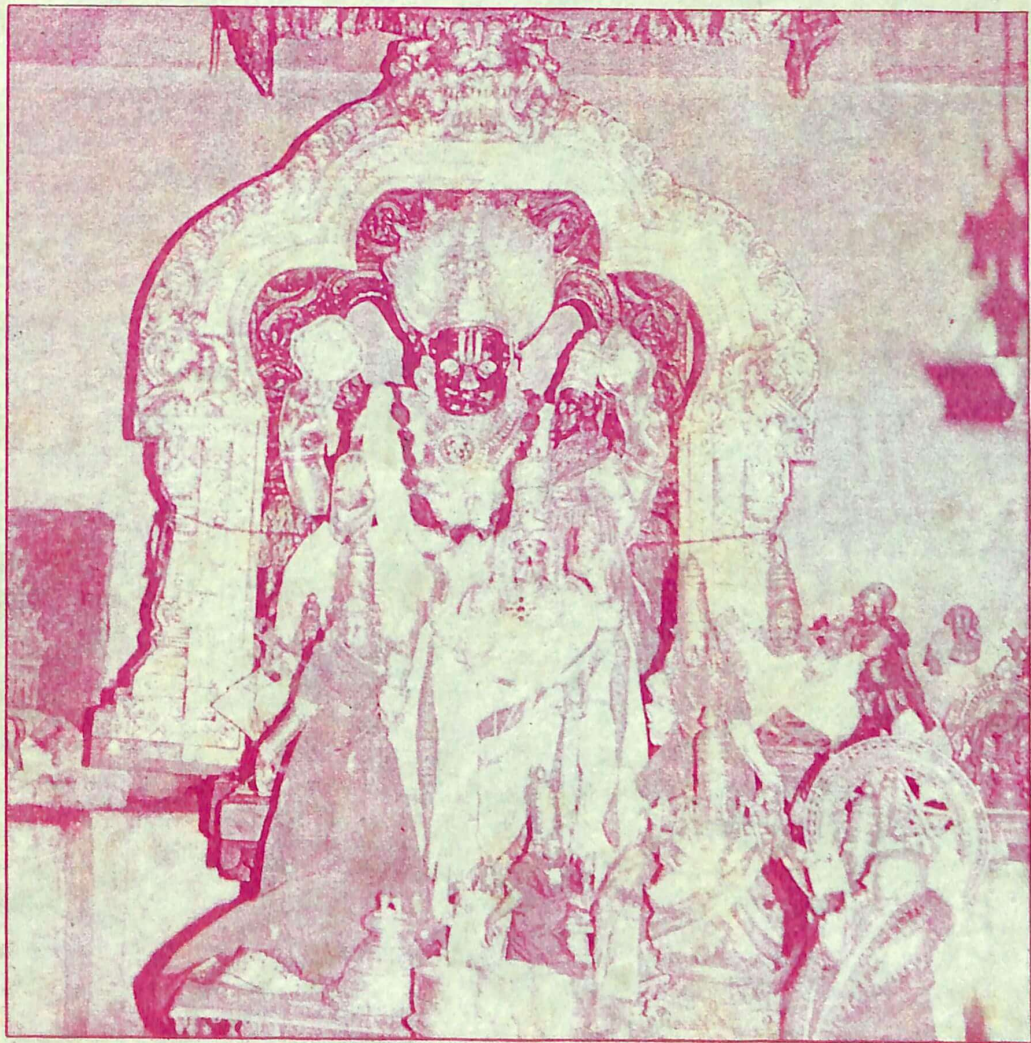


# AHOBILAM SRI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE

Prof. R. VASANTHA



TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS  
TIRUPATI  
2001

# AHOBILAM

## SRI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE

**Prof. R. VASANTHA**



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Executive Officer,  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The unique manifestation of Sriman Narayana as Narasimha has been extolled by our great sages and acharyas. Born out of a pillar neither man nor beast, yet combining in Himself both aspects, this avatara of the Lord amply illustrates His supremacy and transcendence. To the devout, this God of ferocious form is the most alluring one whose compassion and love defy description. Sri Koorattalwan (Sri Vatsanka Misra) in one of his works expatiate on his graceful man-lion combination and emergence from a pillar and other extraordinary features which proclaim His paratva or all-transcending glory. There is no incarnation of the Lord in which the Lord's immanence and transcendence both shine forth simultaneously as in His Narasimha avatara.

Among the great shrines dedicated to Sri Narasimhaswami, Ahobilam occupies a pre-eminent place. This religious centre of great antiquity also known as Singavel Kunram in ancient Tamil classics is mentioned in many puranas like Kurma, Padma and Vishnu. According to the Brahmanda purana, this place was once the haunt of Hiranyakasipu who was slain by Sriman Narayana in his Narasimha avatara aspect for the sake of his devotee Prahlada. Tallapaka Annamacharya in one of his sankirtanas exultantly praises the presiding deity of Ahobilam thus : *Nava Narasimha namo namo/ Bhavanasinitheera Ahobala Narasimha.*

The present book on Ahobilam contains a detailed study of the history of Ahobilam, its growth and development from the pre-historic period to the present day, besides a brief survey of the sthalapuranas and other traditional accounts. A detailed study of the sculpture and iconography of the Ahobilam group of temples and an exhaustive analysis of the administrative and sacerdotal set-up prevalent from time to time make the book an indispensable guide to the students of history. A glossary of the technical terms is also added to help those who are not familiar with them.

We have utmost pleasure in placing this monograph on the sacred temples of Ahobilam before the readers.

Lakṣmī katākṣa Sarasīruha rājahamsa  
Pakṣīndraśaila bhuvanam bhavanāsamīsam  
Gokṣira hari ghanasara patira varnam  
Vande krpānidhim ahobila narasimham

Tirupati,  
Dt. 14-11-2000.

P. Krishnaiah,  
Executive Officer



## FOREWORD

Among India's vast artistic heritage, the temples of South India stand out prominently. These temples are treasure houses of artistic creations. At the same time, these temples are closely intertwined with the lives of the people living around these temples. They are sources of great spiritual support and comfort.

Ahobilam is the home of Vishnu (Narasimha). In the avatars of Vishnu, the incarnation of Narasimha constitutes the transition from the stage of the beast to the human. The earliest reference to this Avatara is found in the Mahabharat according to which Lord Madhusudana took the form of Narasimha to protect the devatas and the people from the hands of asura. The complete myth of the Avatara is found in the Harivamsa. The Puranas such as the Kurma Purana, the Padma Purana, the Vishnu Purana, and the Bhagavata Purana narrate the myth differently.

The cave shrines of Narasimha at Ahobilam belong to the Srivaishnava tradition. It is one of the hundred and eight sacred centres (divya kshetras) of Srivaishnavism. This is a temple whose origins go back to almost 2000 years. Ahobilam is the only place, which exhibits nine distinct iconographical forms of Narasimha. In addition to this, this place is intimately associated with Van Satagopa Jiyar, the first Jiyar of the Ahobila math. It is being popularly believed that God Narasimha Himself came in the form of an old man and offered sanyasa to the Jiyar. Despite the spectacular setting of the cave shrines on the Nallamala hill ranges, pillared mandapas, mathas, and other structures at this hill, Ahobilam has not attracted sufficient attention of historians and archaeologists.

Dr. Vasantha's research on Ahobilam, for the first time, brings Ahobilam to the attention of both scholars and the general readers. The scholarly work of Vasantha is a comprehensive and composite treatise on one of the less known Vaishnava cave shrines of South India belonging to early centuries and developed through the ages. As an introduction she has provided the evolution of the Srivaishnava religion and the regional history. Her book is a good example of how to benefit from traditional, epigraphical, artistic, architectural and iconographical evidences as well as prevalent ritualistic practices in the matter of developing a proper perspective of the history and role of any living temple. The author has made an interesting sociological study of how the temple grew from the position of a holy place to a centre of pilgrimage, capable of attracting devotees from far and wide. It is essential that a magnificent temple like this, with rich sculptural and iconographical wealth, should be properly studied and appreciated.

Professor Vasantha should be congratulated for having contributed a study of Ahobilam in this beautifully illustrated volume. Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams has to be congratulated on this publication.

Hyderabad,

Dt. 9-8-1999.

**Dr. Haripriya Rangarajan**

## PREFACE

The present work is an attempt to study the Narasimhasvami temples and caves at Ahobilam, Kurnool District, Andhra Pradesh, comprehensively from both the historical and the art-historical angles. In fact this study is partially in fulfillment of a need to provide a comprehensive picture of the nature and development of temples in different parts of South India. Keeping in view that a temple is not only a work of art but also a religious and socio-economic institution, quite a few temples in Tamilnadu and Karnataka have been well studied, while such a study was a desideratum with regard to Andhra Pradesh. It is for this purpose we have taken up the present work. The choice for such a study fell on the Narasimhasvami temples at Ahobilam because of the uniqueness of the place and availability of both literary and archaeological material useful for the purpose.

Ahobilam is one of the traditionally famous hundred and eight Srivaishnava centres in India. Secondly, Ahobilam is the only place where nine iconographic forms of Narasimha are found. Thirdly, Ahobilam is intimately associated with Van-Satagopa-Jiyar (the first Jiyar) of the Ahobila math.

Detailed studies on many other Srivaishnava centres, spread over South India are available although such a study is lacking. This book intends to fill the gap and as far as Ahobilam shrines are concerned, it gives a picture of the development of this holy centre of the Srivaishnavas.

I am grateful to His Holiness Srivan Satagopa Sri Narayana Yatindra Mahadesikan for his holy blessings.

I express my profound sense of gratitude to Dr. Parabrahma Shastri for his scholarly guidance and permitting to study and make use of the unpublished epigraphs with him.

Several scholars have given advice, notably Sri Ramesh and other priests and Manager of the Ahobilam temple. Also I thank Sri N.V. Ramakrishnaiah Achari and Sri Allabaksh, Allagadda for nice drawings and photographs.

I gratefully acknowledge the interest taken by Sri P. Krishnaiah, I.A.S., Executive Officer, T.T. Devasthanams, and Sri N.S. Ramamurthy, Editor, T.T.D. for accepting this work for publication under the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Publication scheme.

**R. Vasantha**

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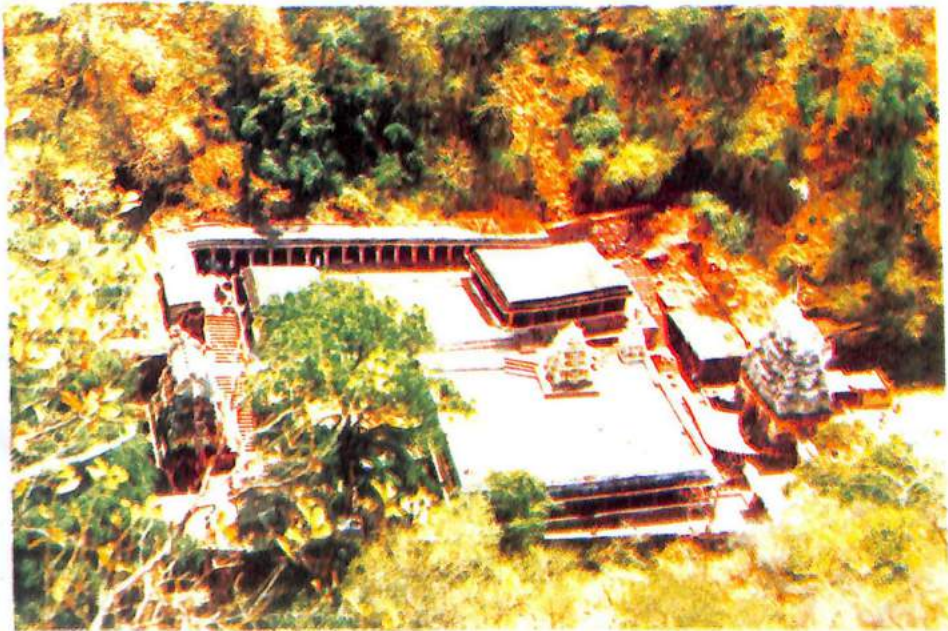
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VIMANA OVER THE GARBHAGRIHA, U.A



GENERAL VIEW OF THE UPPER AHOBILAM





VIMANAS OVER THE NARASIMHA AND  
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GENERAL VIEW OF THE LOWER AHOBILAM





RAJA GOPURA, L.A.



