so by steamer over the river Godavari. The temple cannot thus be reached by easy means of communication, and has to be reached only by a difficult boat journey over the river Godavari.

The story of Sri Ramachandra which has been sung in immortal verse by Sage Valmiki and which has been the main repository for all the later Kavyas to draw their themes is very well known. At the spot where the Bhadrachalam temple stands, it is said, Sri Ramachandra himself lived for some time, before Seetha was carried away by Ravana. The popular legend is that at this spot a sage by name Bhadra was living at the time of Sri Rama's sojourn, and Sri Rama, being pleased with the intense Tapas and Bhakthi of this sage, came here specially to give him Darshan and liberation. That is why the place is called Bhadrachalam in memory of the Saint Bhadra.

The worship of Sri Rama is as ancient as temple worship in this land. The great Itihasa Ramayana by Saint Valmiki itself has the sanctity of scripture to the Hindus. The same story has been sung and popularised by Tulsidas in Hindi

CHAPTER XXII

YADAGIRI

THE present Andhra Pradesh consists not merely of the whole of the Andhra State, but also of 9 districts of the erstwhile Hyderabad State. These nine districts are popularly known as Telengana area. There are, in these districts of Telengana, as many as 641 temples, the highest being in the Mahaboobnagar District and the lowest in Hyderabad District.

Yadagiri or, as it is popularly known, "Yadgiri-gutta", is one of the important and holy places of Nalgonda District. It is in Bhongir Taluk of that district. Bhongir was, in ancient days, called as Bhuvanagiri. Yadagirigutta is about 40 miles from Hyderabad, and is connected with Hyderabad by a very good metalled road. To reach Yadagiri one has to either travel by road from Hyderabad, or go up to Raigir R.S. on the Secunderabad Kazipet section of the Central Railway, and travel about 2 miles to reach the actual village. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu as Narasimha, and is situated on the top of the hillock which is 300 ft. high. The god here is known as Laxminarasimhaswamy.

This temple, like Annavaram in East Godavari District, is a very popular temple, though not very ancient. There are no inscriptions or recorded material available to give the history of the temple. There are, however, Puranic and traditional accounts which are widely popular among the devotees, about this temple. There is mention about the origin of this temple in the Skanda Purana, one of the famous 18 puranas. The legends are as follows:—

CHAPTER XXIII

VEMULAVADA

VEMULAVADA is in Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh and is situated about 20 miles from Karimnagar on the road from Karimnagar to Kamareddy. The village is an ancient one and has been in existence from the time of the Western Chalukyas, as is evident from the inscriptions that are now available at this place. Vemulavada is famous as the seat of a Western Chalukya temple known as the Rajeswaraswami temple. There is also another temple called the Vaddegeswaraswami temple which is also in a good state of preservation. The Rajeswara temple is obviously so named, either because it was built by Rajaditya which was the Biruda of Narasimha I, of the Chalukyas of Vemulavada, who was the grandson of Vinayaditya Yuddhamalla I, or is named after him. There is a big tank which is on the northern side of the Rajeswara temple, called Dharmagundam. This is fed by a big stream flowing by the side of the village.

As regards the origin of this famous and ancient temple, we are on very sure grounds. An inscription in the temple states that Rajaditya, who was a vassal of the Western Chalukya King Thribhuvanamalla, had done the Pratisthapanana of this God and constructed this temple in the 9th year of Chalukya Vikrama Era. In another inscription which is available it is stated that King Arikesari, the Lion of the Chalukyas of Vemulavada, had a titular name of Rajaditya. These feudatory kings lived round about the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. and hence the temple is nearly 1000 years old.

CHAPTER XXIV

DHARMAPURI

DHARMAPURI is one of the oldest villages in Andhra Pradesh situated in Karimnagar District of the Telengana region. This is situated on the western bank (right bank) of the sacred river Godavari which flows here southwards forming a natural boundary between Karimnagar and Adilabad districts. Dharmapuri is situated in the Jagtial taluk of Karimnagar District and is about 30 miles from Jagtial town.