ROWS OF PILLARS IN THE  
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ROWS OF PILLARS IN THE RANGAMANDAPA L.A.,





UNJAL MANDAPA, L.A.



VISHVAKSENA MANDAPA, L.A

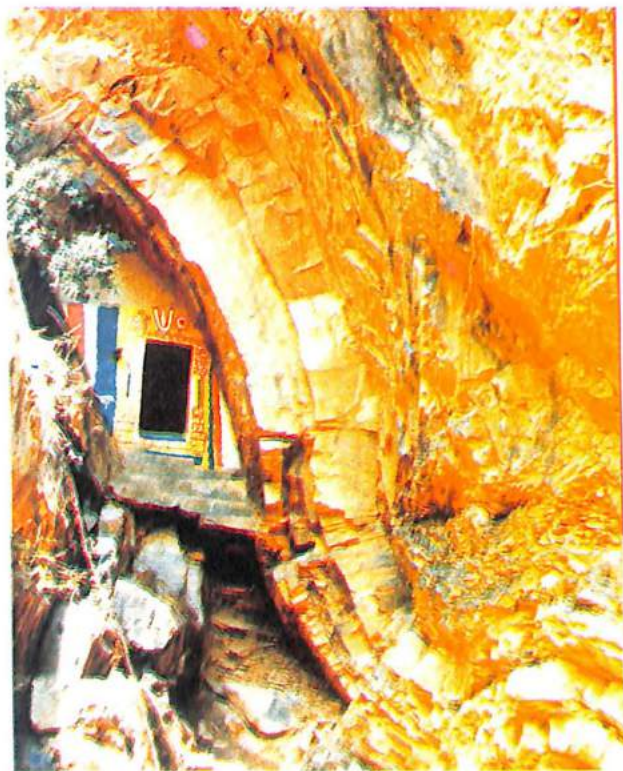


SANNIDHI KONERU, L.A.,





UDYOGAMANDAPA, U.A.



YOGA NARASIMHA SHRINE



GENERAL VIEW OF THE UPPER AHOBILAM  
TEMPLE (WESTERN SIDE)





NARASIMHA TEARING HIRANYAKASIPU. U.A



BHU-VARAHA NARASIMHA



PAVANA-NARASIMHA



YOGA-NARASIMHA  
(NEAR PRAHLADA METTU)





KARANJA-NARASIMHA



JWALA-NARASIMHA (CHATURBUJA)



NARASIMHA CHASING HIRANYAKASIPU



YOGA-NARASIMHA, L.A





BHARGAVA-NARASIMHA



MALOLA-NARASIMHA



JWALA-NARASIMHA (ASTABHUJA)



CHATRAVATA-NARASIMHA





KALYANOTASAVA



DANURMASOTSAVA





DECORATED PROCESSIONAL  
IMAGES DURING BRAHMOTSAVA



DECORATED PROCESSIONAL  
IMAGES DURING BRAHMOTSAVA



DECORATED PROCESSIONAL  
IMAGES DURING BRAHMOTSAVA

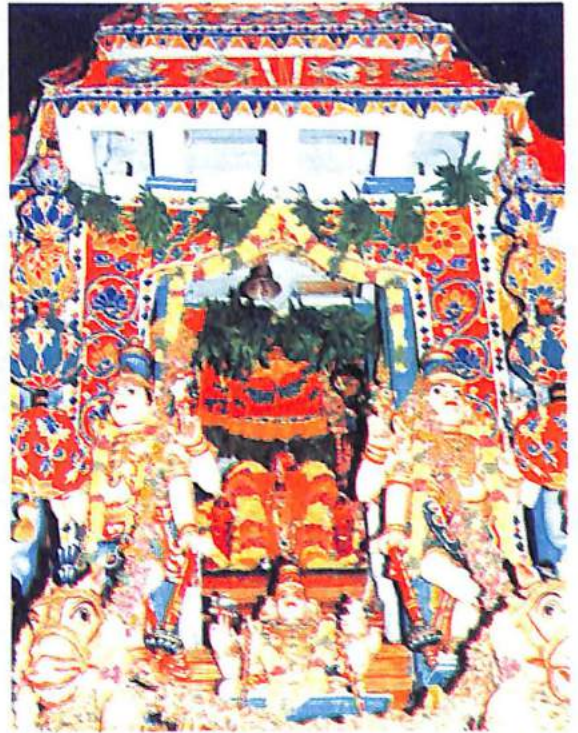


GARUDOTSAVA

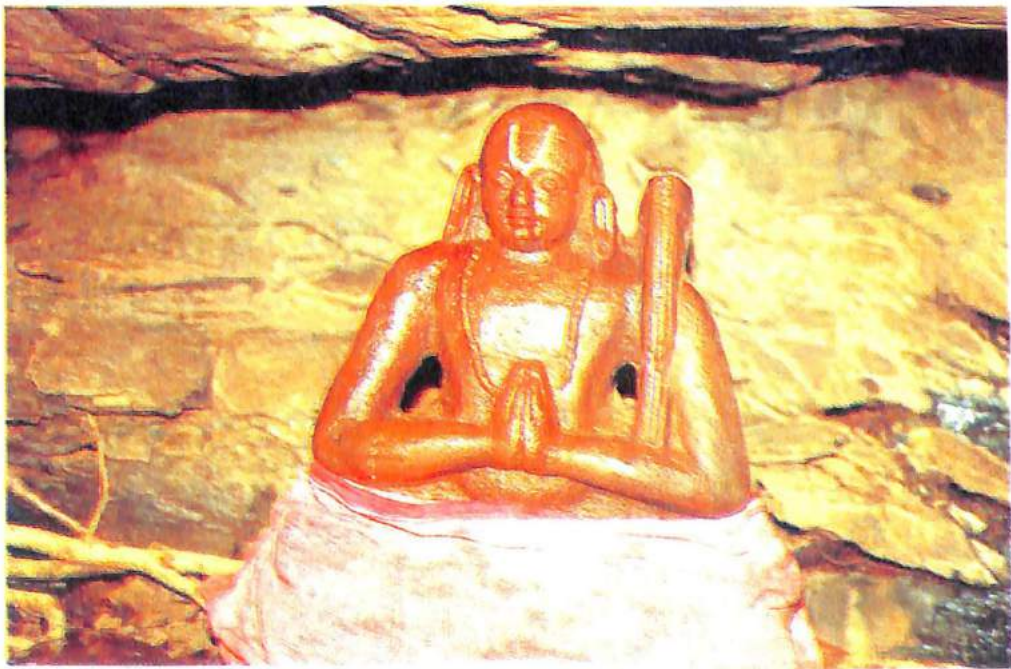




RATOTSAVA



RATOTSAVA



RAMANUJA, U.A





BRONZE IMAGE OF JWALA NARASIMHA



BRONZE IMAGE OF PAVANA  
NARASIMHA



BRONZE IMAGE OF NARASIMHA



BRONZE IMAGES OF THE UTSABEARA





BRONZE IMAGE OF ANDAL



CHENCHU LAKSHMI. U.A.



AMRUTAVALLI TAYAR, L.A.



ANDAL, L.A.





BRONZE IMAGE OF SUDARSHANA



BRONZE IMAGE OF VISWAKSENA



BRONZE IMAGE OF  
THIRUMANGAI ALVAR



BRONZE IMAGE OF KULASEKHAR  
ALVAR





BRONZE IMAGES OF ALWARS



BRONZE IMAGE OF RAMANUJA



BRONZE IMAGE OF ADIVANSATAGOPA JIYAR





45TH JIWAR OF AHOBILA MATH

Any historian interested in the study of ancient and medieval history of South India often meets with a peculiar situation while dealing with the source material. The inscriptions which provide a firm basis for the reconstruction of ancient history and which most of the times happen to be the only source material available are generally temple inscriptions. Similarly the majority of architectural monuments of the past now surviving are temples only. This situation may be due to the fact that the temples were bestowed more care in their execution, they being the houses of gods in contrast to the others associated with mortals. The temples were expected to be monuments to last perpetually and hence they would be constructed by utilizing better building materials and technology. They were also to be institutions to flourish for a longer time thus requiring perpetual endowments for their maintenance, the details of which would be recorded on imperishable stone for the guidance of future generations. This possibly accounts for the situation in which one finds the historical data available for ancient and medieval periods of South Indian history being more numerous relating to the temples than any other aspect of human activity. This abundance of data also provides a picture to the historian that the temple was a major social and economic institution in those times - a fact that has attracted many historians to take up studies relating to these aspects.

Studies on temples are being done in South India for a considerable period. Many of these are either concerned with the temples as surviving works of art, or as works of religious activity or as social institutions. We may mention here a few outstanding ones in this connection as those of K.K. Pillai,<sup>1</sup> K.V. Raman,<sup>2</sup> V.N. Hari Rao<sup>3</sup> and K. Sundaram.<sup>4</sup> In these most of the above mentioned aspects have been taken together, considering the temple as integral organic institution in which all these are inseparably interrelated. There are also a few works which confine themselves to the study of architectural and sculptural aspects of individual temples or regional and dynastic groups.<sup>5</sup> In recent years there are also some interesting studies relating to temple economy, etc.<sup>6</sup> Even though a lot of labour has gone into the study of various aspects of the temples, comprehensive studies of individual temples are confined to those in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu only. Another region of South India which is equally rich in temples, i.e. Andhra Pradesh, has not so far gained any attention in this regard.<sup>7</sup> Therefore we felt that a study of the above type relating to some temple in the Andhra Pradesh region would be of value to have a better picture of the temple institutions in South India in general.

In this connection we opted to choose the Narasimhasvami temples at Ahobilam on two counts. The first aspect that attracted our attention towards these temples is that they have considerable

architectural, epigraphical and literary data useful for a systematic study Secondly, Ahobilam is well known as the *nava- Narasimha Kshetra*

*Jwala Ahobila Maha Lola |*  
*Kroda Karancha Bhargava |*  
*Yogananda Kshatravata |*  
*Pavaneya Nava Moorthayah ||*

Out of the 79 Narasimha temples spread over Andhra Pradesh (Rayalaseema-32, Coastal Andhra-26, Telangana-13, centres not located region-wise for lack of proper historical material-8), Ahobilam is the only place, which exhibits nine distinct iconographical forms of Narasimha In addition to this, Ahobilam is intimately associated with Van Satagopa *Jiyar* (the first *Jiyar*) of the Ahobila math, it is being believed that the God Narasimha himself came in the form of an old man and offered *sanyasa* to the *Jiyar* [PL 122], on the banks of *Bhavanasini* river This fact has not only enhanced the importance of Ahobilam among the *Srivaishnava* Centres but also has made this centre a spear-head of the *Srivaishnava* movement in the region of Andhra Further, this temple lends itself to an interesting sociological study in which the gradual growth of a centre of pilgrimage, from the earliest time of the establishment of a temple to a period when it gained a supreme position as a holy place capable of attracting devotees from far and wide, can be traced

In this book, we aim at making a comprehensive study of the Narasimhaswami temple Complex at Ahobilam both as a religious structural complex and as a socio-religious institution as it developed through the centuries of its growth

As far as the first aspect is concerned we have tried to provide a complete descriptive account of the architecture and sculpture of the temple, including the recognition of different chronological stages and their stylistic features With regard to the latter aspect, it is our intention to provide a picture of the rituals and festivals, the administration, management and economy as well as the interaction between the temple institution and the contemporary society, as they obtained through centuries of history of this temple

The sources available for the study of this temple, as usual for any other historical subject, include both literary and archaeological material

Firstly, the Narasimhaswami temples in the Upper and the Lower Ahobilam are sufficiently major monuments as they have been in a good state of preservation As it would be noticeable even to a casual visitor, these temples are complexes that have grown through additions and alterations made from time to time Still, however, many of these stages of growth are identifiable on the basis of structural features and stylistic forms Thus these temple complexes lend themselves to the study of their growth on the very basis of the architectural data Similarly, there are a number of sacred, secular and decorative sculptures providing a rich array of material for stylistic and iconographic study

Secondly, there are altogether 30 inscriptions available at Ahobilam These inscriptions are in the Upper and the Lower Ahobilam engraved on the walls, pillars and stray stone slabs All are stone inscriptions connected with different monuments of Ahobilam It appears that there were hundreds of copper-plate records preserved in the small room at the Upper Ahobilam, adjacent to the Chenchulakshmi Shrine, but, later, were melt for the sake of copper<sup>1</sup> All the available inscriptions are in Telugu script and language except three inscriptions Out of three, two are in Sanskrit script and language and the other is in Kannada script and language The earliest of the inscriptions of Ahobilam belongs to the time of Chalukya Kirtivarman II (744- 755 A D) and the latest to the time of Venkatapadraya II (1585-1614 A D) Most of the inscriptions are donatory records, and these inscriptions provide us

rich data for the understanding of the various aspects of the temple. Many of these inscriptions are also highly valuable for fixing up the date of several monuments at Ahobilam.

Thirdly, there is a wealth of literary data available for the reconstruction of the history of the Srivaishnava establishment. These include *Sthalapuranas*, Srivaishnava hagiologies, literary compositions glorifying Ahobilam or dealing with the themes drawn from the legends connected with this place, stray references in other literary works and folk songs.

The *Sthalapurana* of this place is available in various *puranas* like the *Nrisimha Purana*, *Brahmandapurana* and *Narasimha purana*, each containing a few chapters concerning this temple. Besides these, another work *Kasikhandam* has a few chapters. The *Sthalapurana* of Ahobilam in Sanskrit gives a detailed description of the nine forms of Narasimha. Tamil poems, *Nalayira divyaprabandham*, has ten poems dedicated to the god of Ahobilam. These were composed by Tirumanga Alvar in the 7th-8th Century A.D. But the *Sthalamahatmya* is considered to be a later interpolation. We may also note, in addition, that the *Sthalapurana* of this place does not figure in any of the literary works of the medieval period, but several literary compositions based on the *sthalapuranas* appeared in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. V.G. Krishnamacharyulu observed on the nature and date of the *Sthalapuranas* from *Andhradesa* deserves quotation for comparison. He says, "Most of the *Sthalapuranas* were composed after the attempted establishment of Islam in Andhra during the 14th century. Islam posed a threat to the religious life of the Hindus and a number of efforts were made for rivetting the Brahminical religion into the minds of the people. The composition of the *Sthalapuranas* was one such effort".<sup>9</sup> These facts may hold good for the *Sthalapuranas* of Ahobilam too and they may have been composed somewhere between the 14th and 16th centuries.

Among the Sanskrit literary works, *Ramabhyudayam* of Saluva Narasimha (1486-91 A.D.), one of the illustrious kings of the Vijayanagara Empire, was a great devotee of god Narasimha. In the introduction to his work the King mentions clearly that he was born by the grace of god Narasimha of Ahobilam.<sup>10</sup> Another important Sanskrit work *Vasantika Parinayam*<sup>11</sup> by Van satagopa Yatindra Mahadesika, seventh *Jiyar* of the Ahobila *math* (1579 A.D.), is a drama depicting the marriage of Narasimha with Chenchita (a tribal girl).

The earliest Telugu work which makes a reference to Ahobilam is Errapragada's *Narasimha Purana*<sup>12</sup> (1324-1349 A.D.). The fifth chapter of this *purana* describes the importance of *Ahobila Kshetra* and of the presiding deity. The preface to *Harivamsam*<sup>13</sup> (Uttarabhagam) by Errapragada has made a reference to the building of the steps to Upper Ahobilam by Vema Reddi.

The next important work is the corpus of Annamayya's devotional songs. Annamacharyulu (1408-1507 A.D.) and Peda Tirumalacharyulu (1460-1547 A.D.)<sup>14</sup> wrote a number of Sankirtanas' (devotional songs) in favour of Ahobila Narasimha of Ahobilam.<sup>15</sup> It is stated that the third Tallapaka poet, Tirumalacharyulu (1485-1550 A.D.) had made 'pratishta' (Consecration) to the image of Narasimha in the Hanuman Shrine at Tirupati.<sup>16</sup> It is stated that Annamayya visited the Ahobilam temple and sang the glory of god Narasimha.<sup>17</sup> It is attested by two copper-plates of Annamayya's Kirtanas, which are found at Ahobilam.<sup>18</sup> He praised the Lord of the Upper Ahobilam as the boon-giver.<sup>19</sup>

*Garudachala mahatmyam*<sup>20</sup> of Obayyanantri (17th century A.D.) is a very popular Yakshagana describing the supposed marriage of god Narasimha with a girl belonging to the Chenchu tribe. *Pratapacharitra* of Ekamranatha,<sup>21</sup> (1290-1323 A.D.) who received patronage from the Kakatiya Prataparudra II, has made a passing reference to Ahobilam.

Anantamatya who flourished in the 15th century A.D.<sup>22</sup> dedicated his work *Bhojarajiyamu* to god Ahobila Narasimha. Srinatha<sup>23</sup> in his *Kasikandam* (1440 A.D) also has made a reference to

Ahobilam. The renowned Telugu poet, Pingali Surana, (1560 A.D)<sup>24</sup> also makes reference to the god of Ahobilam, in his great classic *Kalapurnodayam*.

There are about six unpublished Telugu manuscripts, which provide information about the god Narasimha. *Lakshmi Narasimha Vilasamu* by Paidipati Venkata Nrisimha Kavi is preserved in Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.<sup>25</sup> This describes the love and marriage of god Narasimha with Chenchulakshmi.

*Vasantika Parinayamu*, a Yakshagana written by Kranja Venkatadri, is preserved in Saraswatimahall Library, Tanjore.<sup>26</sup>

Kattamanchi Kamesvara Kavi is the author of *Lakshmi Narasimha Charitramu*,<sup>27</sup> a *prabandha* narrating the legend of the incarnation of Narasimha and Ahobilam. This is in Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

*Ahobila Narasimha Satakamu* is a palm leaf manuscript,<sup>28</sup> preserved in Oriental Research Institute of Manuscripts Library, Tirupati.

The other two manuscripts<sup>29</sup> *Sikhi Narasimha Satakam* and *Narasimha Dandakamu*<sup>30</sup> are preserved in Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

Of great importance and utility is the paper manuscript of D. Ramaswamy Iyyengar of 1916, which is preserved in the State Archives,<sup>31</sup> Madras. It provides details about various aspects of the temple administration, and also gives the temple plans. The temple plans of 1916 are markedly different from the existing ground plan of the temples.

*Ahobilam Kaifiyat* and *Rudravaram Kaifiyat* are the two important written documents of considerable interest for our study. These are of much later period mostly recorded by the village officials. They contain day-to-day accounts of the happenings of the areas to which they pertain. But, almost all these *kaifiyats* here become fascinating reading material since, so far as the past events are concerned, they refer to quite a good number of traditional legends and stories which often remain unsubstantiated. In narrating such legends, the writers of the *Kaifiyats* have lost sense of time, chronology and facts. But they put greater emphasis on stories full of romantic or heroic deeds without any relation to facts. We have examined some *Kaifiyats* which deal with Ahobilam in sufficient detail, regarding their acceptability, in reconstructing the history of the place.

Mackenzie has done a great service to historical research by collecting as many *kaifiyats* as he could and summarise them. In the manuscript No. 100<sup>32</sup> we have *Kaifiyats* of fifteen places and obviously the biggest one is the *Kaifiyat* of Ahobilam. The *Kaifiyat of Ahobilam* deals with the history of the place commencing from its foundation.

The God Narasimha of Ahobilam popularly called 'Ahobila' figures as the subject-matter of innumerable folk songs current among the populace of the region. Many of them not only praise this god as the greatest in fulfilling the wishes of the people, but also treat him often times as not dissimilar to a member of their own community who enjoys life as a colourful personality with all the human urges and feelings of love and hatred. In this context a number of stories are woven round him due to the fertile imagination of the common folk. Most of the folk songs are still in the oral tradition sung on occasions by the village folk around.<sup>33</sup>

The book has been divided into two parts. Part One is devoted to provide a general geographical, historical and religious background pertinent to the study of the Narasimha temples. Part Two is completely devoted for the consideration of the various aspects of the Narasimha (both Upper and Lower) temples itself.

## 1. Location

Ahobilam is situated in the Nallamala hills, and is about 24 kms. from Allagadda taluq headquarters, 112 kms. from Cuddapah and 65 kms. from Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh. It can be reached by bus from Hyderabad and also by train via Kumool and then by bus from there. The whole complex is composed of two parts - one called *Yeguva* Ahobilam which contains shrines devoted to (upper Ahobilam) *Nava* Narasimha (nine Narasimhas) and the other called *Diguva* Ahobilam (Lower Ahobilam) with a single shrine for Lakshmi Narasimha. Both are connected by a road, covering a distance of about 12.8 kms. from the Lower Ahobilam to the Upper Ahobilam. From the Upper Ahobilam, the other shrines are to be reached only by trekking and negotiating the difficult terrain of flowing streams and slippery rocks. Nature is bounteous. It affords plenty of water by way of ponds, brooks and also some resting places in the form of shady trees. One can witness several cave like rocks on the way. Lions and other wild animals dwell in the forest. If one undertakes a strenuous traverse of 8 kms. from the Upper Ahobilam, one can see the *ugrastambham* or *ukkukambhamu* (an immaculate iron pillar) on the mountain side to be the one from which Lord Narasimha emerged in his ferocious form in response to Prahlada's prayers.

## 2. Names of the place

The place is variously referred to in the inscriptions as *Vobula*<sup>1</sup>, *Ahobala*<sup>2</sup>, *Ahobila*<sup>3</sup>, *Ahobilagiri*<sup>4</sup>, *Vedadri*<sup>5</sup>, *Diguva Tirupati*<sup>6</sup>, *Garudadri*<sup>7</sup>, *Virakshetra*<sup>8</sup>, *Achalachaya Meru*<sup>9</sup>, *Singavel Kunram*<sup>10</sup>, *Nidhi*<sup>11</sup> and *Nagari*<sup>12</sup>. The popular name of the place in *Ahobila* and all the other names appear as terms connoting its mythology, sanctity and glory. *Ahobala* is the ancient form of the present name Ahobila. The earliest inscription naming this place as *Ahobala* belongs to 1124 A.D.<sup>13</sup>. According to the *sthal Purana*<sup>14</sup>, there are two popular legends, explaining the derivation of the word 'Ahobilam'. It is stated that the *Devas* (Gods), while witnessing the ferocious aspect (*Ugra Kala*) the lord took on in order to tear Hiranyakasipu to pieces, exclaimed in wonder 'Ahobala' (literally, *Lo!* the stupendous strength!). Hence this place has come to be known as Ahobilam. In support of this derivation of the name, there is a popular Sanskrit verse about Ahobilam that reads:

*Ahoviryam Ahosauryam Ahobahu Parakramah |*  
*Narasimham Param Daivam Ahobilam Ahobalam ||*



The other version of Ahobila is ascribed to the great cave, where Garuda worshipped, did penance and realised the Lord.

According to the *Ahobilam Kaifiya*<sup>15</sup> there is another version, which states that "on one of the mountains in the range of Nallamala hills, eight *amadas* (an amada is equal to ten miles in measure) from Srisaila *Kshetra*, Garuda commenced silent penance to obtain a vision of Lord Narasimha who destroyed Hiranyakasipu. The Lord in His grace, after long years of the *tapas* of Garuda, manifested Himself in the cave of a mountain".

"Ten 'Paruvus' (a paruvu is equal to two and a half miles) to the north-east of the mountain, Garuda was doing penance. A vision of His manifestation was then granted to Garuda, who after obtaining a sign of the location of the mountain-cave, gladly travelled thither and had the vision of the Lord Jwalanarasimha not easily accessible to common people. Garuda then worshipped the lord, and praised him that 'Ahobilam is *Mahabalam*' (Ahobilam endows us with great strength). The Lord's *Divya Mangala Vighraha* was worshipped by him with several *stotras*. Garuda then considered himself as blessed after a vision of the Lord. This divine place thereafter obtained the deserving name of Ahobilam".

*Vobula* is possibly the earliest name available about this place, occurring for the first time in an 8th century Chalukyan inscription<sup>16</sup>. *Vobula* is most probably the corrupt or even the vernacular Telugu form of the Sanskrit word *Ahobala*.