The place is rather difficult of access. There is a bus service from Karimnagar to Kapparaopet, which is 10 miles distant from Dharmapuri, from which one has either to walk or to go on a country cart. Alternatively, one has to get down at Mancherial Railway Station which is in the Bez-wada-Nagpur section of the Central Railway and from there go up to Venkatapuram village by bus, and then walk six miles and cross the river Godavari to reach Dharmapuri. By either of these routes, it is difficult to reach Dharmapuri, but the sanctity of the place is such that pilgrims flock here in large numbers in spite of the difficulty in communication.

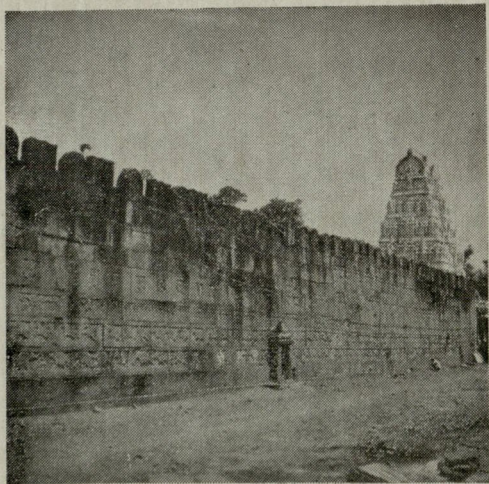
Dharmapuri is not only one of the oldest villages of Andhra Pradesh but also comparatively a big one considering its inaccessibility. It has about 2,000 houses which are built in the old fashion. The village is a famous and renowned one, as a centre for Vedic studies, and for several centuries in the past Sanskrit pandits have emerged from this village. The tradition and environment of the place prove that it was a great seat of learning of Vedic and Sanskrit studies in the past.

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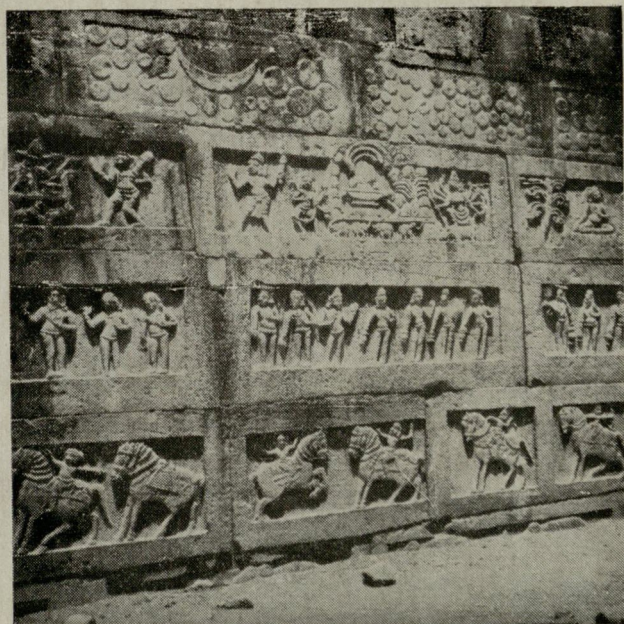
1. Srisailam Temple: Nataraja in Bronze