*Ahobalagiri* means Ahobala hill. As the place is situated on a hill, the name appears to be appropriate. Several inscriptions found in the surroundings of Ahobilam refer to Ahobilam by this name. The earliest record which refers to Ahobilam by this name occurs in an inscription of 1378 A.D.<sup>17</sup>

The name *Garudadri*<sup>18</sup> is obviously explainable on the basis of Garuda's penance on this mountain. According to *Sthalapurana*<sup>19</sup> as per his father's (Kasyapa's) instruction, *Vainateya* (Garuda) in his boyhood performed a very great penance in this place i.e., Ahobilam and obtained the grace of the Lord for being a *Vahana* (the eternal vehicle) of Sri Mahavishnu. Hence the mountain is called *Garudadri* to signify this legendary incident.

According to *Sthalapurana*,<sup>20</sup> an *asura* (demon) called Somaka stole away the Vedas from Lord Brahma. Then they were restored by Lord Vishnu, after he killed the *Asura*. After this incident, the Vedas performed a severe penance in this place (Ahobilam) and Lord Narasimha who was pleased with their penance blessed them that thereafter they would not be stolen away by anybody else. To signify this occurrence the mountains are called "*Vedadri*". The earliest record which refers to Ahobilam by this name belongs to the year 1410 A.D.<sup>21</sup>

*Singa-vel-Kunram* means 'seven hills', the abode of Narasimha. Saint Tirumangai *Alvar* who lived in the 8th century A.D. composed ten<sup>22</sup> Tamil poems in praise of the God. In the first poem, *Alvar* sings about *Sengan ali ittu erainjum singavel kunram*. *Singavel* meaning the youthful lion is, doubtless, a reference to Lord Narasimha who resides in the hill Ahobilam. It is for that reason the hill is named *Singavel* Hill. The words *Sengan Ali* (Ali means lion) also signify a red-eyed lion. The name *Nagari* appears at the earliest in an inscription of 1558 A.D.<sup>23</sup> This name is probably explainable as *mulasthan* (the main abode of Narasimha in the Upper Ahobilam).

Besides the names already mentioned appearing in the inscriptions, many *puranas* refer to Ahobilam by different names such as *Achalachaya Meru*, *Virakshetra*, *Sheshadri*, *Narsimhatirtham*, *Garudadri*, *Garudagiri* and *Garudachalam*.

### 3. Antiquities

Quite in tune with the importance of this place as a holy centre, a whole range of paraphernalia appropriate in such places has come up here from time to time due to the philanthropic contributions of the devotees. As such, we have here about nine shrines, six *Koners* (tanks), thirteen holy *tirthas* (ponds), besides twelve *mandapas* and other structures built for the benefit and comfort of the visiting pilgrims. In short, Ahobilam is a well developed religious centre studded mainly with religious buildings, a study of which provides a good background for the understanding of the growth and development of this religious centre.

Among all the significant monuments at Ahobilam the Ahobala Narasimha temple at the Upper Ahobilam and Prahladarada temple at the Lower Ahobilam stand out by the sheer grandeur of their size and appearance. An elaborate discussion of these two temples is taken up later. Now, we may pass on to the description of the other antiquities of the place.

#### A. Nava - Narasimha shrines

##### I. Ahobila Narasimha shrine

The temple, situated on the Upper Ahobilam, at a distance of eight kms. from the Lower Ahobilam, is the main temple and the earliest of all the nine shrines. The Lord in the sanctum sanctorum here appears in his fierce aspect. Hence he is called *Ugra* Narasimha. He is the presiding deity of the temple and is also known as Ahobila Narasimha. It is firmly believed that Narasimha was 'Svayambhu' (self-manifest) here. (A detailed description of this "Svayambu" is taken up later in the succeeding chapters).

##### II. Bhargava Narasimha shrine

The Bhargava Narasimha shrine is situated at a distance of two kms. from the Lower Ahobilam on a hill, near the sacred pond, known as *Bhargava tirtham*. It is the site where Bhargava Rama performed his penance. Hence the Lord of the temple is known as Bhargava Narasimha.

The entire distance is to be covered on foot. At some distance down a deep incline, we come to a very calm place where we find a beautiful pond of cool, fresh and crystal clear water surrounded by ever-green thick shrubs and tall trees. The pond is also called *Akshaya Tirtha*. At a few yards away from this pond, there is a flight of some steps, climbing up which, we reach the Bhargava shrine, which is renovated recently.

The deity installed in the *Garbhagriha* is about '3' high and is placed on a low pedestal and is represented as four-handed, the upper two hands holding the *Chakra* and *Sankha*, the lower two hands are shown tearing the intestine of Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyakasipu is shown with a sword in his right hand. Prahlada is seen on the right in the *Sihanaka* posture with *Anjali hasta*.

The image is crude looking. But the presence of *Dasavatara* in the *Prabhavali* without *Kirtimukha* is interesting as it reminds us of the more graceful and artistic images of 10th-11th century.

An inscription belonging to 1564 A.D.<sup>24</sup> was set up by Sri Parankusa Srivansatagopa Jiyyangaru, the presiding *acharya* of the Ahobila math. This registers the grant of a piece of land in Lingamdinne in Gandikotasima to the God Ahobalesvara for specified offerings and their distribution during the garden festival (*Vana-mahotsava*) near the tank constructed by him on the way to Bhargava shrine by Parankusa Van Satagopajiyyar who received this piece of land from Narasaya who in turn, is stated to have obtained the village Lingamadinne from Nandela Timmaraju. The

inscription also mentions that the approach road and steps to Bhargava shrine were constructed by Parankusajiyar

### III. Yogananda Narasimha shrine

This shrine is at a distance of two kms to the south-east of Lower Ahobilam distance of two kms. The popular legend is that after killing Hiranyakasipu, Lord Narasimha taught Prahlada several yogic postures. Therefore, the lord in this posture is called Yogananda Narasimha. It is connected by a good road. This shrine is a plain stone structure with a square *Garbhagriha* and *ardhamandapa*. Seated on a Garuda pedestal of 1'2" high, the figure of the Lord is about 2'8" high in the yogic posture of the legs being crossed and tied with a *Yogapatta*. The deity is four handed and holds *Chakra* in the right upper hand and *Sankha* in the upper left hand. The other two hands rest on the knees. The form of *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the hand postures, the conical *kirita* and the style of the delineation show that this image is possibly of the 9th - 10th century A D.

There is another Yogananda idol in a cave, near *Prahladabanda* in the Upper Ahobilam. This cave is in the upper reach of a lofty mountain. This figure is similar to the one mentioned already, except for such aspects like the slender body, style of holding *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the low pointed *kirita*, crude face and large ear. These peculiar aspects point out that this image may be earlier than the one referred to earlier and possibly might belong to the 7th - 8th century A D (PL 67).

### IV. Chatravata Narasimha

The shrine of *Chatravata* is about four kms away from the lower Ahobilam, on the same motorable road leading to Yogananda. But we have to walk about a furlong on a rough track from the road to reach this shrine. The temple is small and is under the shade of an umbrella-like banian tree. Hence the deity here is called Chatravata Narasimha. This shrine has a square *Garbhagriha* and a *mukha mandapa*. This *mukha mandapa* has six pillars, which consists of a simple rectangular lower part from which rises octagonal and square shaft and a plain capital. This is typical of the 12th century A D pillars in temples in all parts of South India. Bas-relief sculptures of Narasimha, Anjaneya etc are found on these pillars.

The deity carved in black basaltic stone is seated in the *padmasana* pose on a low *padmapitha*. The two upper hands hold the *Chakra* and *Sankha*. The lower right hand is in the *abhaya* posture, while the lower left hand is a *Katihasta*, placed on the waist and the left thigh. The image is adorned with *Kirita makuta graiveyaka Keyura Yanynopavita* and a drapery. The ornamentation, workmanship, depiction of *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the way of showing the four hands, drapery and the style of delineation suggest that, stylistically the image belongs to the early Vijayanagara period. It is said that the two Gandharvas Haha and Huhu came from *Meruparvata* and entertained this Narasimha with their melodious singing, where upon, the Lord blessed them to become first rate singers in all the three worlds. Even now devotees who visit this shrine sing melodiously before the deity.

### V. Kroda or Varaha Narasimha

The shrine of Varaha Narasimha is one km away from the main temple of Ahobila Narasimha of the Upper Ahobilam. Walking along side the Bhavanasini river east-wards and *Kalakshepa mandapa*, we arrive at the cave shrine of *Kroda (Varaha)*. Here we get entranced by the attractive natural scenery all around. The lofty mountains over-grown with tall trees are awe inspiring. In the narrow valley between *Vedari* and *Guradadri*, the silver stream of *Bhavanasini* glides on and forms the *Varahagundam*.

In this cave shrine, there are two images, one of Lakshmi- Narasimha and another *Sihanaka* figure of Varaha Narasimha with his consort, goddess Bhudevi. The goddess is shown as embracing



the 'snout' portion of the lord, just as she did while being raised by him up from the ocean waters after piercing Hiranyaksha with his tusks and then slaying him. Varaha stands in a *tribhanga* posture with only two hands, the head of the boar and the tail of the lion on a human torso. The image is bereft of any ornamentation. Stylistically the image may be placed in the period about 9th-10th centuries. A.D.

#### vi. Karanja or Saranga Narasimha

This shrine is situated at a distance of one km. from the upper Ahobilam and one furlong away from the road leading to lower Ahobilam. The *Bhavanasini* river glides on at the left of the road. The shrine is under a *Karanja* tree which accounts for the name Karanja Narasimha. The shrine is a simple rectangular structure of granite slabs.

The image of the Lord appears to be seated in meditation, with a hooded cobra over the head. The upper right hand holds a *Chakra* and upper left hand has *Saranga* or bow. The lower hands are in *Dhyana mudra*. Stylistically the image may be placed in the period about 10th-11th centuries A.D.

#### vii. Malola Narasimha

*Malola* shrine is situated, nearly two kms. from the main temple of the Upper Ahobilam. The deity here appears in '*Soumya*' (peaceful) form. As Narasimha is seen with his consort, Lakshmi, He is known as *Malola* Narasimha. The word '*Malola*' means beloved of Lakshmi. (*ma*=lakshmi, *lola*=beloved)

The shrine is on a level surface of a peak of the Vedadri mountain. This place is also called *Markonda Lakshmi Kshetra*.

वेदाद्रे शिखरे स्थे लक्ष्मीशेत्रमुदाहृतम् ।

तत्रास्ते भगवान् विष्णु लक्ष्म्या सह नृकेसरी ॥

The God is seen seated here in *sukhasana* posture with his left leg folded while the right leg is shown dangling at an angle with a semi circular *Prabhavali* and a raised *Kirtimukha*. The goddess is shown seated on the left thigh of the Lord with *kataka* and *parisaritaya vamahasta*. The feet of the goddess rest on *padma* which appears to have sprouted from the earth. The Lord's two upper hands hold *Chakra* and *Sankha*, his lower right hand is in *abhaya* pose and the lower left hand is shown embracing his consort.

The semi-circular *prabhavali* with a raised *Kirtimukha*, over-ornamentation, crude bodily features of the goddess, the elongated *kirita makuta*, the style of holding *sankha* and *chakra*, suggest that the image may belong to the 12th-13th century A.D.

#### viii. Jwala Narasimha

The temple of *Jwala* Narasimha, lies higher up the *Malola* temple, on a hill called '*Achalachaya Meru*'. This is about four kms. from the upper Ahobilam temple. This place is said to be the actual spot where the ferocity or anger of the Lord reached its acme when he tore Hiranyakasipu. It is somewhat difficult to reach this place as we have to pass through a narrow passage made by cutting and chiselling the rocks of the peak on one side, while to the other side of this passage there is a very deep valley. One has to walk very carefully. It is told that the spot where *Jwala* Narasimha is sitting with Hiranyakasipu on his lap, is the threshold of the main entrance door of the spacious palace of Hiranyakasipu. Cleaving one of the pillars of the demon's palace, Narasimha manifested himself. The part of this pillar standing erect has the shape of a lofty hill. This vertical hilly pillar is called *Achalachayameru*. The cleaven side of the standing part is straight and at right angles to the foot part of it. On the precipice of this peak, there are three steel posts erected. On the surface of these steel posts, the names of the devotees erecting them are engraved.

It is generally believed that after slaying Hiranyakasipu, Narasimha looked very frightful. To pacify him, Indra and other gods poured *suraganga* water (celestial Ganges) on his head which flowed down as a stream into the nearby valley and the latter turned into a river called *Bhavanasini*. In front of this shrine, there is a small pond below a fully open cave. The water of this pond is reddish. The colour of the water is said to be due to Narasimha's washing his hands here after tearing the abdomen of Hiranyakasipu.

The shrine appears to be a natural cave. There are three idols in the shrine, a. *Ashtabhuja* Narasimha b. *Chaturbhuja* Narasimha and Narasimha chasing Hiranyakasipu.

#### a. Ashtabhuja Narasimha

The main deity seated at the centre is with eight arms. He is seated on a *Garudapitha* and a small image of Prahlada is placed to the left of Narasimha, standing with folded hands.

The sculpture suggests massive energy and vigorous action. The first pair of hands catches hold of Hiranyakasipu's crown and renders him motionless, while the other pair by tightly gripping the sword-carrying hand of Hiranyakasipu, completely disarms and overpowers him. The second pair of hands is engaged in tearing open the entrails of the demon lying on the folded right leg of the God. The third pair of hands hold *Sankha* and *Chakra* and fourth pair holds the intestine of the demon in the shape of a garland. A *prabhavali* with *kirtimukha* is carved in the same stone.

Stylistically this image goes back to the early Vijayanagara period.

#### b. Chaturbhuja

This figure is depicted in the standing posture coming out of the pillar (*Stambhodbhava-murti*). This is said to represent the *Kevala* Narasimha form. This is a very rare form and appears to be earlier. It has four hands, the two upper hands holding *chakra* and *sankha* and the lower hands are depicted downwards as though he is tearing the demon. But peculiarly the demon is not depicted. Lakshmi is seated to the right and Prahlada stands to the left and the god is adorned with *Karandamakuta*. Stylistically this image appears to be earlier than the above and may belong to the 7th-8th century A.D.

The third figure depicts Narasimha as advancing towards Hiranyakasipu from the right, as the latter is approaching in a defiant attitude, with his sword lifted up to strike. Narasimha is made to take hold of the body of Hiranyakasipu so as to overpower him. Moreover the right hand of Narasimha is held up as if he is going to deal a blow to the enemy with the open palm of the hand.

The conventional lion's face, the conical *kirita*, the expressionless attitude and other details place the image to the 10th-11th centuries A.D.

#### IX. Pavana Narasimha

*Pavana* Narasimha shrine is situated on the bank of the river *Pavani* and it is about six kms. from the upper Ahobilam temple. One has to walk the entire distance from upper Ahobilam southwards, on a hilly forest track. This shrine is in the middle of a dense forest.

The shrine is a small rectangular building with a *Garudastambha* in front. The presence of *Garudastambha* suggests that the shrine might have been in great prosperity and annual functions were being regularly conducted. There is another shrine, opposite to this, dedicated to Siva.

At a distance of about a km. from this shrine, *Chenchus*, (tribal people) reside. They, even to this day, sing in their own language the momentous marriage of the Chenchu bride with Narasimha.

In the shrine, just by the side of the main image Pavananarasimha, there are idols of Gopalakrishna, Navanithakrishna, Varadaraja, Anjaneya and another Pamuletinarasimha.

The main image is actually a Lakshmi Narasimha idol, with four hands. The upper two hands carry *Sankha* and *Chakra*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* pose, while the lower left hand is shown as embracing Lakshmi seated on his left thigh. The lord is seated in *sukhasana* posture on *Adishesha*, with his left leg folded while the right leg is bent at the knee. Dangling down over the head of Narasimha is found a seven-hooded snake (*Adishesha*) spread like an umbrella. Lakshmi is shown seated on the thigh of the Lord with right hand embracing god. But the left hand is a little bit broken.

This form of image has sanction from the *Vishnudharmottara* and stylistically this image belongs to the period of the 6th-7th century A.D.

#### **B. Ukku Stambham (Iron pillar) or Ugra Stambham**

At a distance of eight kms. from the upper Ahobilam, we can see a cleft of the mountain dividing itself into two visible parts. It is a long-held view that from the cleft, the lord appeared in the form of Narasimha and this cleft is known as '*Ugra Stambham*'. The pathway to this place is a very arduous one. There is a small pillar of iron here on the cleavage of a mountain to commemorate the event.

#### **C. Prahlada Mettu**

The small shrine situated on the hill is in between *Ugra Stambham* and the upper Ahobilam. It is dedicated to Prahlada. The images of Narasimha and Prahlada are installed in a small cave.

#### **D. Mandapas and Pushkaranis (ponds)**

Besides the above monuments, there are a number of *mandapas* dotting the hill and its lower part. The *Ahobilam* and *Rudravaram* Kaifiyats list 12 *mandapas*, 12 *tirthams*/*Gundams* and 8 *Koners*.

The twelve *mandapas* distributed in the Lower and the Upper Ahobilam are *Vasanta mandapa*, *Unjal mandapa*, *Koluvu mandapa*, *Visvaksena mandapa*, *Mrtasangrahana mandapa*, *Bigala Anjaneya mandapa*, *Durudu mandapa*, *Raghupati mandapa*, *Bhairava mandapa*, *Udyoga mandapa* and one hundred and sixteen pillared *mandapa* and *Varaha mandapa*.

#### **I. Vasanta mandapa**

This *mandapa* which is square in shape measuring 12'7"x12'7" and located at a furlong distance from the Lower Ahobilam temple, consists of four pillars. The *adhisthana* is 2'4" high with a panel of dancing girls. An inscription belonging to 1548 A.D.<sup>25</sup> states that Narasamma, wife of *Mahamandalesvara* Goburi Vobaya, constructed a *Vasanta mandapam* to the north of *Diguva* Tirupati, endowed 120 gold *Varahas* to the temple as a principal amount and the recurring interest, is to be utilized for offerings (*Naivedyams*) to the god Ahobaleswara, when the *Utsava Vighraha*, the idol used in ceremonial processions visits the lower Ahobilam and waits at the *Vasanta mandapam* during occasions such as, *Nityotsava*, (daily function), *Pakshotsava*, (fortnightly function) *Masotsava* (monthly function) and *Samvatsarotsavas* (annual functions).

#### **II. Unjal mandapa**

The pillars in the *mandapa* are artistic and bear the imprint of the Vijayanagara style of architecture.

This is situated opposite to the entrance gate of the lower Ahobilam temple in the *sannidhi* street. This *mandapam* is occasionally used during *unjalsevai* functions. This is a simple square



mandapa measuring 9'x9' with four pillars. The Adhistana is 1'6" high from the earth. Pillars are very tall having square base, circular shaft and in the capital a neck-moulding (*padmabandham*) has been introduced. The *Padmabandham* joins on to the shaft, thus appropriating to itself a segment of the upper part of the shaft, and adding another item to the lower part of the capital in the form of a vessel or pot. As to the abacus, the palagai or plank is much expanded, in order to combine with the flower shape underneath and it is the most striking element. This pillar is an example of the Chola style. An inscription stone is placed near this *mandapa*.

### III. Koluvu mandapa

This is located, a few yards next to *unjal mandapam* towards the east. This is slightly bigger than *unjal mandapam*. This is situated by the side of the present bus stop on the Allagadda Road. Occasionally on festival days, God is brought in a procession and is placed in this *mandapa* for sometime. The *mandapa* is square in shape measuring 15'10"x15'10", and the height of the *Adhistana* is 3'8". These pillars belong to the Vijayanagara style.

### IV. Visvakṣeṇa mandapa

This is also called *mudra mandapa* and situated on the other side of the main road (Allagadda road). The *mandapa*, which measures 12'7"x12'7", has four pillars of the Vijayanagara style and at present, is used as a shelter for the local people. The *mandapa* stands on high *adhistanas* measuring 5' from the earth. The *adhistanas* are very decorative consisting panels of dancing girls.

During the festival times, the idol of Visvakṣeṇa is brought here and offered *pūja*, and taken in a procession to the temple again. We do not have any definitive knowledge about the reason behind the name *mudra mandapam*. We may presume that this *mandapa* might have acted as 'entry control' place.

### V. Mṛtasangrahaṇa mandapa

This is located a few yards, to the east of *Visvakṣeṇa mandapa*. During special festival times, earth is collected from this place. The *mandapa* is square in shape measuring 12'7"x12'7" with an *adhistanas* of 2'8" high. The pillars appear to belong to the early Vijayanagara period.

### VI. Bigala Anjaneyasvami mandapa

This is two furlongs away from the Lower Ahobilam temple. There is a 6' Anjaneya idol in the centre and also a processional image. It is recently renovated. The *mandapa* measures 13'8"x13'8".

According to the local tradition, the main keys of the Ahobilam temple were deposited at the feet of Anjaneya, after the daily pujas were over and the Chief priest used to collect the keys in the morning from this place. ('*Bigala*' in Telugu means 'keys').

### VII. Durudu mandapa

'*Durudu*' means in Telugu 'to pass through'. It is said that, before constructing the concrete road to the Upper Ahobilam, people used to pass through this *mandapa* to reach the Upper Ahobilam.

The ghat road from the lower Ahobilam slowly winds its way with an abundant sylvan pomp on both sides to the Upper Ahobilam. On the way to the Upper Ahobilam, is the *Durudu mandapa* on the *Sopana marga*. This is a plain *mandapa* which has in all sixteen pillars, eight on each side. There is an inscription on a slab near this *mandapa*. This inscription registers an endowment of twenty *Varahas* as *Polivuttu* for maintaining offerings during the sixteen days of festivals every year, when God was staying in this 16 pillared *mandapa*, while going down to the Lower Ahobilam on procession and back. The *mandapa* was built by Kurucheti Venktadrīdeva - maharaju in 1553 A.D.

The pillars in the mandapa are plain without any special architectural features.

#### viii. Raghupati mandapa

This is also a sixteen pillared *mandapa* with a bigger dimension. The inscriptional<sup>26</sup> slab set up near this *mandapa* records the grant of a piece of land and some money by *Van-Satagopa Jiyar* for conducting certain festivals (16-day festival) when god Ahobaleswara was seated during procession in the 16 pillared *mandapa* from the temple to the Lower Ahobilam and back. This *mandapam* is said to have been constructed by *Mahamandalesvara Kurucheti Timmaraju*, in 1558 A.D. The pillars in the *mandapam* exhibit the Vijayanagara style of architecture. These pillars have ornamental brackets forming part of their capitals, as found in every stage of the Dravidian order. This is situated next to *Durudu mandapa* on the way to the Upper Ahobilam and measures 24'6"x24'6". There is a 3'5" Anjaneya idol in the centre.

#### ix. Bairava mandapa

*Bairava mandapa* is located to the west of the ghat road to the Upper Ahobilam. As we go up the hill, we notice a waterfall on the left of the mountains and there is a *Gundam* (water collected in the low lying area) by name *Bairava Gundam*. In it water collects from the stream flowing down the mountains. Opposite to the *Bairavagundam* is a long corridor *mandapa* with sixteen pillars. Deep inside this *mandapa* is a four pillared structure, where an image of Van Satagopa Jiyar in *dhyan mudra* is seated. These pillars have early Vijayanagara features.

#### x. Udyoga mandapa

Climbing up a stone - stepped staircase about four metres wide, we arrive at a level area surrounded by three mountains of the Ahobilam range of mountains. On the Western extreme is the *Udyoga mandapam*. This is a 16-pillared *mandapam* measuring 24'x24' in the typical Vijayanagara style. The *adhistana* is 4'9" high. This might belong to the late Vijayanagara period.

#### xi. Kalakshepa mandapa

This *mandapa* is situated near Varaha shrine. Walking further up from the Upper Ahobilam shrine, east-wards along side the river for about 200 yards on a narrow rough track of stones and boulders, we find this one hundred and sixteen-pillared *mandapa* walled in only on the western side. The pillars are all plain and simple and may belong to the 11th-12th centuries A.D. or to the early Vijayanagara period.

#### xii. Varaha mandapa

Walking further upwards from *Kalakshepa mandapa*, this *mandapam* is situated adjacent to the *Varaha* shrine. This is in a dilapidated condition. The *mandapam* consists of sixteen pillars, beautifully carved and sculptured. Though the pillars exhibit the 16-17th century features, each pillar is distinct.

Another remarkable group of monuments, if they can be called so, seen here is that of *Gundams/Tirthams* and *Pushkaranis* or *Koneru* (water ponds). Twelve of these are considered as sacred *tirthas* or *gundams*. They are the *Bairava gundam*, *Narasimha tirtham*, *Varaha Gundam*, *Chuta tirtham*, *Sudarsana tirtham*, *Vinayaka tirtham*, *Dara tirtham*, *Sankhu tirtham*, *Gajendra Gundam*, *Rama-Lakshmana tirtham*, *Bhima tirtham* and *Rakta Gundam*.