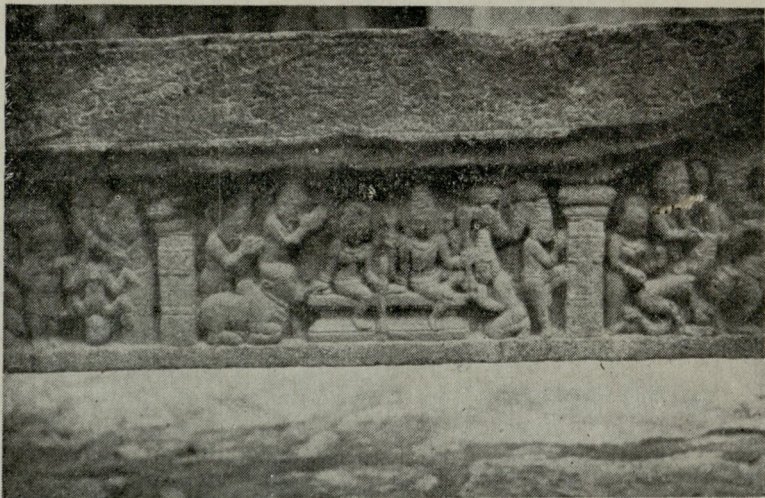
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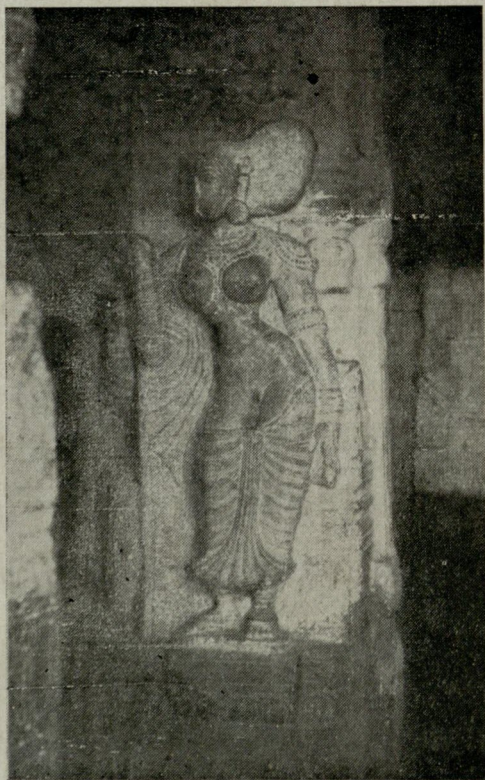
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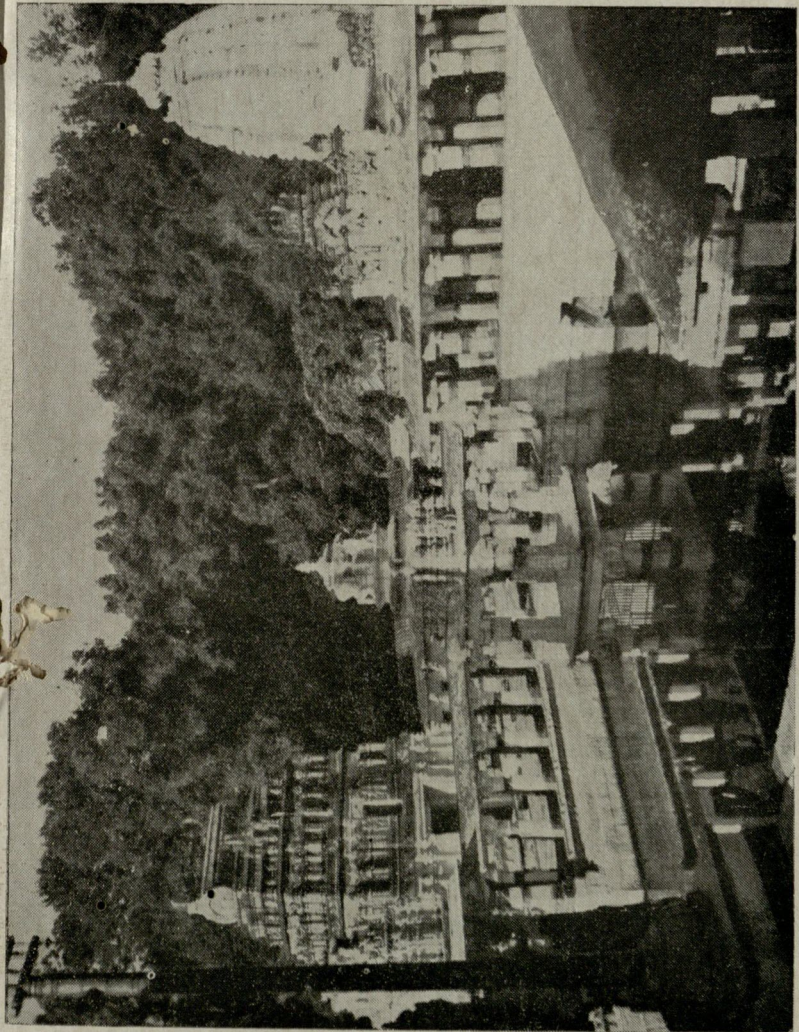
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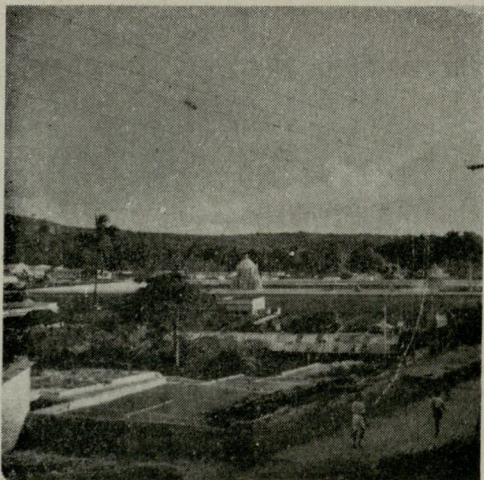
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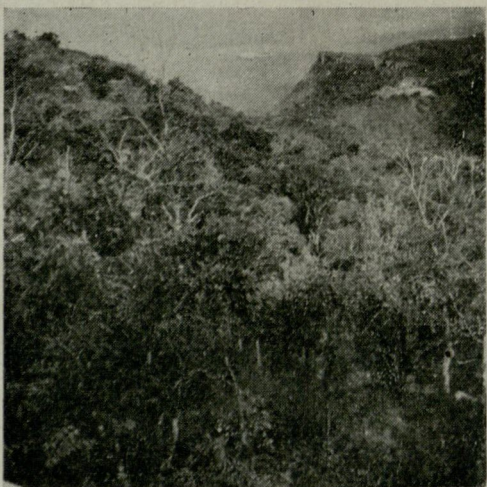
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