Besides those described above, there are eight *pushkaranis* or *koneru* (ponds). They are *Sannidhi koneru*, *Alvar koneru*, *Lanja koneru*, *Bhargava koneru* in the Lower Ahobilam; *Sannidhi koneru*, *Utamadugu koneru*, *Akulapapaiah koneru*, in the Upper Ahobilam and a small *koneru* near *Malola shrine*.

## E. Koneru

### i. Sannidhi Koneru (Lower Ahobilam)

This *koneru* is on the southern side of the Lower Ahobilam temple. The mandapas surrounding the *pushkarinis* are in a dilapidated condition and these housed vedic schools formerly. Recently this *koneru* is renovated by the present *Jiyar* of the *Ahobila math*. This tank is always dry and a deep well is dug within the tank. This pond measures 190'x182'10" outside and 143'4"x117'8" inside.

D.Ramaswamy Iyengar (1916) says that "Some years ago, one Jangalapalli Aswath Reddy, a *devotee*, constructed a feeder channel for the *pushkarini* to store the rain water". But it appears that now even the feeder channel had proved useless owing to the percolative nature of the sub soil. The *mandapas* around the tank are sinking into the ground due to the negligence and indifference of the temple authorities. The well in this tank retains water during a major part of the year. But they are muddy and infected with bacteria.

According to local *Kaifyat*, this tank is said to have been constructed by Krishnadevaraya.

### ii. Alvar koneru

This *koneru* is at a distance of two furlongs to the west of the Lower Ahobilam temple. It has flights of steps all round like the *Sannidhi koneru*. But now they are in a dilapidated condition. As D.Ramaswamy Iyengar (1916) says, "this tank was started during the time of Krishnadevaraya and the work was completed in Sadasivaraya's time. Round the bund of this tank there is a huge embankment provided with stone rivetment. This embankment is a very fine one and is called *Alvar-katta*. It preserves rain water silting up the tank. This tank is 156'x138' in dimension and was used for the *Brahmothsava* festival. On the bund, there are a number of monolithic stone reservoirs formerly used for storing water for the cattle<sup>27</sup>. This tank retains water throughout the year. There is a well dug within this tank as in the *sannidhi koneru*.

### iii. Lanja koneru

This *koneru* is at a distance of a few yards away from the Lower Ahobilam temple towards north-eastern side. This tank retains no water even during the rainy season. It is believed that this was constructed by a prostitute (*Lanja*) and so is called *Lanja-koneru*.

### iv. Bhargava koneru

This is the smallest of the tanks at the Lower Ahobilam. It retains water throughout the year as it is fed by a perennial spring. This is situated 3 kms. from the lower Ahobilam temple, closely surrounded by forest adjacent to Bhargava shrine. An inscription dated 1564 A.D.,<sup>28</sup> registers that this tank was constructed by Parankusa Van Satakopa *Jiyar*.

### v. Akulapapaiah koneru

This is on the way to the Upper Ahobilam on the *sopana margam*. At present, this is totally covered with thick green trees.

### vi. Uttamadugu koneru

This is five kms. from the Lower Ahobilam and is situated on the road side to Upper Ahobilam.

### vii. Sannidhi koneru (Upper Ahobilam)

The ghat road to Ahobilam leads to the west. As we go up the hill, we notice a waterfall on the left in the mountains and there is a tank called *Sannidhi koneru* where the water collects from the



streams flowing down the mountains. The size of the tank is 61'x82'6" with 22 steps on three sides. Opposite to the tank, there is a long corridor *mandapa* with sixteen pillars.

This tank and *mandapa* are magnificent and are partly hewn out of the mountains.

**viii. *Small koneru (near Malola shrine)***

This is two kms. away from the Upper Ahobilam situated adjacent to *Malola* shrine. The size of the tank is 24'10"x13'.

Apart from antiquities described already, there are ten chattrams and they are, *Papamma Chattram, Konda Reddy Chattram, Ganthi Guruvayya Chattram, Kotapudu Chattram, Vobalampalli Chattram, Suddapalli Lakshamma Chattram, Pedda Pasupala Chattram, Chenchia Chattram, Kammara Chattram* and *Gundupapala Chattram*.

These *chattrams* are located in *Sannidhi* street at the Lower Ahobilam and are in a dilapidated condition. Some chattrams are used as shelter and some as shops and some of them are in a ruined state. At present, these are used as free-feeding places for non-brahmin community during the special festival times.

Through such benefactions as described already, the religious devotion of generations of people has made Ahobilam a centre of ardent pilgrimage.

## NAMES OF THE PLACE

S.No.	Names of the Place	Inscriptional Reference	Literary Reference
1.	Vobula	E.I Vol.38.No.56 C. 8th Cent. A.D.	—
2.	Ahobala	S.I.I. Vol. IX. No. 207 1124 A.D.	
3.	Ahobila	—	Nrisimhapuranam Bramhandapuramam Kasikandam Ahobilam Kaifiyat
4.	Ahobilagiri	Inscriptions of Andhra- desa Vol.II, Part I, Guntur Taluk, No. 196., P. 247 - 1378 A.D.	—
5.	Vedadri	S.I. I Vol. X No. 577 P. 319 - 1410 A.D.	Bramhandapuram, Nrisimhapuranam
6.	Diguva Tirupati	S.I.I., Vol. XVI. No. 96 1532 A.D.	—
7.	Garudadri	—	Bramhandapuramam
8.	Virakshetram	—	Bramhandapuramam
9.	Achalachayameru	—	Bramhandapuramam
10.	Singa-Vel-Kundram	— Prabandham	Nalayira Divya
11.	Nidhi	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 271 1538 A.D.	—
12.	Nagari	S.I.I. Vol. XVI, No. 235 1538 A.D.	—

# THE SHRINES, MANDAPAS AND KONERS

(Chronologically arranged)

S.NO.	NAMES	DATES
<b>A. SHRINES</b>		
I	Ahobila Narasimha Shrine	C. 2nd-3rd Century A.D.
II	Pavana Narasimha Shrine	C. 6th-7th Century A.D.
III	Kroda or Varaha Narasimha Shrine	C. 7th-8th Century A.D.
IV	Yogananda Narasimha Shrine	C. 7th-8th Century A.D.
V	Jwala Narasimha Shrine	C. 7th-8th Century A.D.
VI	Karanja or Saranga Narasimha Shrine	C. 10th-11th Century A.D.
VII	Bhargava Narasimha Shrine	C. 10th-11th Century A.D.
VIII	Malola Narasimha Shrine	C. 12th-13th Century A.D.
IX	Chatravata Narasimha Shrine	Early Vijayanagara Period
X	Prahladavarada Narasimha Shrine (L.A.)	Saluva Narasimha's Time
<b>B. MANDAPAS</b>		
I	Unjal Mandapa	C. 9th-10th Century A.D.
II	Koluvu Mandapa	C. 1500 A.D.
III	Visvaksetra Mandapa	C. 1500 A.D.
IV	Vasantha Mandapa	1548 A.D.
V	Durudu Mandapa	1553 A.D.
VI	Raghupati Mandapa	1558 A.D.
VII	Mritti Samgrahana Mandapa	Early Vijayanagara Period
VIII	Bairava Mandapa	Early Vijayanagara Period
IX	Kalkshepa Mandapa	C. 11th-12th Century A.D. (or) Early Vijayanagara Period
X	Varaha Mandapa	C. 16th-17th Century A.D. (or) Late Vijayanagara Period
XI	Udyoga Mandapa	Late Vijayanagara Period
XII	Bigala Anjeneyaswamy Mandapa	—
<b>C. KONERS (PONDS)</b>		
I	Sannidhi Koneru (L.A.)	Krishnadevaraya Period
II	Alwar Koneru	C. 16th Century A.D.
III	Lanja Koneru	—
IV	Bhargava Koneru	—
V	Akulapapaiah Koneru	1564 A.D.
VI	Uttamadugu Koneru	—
VII	Sannidhi Koneru (U.A.)	—
VIII	Sannidhi Koneru (Near Malola Shrine)	—

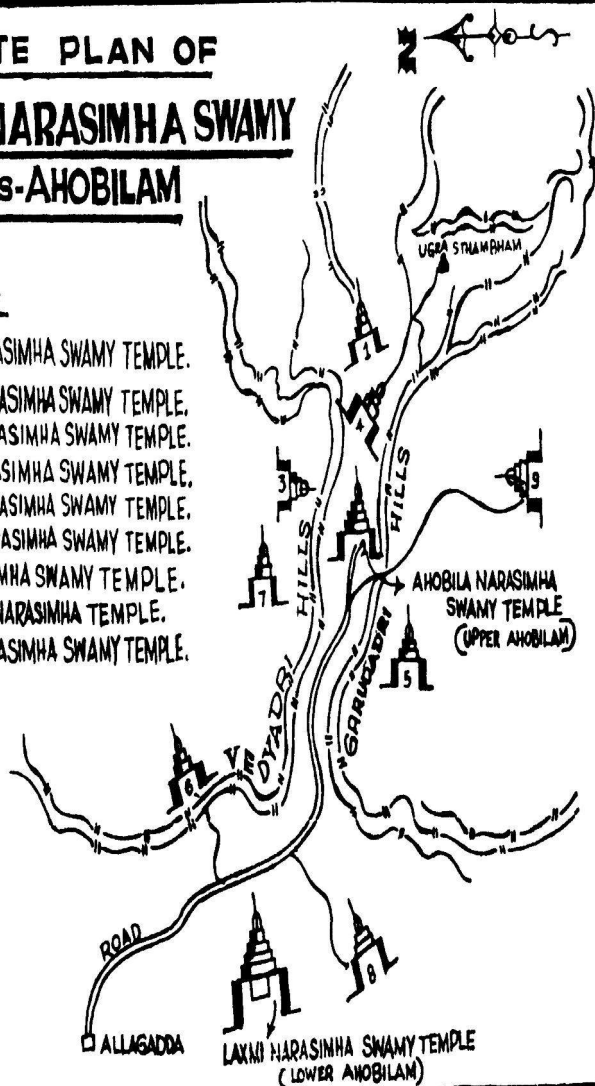
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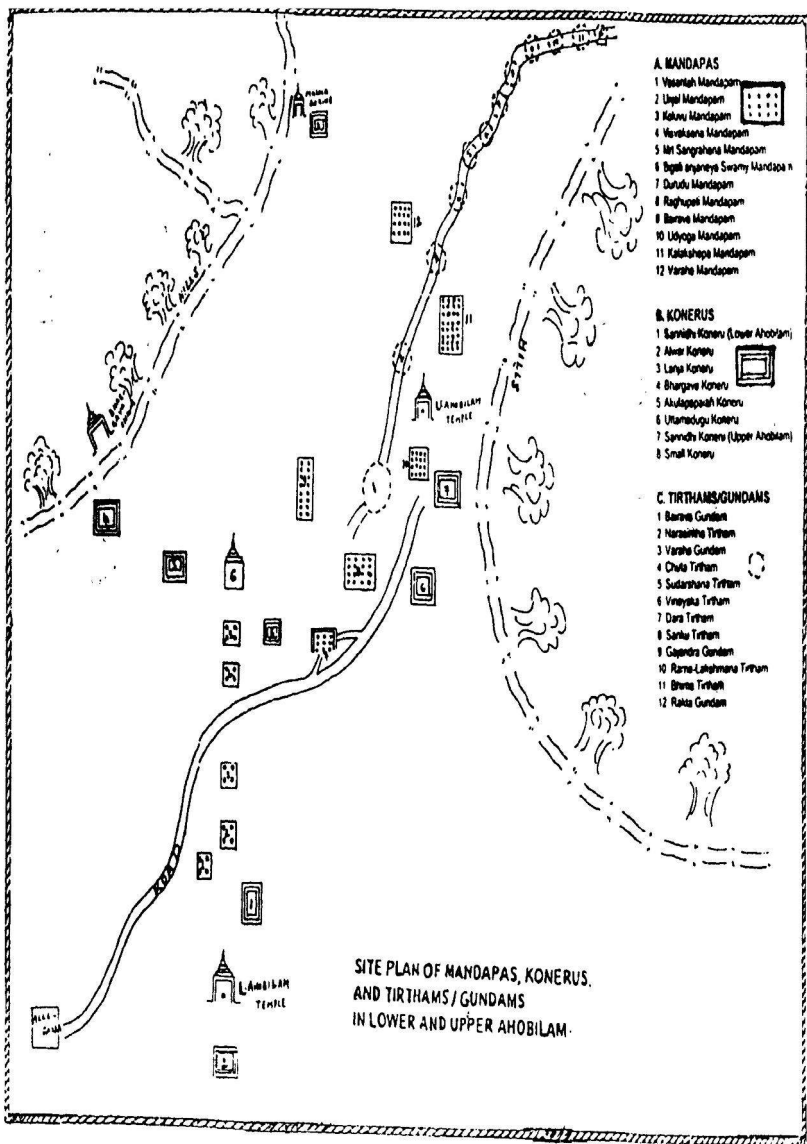