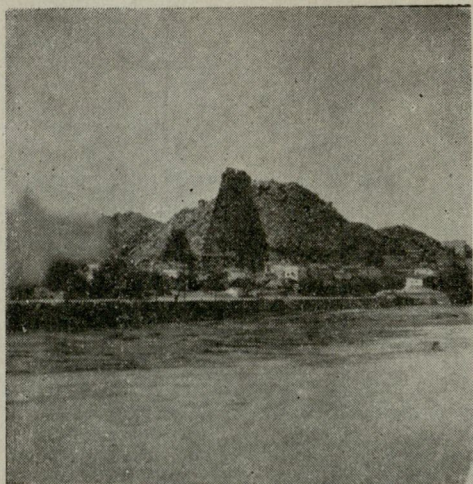
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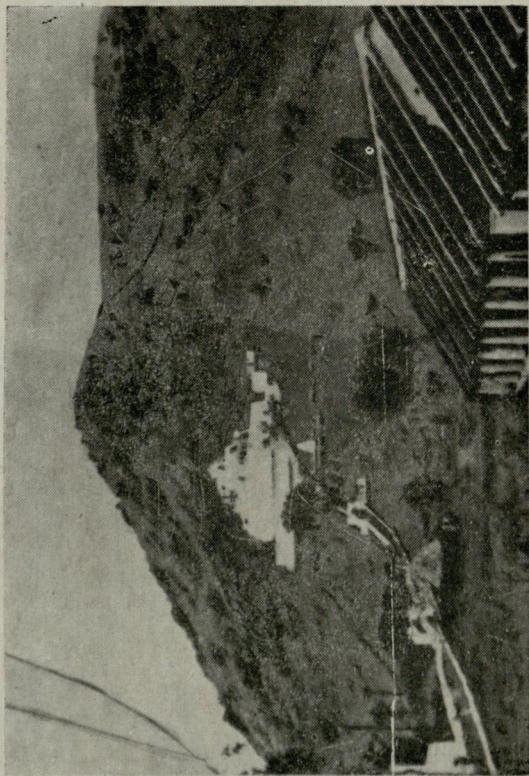
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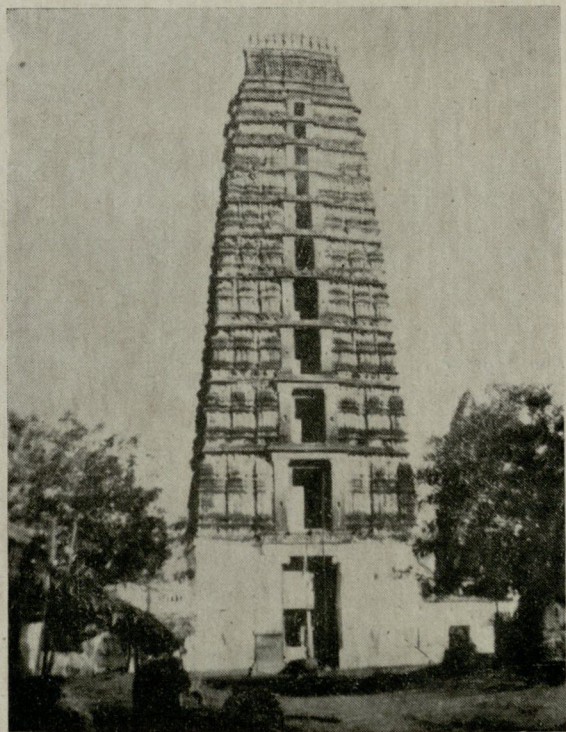


13. Chezerla Temple

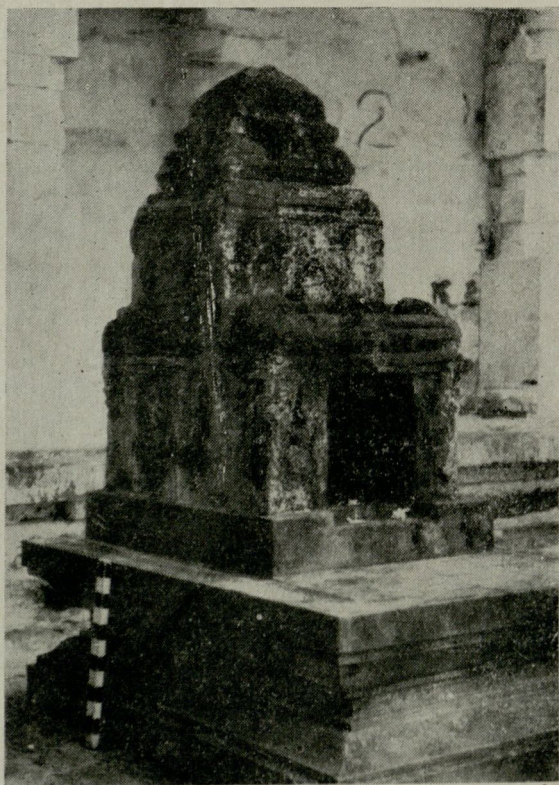


14. Mangalagiri Temple: Setting

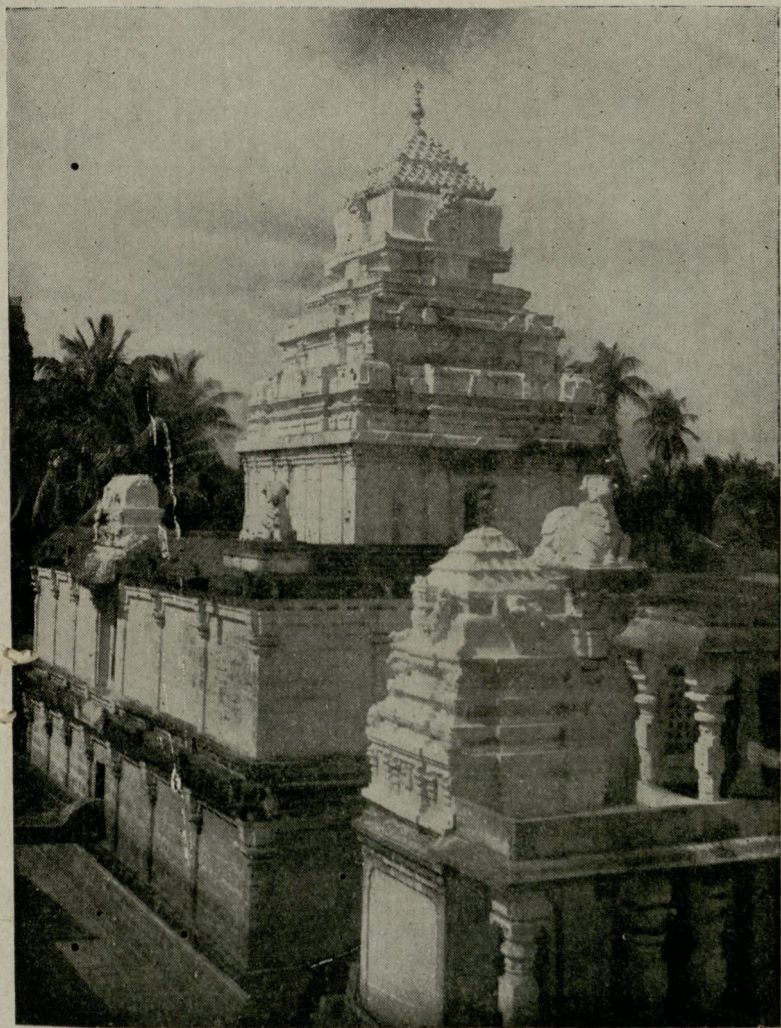




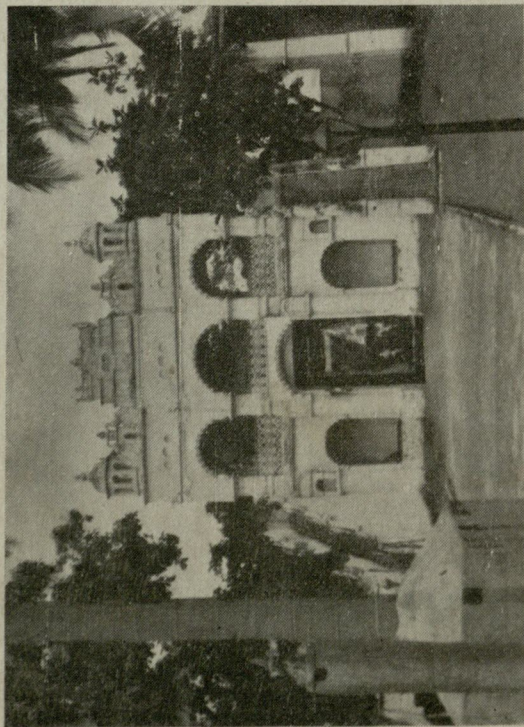
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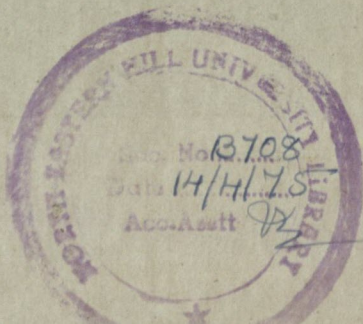
16. A Model of the Temple found in Draksharama.