# SITE PLAN OF NAVA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLES-AHOBILAM

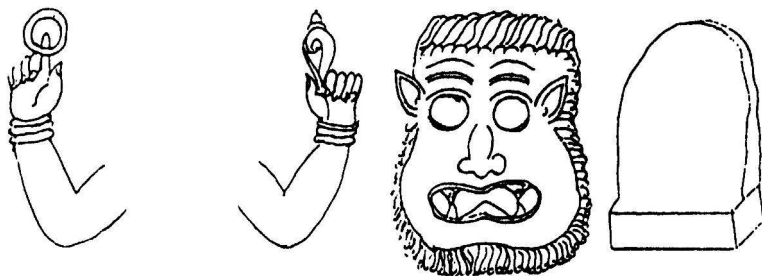
## REFERENCE

1. JWALA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
2. AHOBILA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
3. MALOLA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
4. CRODA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
5. KARENJA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
6. BHARGAVA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
7. YOGA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.
8. CHATRAVATA NARASIMHA TEMPLE.
9. PAWANA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE.

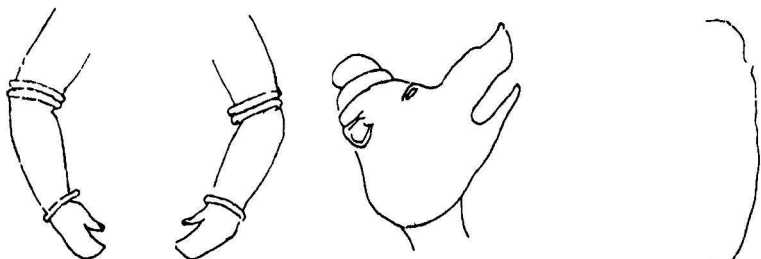




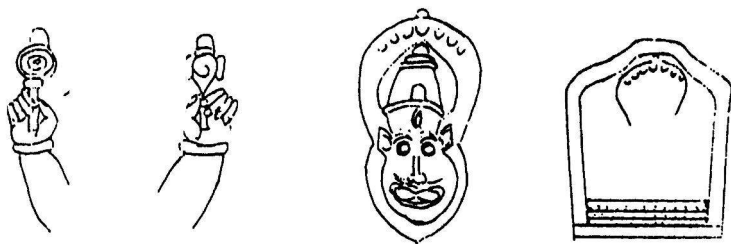
**SKETCHES SHOWING THE DETAILS OF THE DELINEATION OF THE NARASIMHA ICONS**  
(Please see the colour plates also for the icons)



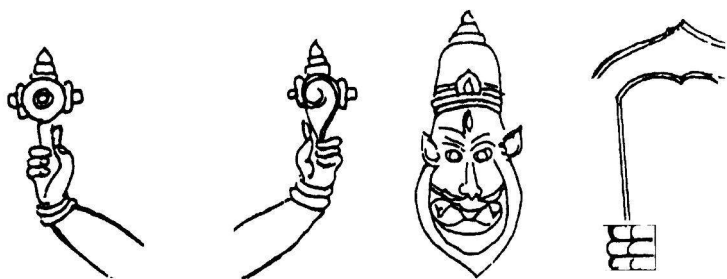
**❖ Narasimha tearing Hiranyakasipu**



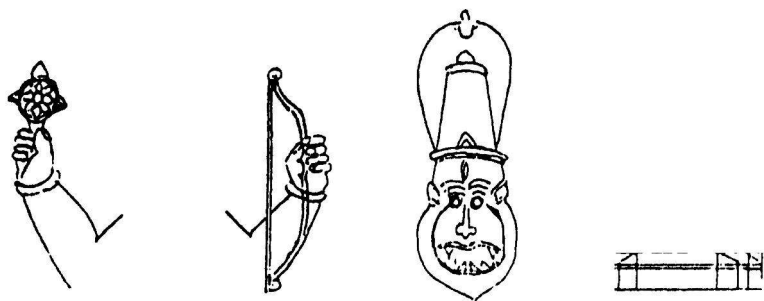
**Bhu-Varaha-Narasimha**



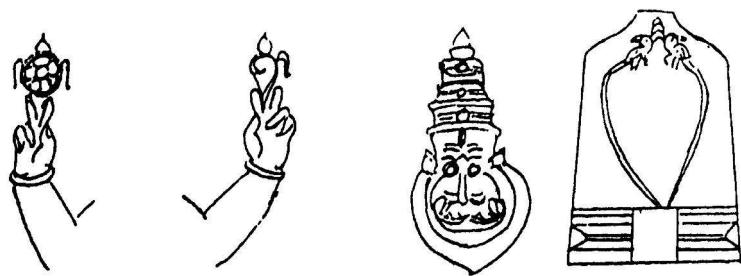
**Pavana-Narasimha**



Yoga-Narasimha (near Prahalada mettu)

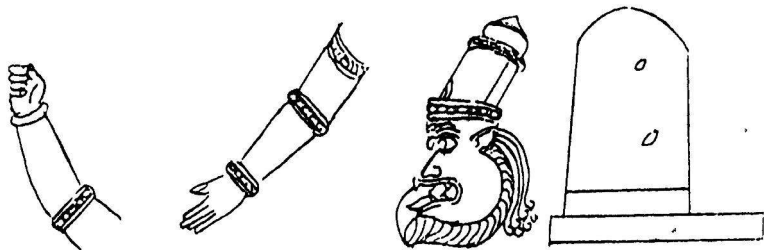


Karanja-Narasimha

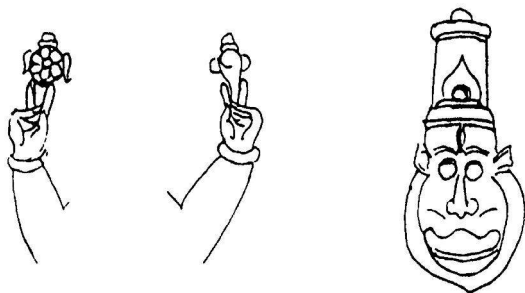


Jwala-Narasimha (Chaturbhuj)

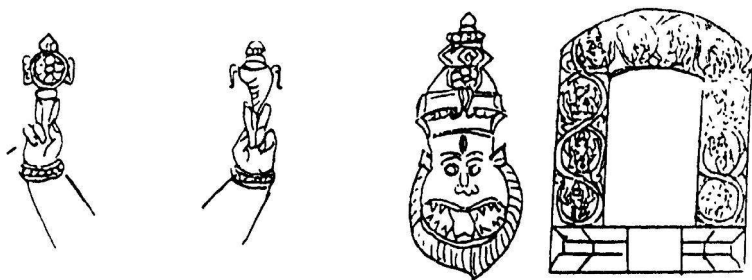




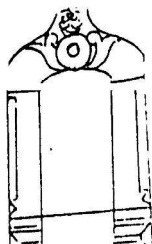
Narasimha chasing Hiranyakasipu



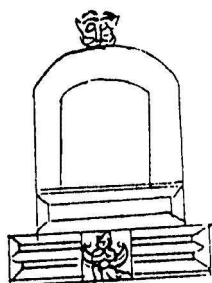
Yoga-Narasimha (Lower Ahobilam)



Bhargava-Narasimha



Malola-Narasimha



Jwala-Narasimha (Ashtabhuj)



Chatravata-Narasimha

In order to understand the significance and the historical situation that promoted the rise of Ahobilam as a prominent Narasimha centre, a brief account of the history of the region is very helpful. This region situated in the south of the Deccan plateau witnessed the play of successive historical forces that had been operating here from very early times.

### 1. Pre-history

The district of Kurnool abounds in several pre-historic sites. Several paleolithic implements and weapons are found in the beds of the Kunderu and the Sagileru, the high ground lying between the river Gundlakamma and the depression of Markapur taluk region.

Traces of microlithic culture were revealed by the discovery of some scattered fragments of light and dark coloured chert along the banks of the Madhyapur and the Ullamoor streams, a number of agates near Iskagundam, a microlithic site near Dhone below the railway bridge on the road to Kurnool and cores and flakes at Peapally (Pyapali). Microliths were also noticed on the high ground lying between the Gundlakamma and the depression of Markapur taluk, Siddepalle, Gajulapalle (Gazulapalle) and Gundla Brahmeswaram.

The remains of the neolithic age were brought to light at Kodumur (Kodumuru), Veludurthy (Veldurti), Pattikonda and Ternekallu (Teranikallu) where the finds comprised mostly flakes and cores. The existence of megalithic culture was revealed by the discovery of burials termed variously as circles, stone circles, cists, cairns, dolmen and menhirs at Cumbum, Janpalacheruvu, Gajjalakonda (Gajjelakonda) railway station, Yerragondapalem, the Arella-Marella Gutta in the west of Nandikotkur and in Giddalur and Markapur taluks. When some of these burial sites were unearthed, bones and potsherds were found, while some comprised terracotta sarcophagi containing bones and earth mixed with decayed grain.

Besides these, two groups of caves, the Billasargam and the Yerrazangabbi caves, of great archaeological interest exist in Kurnool district. On examination, the Billasargam group was found to be ossiferous. One of the caves in this group yielded bones of rhinoceros, horse, bison and some extinct fauna long ago. Pottery was also found below the surface and evidences of human habitation abounded in the shape of cut-bones, of which 200 were implements like awls, arrow-heads, barbed and unbarbed knives and scrapers. The Yerrazangabbi group did not yield fossil bones, though considerable excavation was carried on there.

In order to gain a good understanding and appreciation of the ambitions and activities of the major dynasties which created an impact on this district in the arts of both peace and war, it may be helpful to attempt a geographical placement of Kurnool district in the wider historical region, the vicissitudes underwent through the centuries. Kurnool district in the ancient times, appears to have formed part of Andhra and Karnataka. In modern times, the portion included in Karnataka became gradually merged with the portion in Andhra which was again an influential political division of ancient India<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Early-history

In view of these facts, it would be necessary here to deal with the political history of Rayalasima in brief, for the political history forms the skeleton of the area which in course of time gets fleshed out by its culture. The dynasty-wise political history of the kings in each dynasty with their contributions for the growth of culture is presented in the following sections

### 3. The Mauryas (C 324 -187 B C)

The region, in all probability, was included in the Mauryan empire. The existence of Asokan inscriptions at Yerragudi and Rajula-mandagiri in the Pattikonda taluk of Kurnool district in the neighbourhood and the references in an Asokan stupa at Kanchi by Hiuen Tsaing, who visited the city in the first half of the 7th century AD seem to indicate that the territory lying between the two places formed part of Asoka's dominions<sup>2</sup>. According to the XIII rock-edict of Asoka, the Andhras were within the Mauryan imperial domain. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the Mauryan court also noted that the Andhras supplied a large army to the Mauryans<sup>3</sup>. It may be said that the Rayalasima had been a part of Asokan dominion, as Jonnagiri which is twelve miles away from Rajula-Mandagiri is identified as Suvamagiri, a seat of Mauryan viceroyalty. The major and minor rock edicts of Asoka discovered in Rayalasima were meant to carry the 'Dharma' of Asoka to the people of this area.

### 4. The Satavahanas (C 235 B C - 225 A D)

After the decline of the Mauryas, the Andhra region came under the sway of the Satavahanas, the feudatory chiefs of the Mauryans. They declared independence in this region and their rule lasted for four centuries which included Rayalasima. The mention of *Satvahani-ratha* in the Myakadoni (Makadone in Adoni Taluk, Kurnool district) inscriptions of Pulumavi IV, the existence of *Satavahana-kota* (Satanikota in Nandikotkur taluk of Kurnool district) clearly indicate that the neighbouring districts of Kurnool were under the rule of Andhra Satavahana kings. Their authority seemed to have extended south-eastwards into the Cuddapah district.