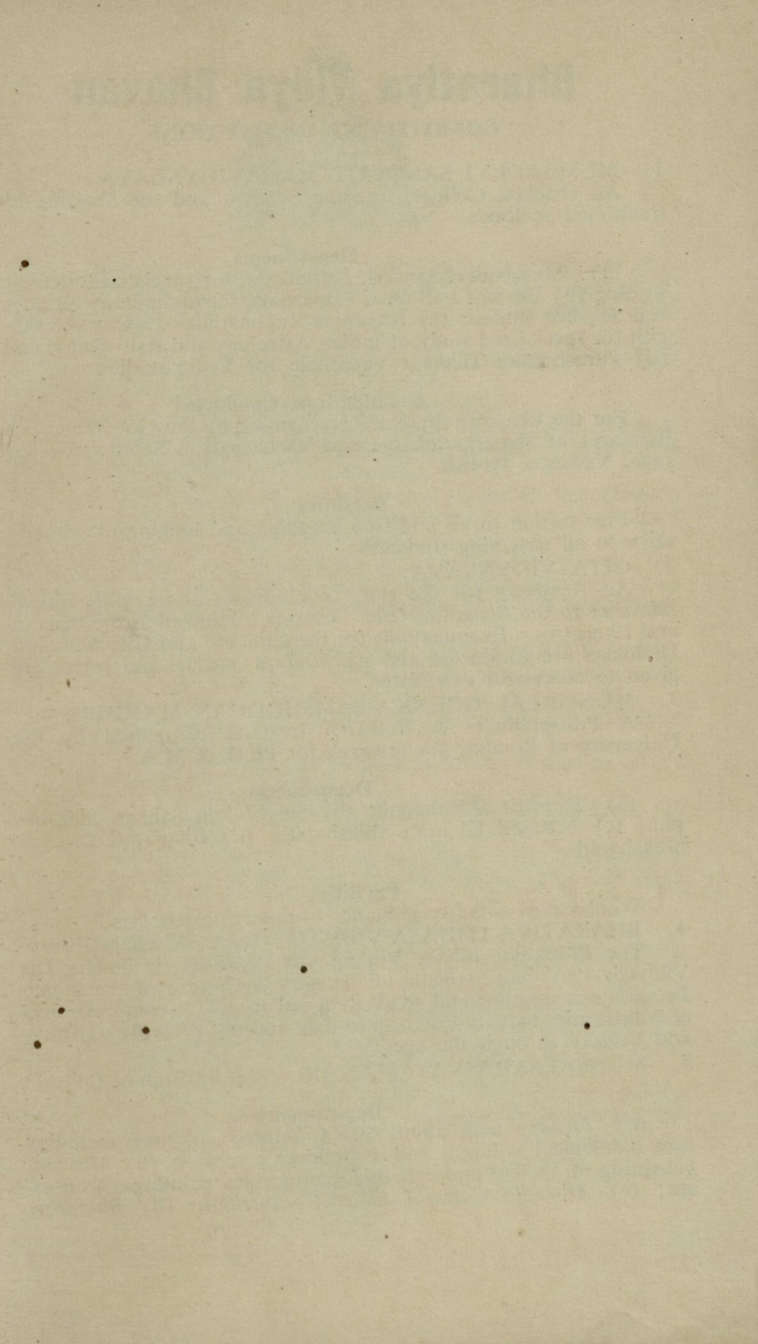


17. Draksharama Temple: General View



18. Arasavalli Temple: Gopuram





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Shri Ramesan has a sound knowledge of classical Sanskrit in which he has been always keenly interested. He specialised in Epigraphy and Temple Architecture. While serving as Joint Secretary to the Government of Andhra Pradesh in the Public Works Department, he was also the Director of Archaeology for the State. During this time and the previous years he served in the districts, he visited and studied almost all the temples in Andhra Pradesh, and the present book gives the wealth of information thus collected.

A well-known free-lance journalist, Shri Ramesan has contributed articles on various subjects to the *Hindu*, *Andhra Prabha*, etc. Among his published books are: *The Biography of Sri Sankaracharya*, *Glimpses of Buddhism*, *A Political History of Andhra Pradesh based on Copper-plate Inscriptions* and *A Catalogue of the Vijayanagar Coins of the Hyderabad Unit*.