The earliest mention of the Srisailem hill, a historical place in Kurnool district is recorded in Nasik inscription<sup>4</sup> of Gautami Balasri. It also makes a mention of the Satavahana ruler, Gautamiputra Satakarni, who was the ruler of several countries and mountains including the Western and the Eastern ghats. It also mentions that Satakarni was the ruler of Mulaka, identified with *Mulikinadu*, a part of Rayalasima in Cuddapah district. "The term 'Muliki' in *Mulki-nadu* is reminiscent of the *Mulkis*, an Andhra tribe who lived in the neighbourhood of Parthan on the banks of Godavari, in the time of Buddha. It is not unlikely that the *Mulkis* had to move southwards beyond the Srisailem range in search of new homes, unable to bear the pressure of the barbarians who swept over the Deccan after the disappearance of the Satavahanas"<sup>5</sup>.

The inscriptions and literature of this period describe that the Satavahana kings practised religious tolerance. The Vedic Brahminism, the Buddhism and the Jainism flourished in their kingdom. Though these kings, patronised Vedic religion and performed Vedic sacrifices, they tended to show greater respect and favour towards Buddhism. So, the popularity of Buddhism can be witnessed through the worship of Buddhist images prevalent during this period. The inscriptions of Satakarni,



Krishna<sup>6</sup>, Gautamiputra Satakarni<sup>7</sup>, and Vasisthiputra Pulumavi<sup>8</sup> found at Nasik caves and the inscriptions of Vasisthiputra Pulumavi<sup>9</sup> and Gautamiputra Yagnasri<sup>10</sup> on the caves of Karla, Amaravati<sup>11</sup> and Kanheri record the royal grants to the *Buddhist Sanghas*. The chief patrons of Buddhism were ladies, many of them were from the royal harem, the classes of merchants and artisans and also the people at large.

The kings of this dynasty performed vedic sacrifices and patronised Brahminical religion. The Naneghat inscription<sup>12</sup> of Naganika and the Nasik inscription of Vasisthiputra Pulumavi describe the vedic sacrifices and the rule of Gautamiputra Satakarni, strictly based on *Dharma Sastras*. The Satavahans metronymics are derived from the vedic *gotras*. Gautamiputra means the son of Gautami or a lady belonging to the *Gautama gotra*<sup>13</sup>. The emphasis shown on the Vedic religion by the Satavahana kings was responsible for the Vedic culture to be initiated in Rayalasima also.

The idol worship in Buddhism initiated by the Satavahana kings inspired the people of the Vedic religion to worship the Vedic gods in the form of idols. Idol worship was encouraged among the Hindus also. Influenced by the Buddhistic constructions, the Hindus also constructed shrines for the Vedic gods on a large scale. The famous Siva linga at Gudimallam, belonging to the first century BC suggests that the idol worship of Lord Siva was propagated during this period. The recent discovery of Virapuram (Kurnool district) brought to light a large number of Saiva shrines which were built by the Satavahana kings. As in other places of the Andhra country, in Rayalasima region also temple building activity was undertaken. The Prakrit literature of this period propagated idol worship of the Vedic gods. *Gathasaptasati* compiled by Hala mentions a number of episodes related to Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu. Personal names especially in the royal family appeared with Saiva prefixes. Names of frequent occurrences were Siva, Sivaskanda, Sivadatta etc. The appearance of bull<sup>14</sup> on Satavahana coins also indicates the Saiva leanings of the kings. In her Nasik cave inscription Gautamiputra Balasri compared her son Satakarni with Rama, Bhagiratha and Ambarisha. The wife of Satakarni I worshipped Vasudeva, Krsna and Samkarsana<sup>15</sup>. The first Satavahana king probably Simuka is said to have built Jaina temples and *Chaityas*. These points show as to how different religious beliefs co-existed in the Satavahana dominion. The Rayalasima formed one *ahara*, as some scholars opine according to the *Myakadoni* inscription of Pulumavi. The religious sentiments prevalent in other parts of the Satavahana kingdom also echoed in Rayalasima.

## 5. The Early Pallavas (290 - 510 A.D.)

At the end of the 2nd century A.D. and in the beginning of the 3rd century A.D., the Satavahana empire began to decline and the feudatory chiefs became independent. A number of independent principalities arose in their respective localities. The Rayalasima area, including Cuddapah, Kurnool and Chittoor except Anantapur fell into the hands of the Pallavas<sup>16</sup>. Though, no record of the early Pallavas are found here, *Munda-rastra* and *Hiranya-rastra* are mentioned in the inscriptions of Vishnugopa and his son Simhavarmen II, who ruled over the coastal region comprising the present Nellore and Guntur districts in the 5th century A.D. *Allahabad pillar* inscription mentions that Samudragupta, the emperor of Magadha, invaded Kanchi and disturbed Vishnugopa. Samudragupta's army while advancing to Kanchi, must have passed through Cuddapah district and created some stir.

## 6. The Nalas

A family of local chiefs known as the Nalas was ruling over the territory of Nalavadi around the early 6th century A.D., which lay in the direction of Bellary and Kurnool. But very little is known about the events connected with their rule in this district<sup>17</sup>.

## 7. The Chalukyas of Badami (C.5th - 8th Cent. A.D.)

The association of the *Chilikas* with the *Hiranyaks* is of special interest. There can be no doubt that *Chilika* is identical with Chalukya inscriptions as the family name of the rulers of that dynasty. Now, according to the tradition preserved in the charters of the Eastern Chalukya kings of Vengi, Vishnuvardhana, the progenitor of the Chalukya race, was born at Mudivemu, the present Peddamudiyam in the Jammalamadugu taluk, a place within the boundaries of the *Hiranya-rastra*. The reference in the Ikshvaku inscription to the *Chaliki* in close association with *Hiranya-rastra* concerns with the truth of the legend mentioned above. Peddamudiyam six kms. away from Ahobilam may be regarded as the cradle of the Chalukyan family, which played an important part in the history of the Deccan of the later ages<sup>18</sup>. Ikshvakus had matrimonial alliances with the *Hiranyakas*. Thus, this area comprising the eastern taluks of Cuddapah district was closely associated with the Ikshvaku kingdom.

The Western Chalukya ruler of Badami, Kirtivarman I (566/7 - 597/8 A.D.), defeated the Nalas and occupied their territory. Pulakesin II (609/10 - 642 A.D.) who came into conflict with the Pallavas suffered a series of reverses and lost this territory to the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I. Pulakesin's death in one of the battles in A.D. 642 gave rise to a war of succession among his sons, Chandraditya, Adityavarman, Vikramaditya I and Jayasimhavarman, who like the other feudatories, sought their safety by converting the territories under them into independent kingdoms. A copperplate grant in Kurnool refers to the self-assumed Adityavarman's titles and states that he had conquered a vast empire. This district appears to have been in the hands of the Pallavas till A.D. 654 when the war of succession ended with the accession of Vikramaditya I. Kurnool district again came under the Chalukyas and remained with them till they were overthrown by the Rashtrakutas<sup>19</sup>.

## 8. The Greater Pallavas (575 - 893 A.D.)

The Rayalasima region passed into the hands of the greater Pallavas between 630 A.D. and 800 A.D., which can be attested to, from a number of inscriptions found in Chittoor district. The greater Pallavas obtained the Rayalasima region from the early Chalukyas after the defeat of Pulakesin II in 642 A.D., by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I (630 A.D. - 680 A.D.)<sup>20</sup>. The political battles fought between these two kings took place on the battle-fields of *Manimangalam*, *Pariyala* and *Surmara* in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. Pulakesin II was killed in these battles and the Pallavas occupied more Chalukyan dominated areas in Rayalasima.

The Pallavas took up several temple-building activities and donated lands and villages for their development. The Parasurameswara temple at Gudimallam (Chittoor district) was constructed by the Pallavas. According to an epigraph dated 801 A.D., this temple was built in the middle of the 8th century A.D.<sup>21</sup> There are inscriptions to attest to the fact that the Pallavas and the Banas donated liberally to this temple.

## 9. The Cholas (C.9th - 13th Cent. A.D.)

The Chola king Karikala, the predecessor of Cholas in Tamil and Telugu regions had frequent wars with Trilochana Pallavas in the fifth century A.D., which resulted in the overthrow of the Pallavas not only from their home territory *Tondamandalam* but also from the Telugu region including *Paka-nadu*, a part of Cuddapah and Nellore regions. A part of Cuddapah district was under the rule of a local dynasty of Chola chiefs during the period of the Pallava-Chalukya wars. The Cholas of Tamil country, deported from their home land during the period of their weakness, were in quest of fortune. The Cholas of *Renadu* was one such branch<sup>22</sup>.

## 10. The Renati Cholas (C. 6th - 10th Cent. A.D.)

*Renadu* is the name of the part of the Andhra country comprising broadly the present taluks of Pulivendala, Kamalapuram and Jammalamadugu of the Cuddapah district and some stretches in the Kurnool district. It is stated in the inscriptions of *Renadu-eduvelu* (*Renadu-7000*) implying that this territory consisted of 7000 villages or revenue units in the ancient days<sup>23</sup>. It is also called *Maharajavadi* or *marjavadi*. A branch of Chola chiefs ruled over this region from the sixth to the tenth Century A.D., and hence, they are called the *Renati Cholas* by the historians. Four copper plates grant and nearly fifty stone inscriptions<sup>24</sup> are available of this dynasty.

The *Renati Chola* king Pormukharma Punyakumara conquered the *Hiranya-rastra*, a sub-division of the Pallava kingdom of Kanchi in the 7th century A.D. He styled himself as the lord of *Hiranya-rasra* in his Dommara Nandyala copper plate inscription<sup>25</sup>. During his reign the famous Buddhist traveller Hieun-Tsang of China passed through *Renadu* and his reference to the kingdom of *culiya* is identified with this dynasty. These Cholas had lost their control over *Renadu* somewhere about the 10th century A.D. An undated inscription at *Veligallu* (Chittoor district) refers to a Vaidumba chief, Ganda Trinetta as ruling over *Renadu-7000* country<sup>26</sup>. The dated inscriptions of Vaidumbas appear at places like Upparapalli in Proddatur taluk and Animela in Kamalapuram taluk since the last quarter of the 10th century A.D.

Another branch of Telugu Cholas of Bodinenipalli is named after the village in Giddalur taluk of Kurnool district. They became feudatories of the early Chalukyas of Badami in the 7th century A.D. Another branch of Telugu Cholas of Nellore also ruled the south-eastern part of Cuddapah district in 1160 A.D., and later they were brought under the control of the Kayastha chiefs in the beginning of the 14th century A.D.<sup>27</sup> Another branch called Nidugal Cholas, Oraiyur Cholas established their rule over the territories Nidugal and Hemavati (Anantapur district) in the middle of the 11th century A.D.

The *Renati Cholas* were very busy warring with the Vaidumbas and Rastrakutas and did not carry on any temple-building activities. Their inscriptions record their donations largely to the Vedic Brahmins and temples which existed already by that time.

## 11. The Vaidumbas (C. 8th - 11th Cent. A.D.)

Consequent on the fall of the Cholas of *Renadu*, the region was seized by the Vaidumbas, another line of Telugu-speaking chiefs. Their original home was in Chittoor district, where their ancient capital *Vaidumbavolu* is situated. After the conquest of *Renadu* from the early Cholas, they changed their capital to *Chippili* in Madanapalli taluk and subsequently to *Pottapui* in the Rajampet taluk. Although they claim to have been ruling *Renadu-7000*, that is in the present Pulivendala, Kamalapuram, Jammalamadugu taluks and parts of Kurnool district, their authority extended in the taluks of Madanapalli, Vayalpadu, Rayachoty, Rajampet and parts of Kolar district. Only some kings of the later generations of the family seem to have ruled over the taluks of Kamalapuram, Jammalamadugu and Cuddapah also, besides the taluks mentioned above.

The rule of Vaidumbas was extended into the Telangana region also during the 11th and the 12th centuries A.D. They waged regular battles with the Rastrakutas and the Nolambas. Though they were continuously ruling the same parts of Rayalasima off and on, they had to depend upon give-and-take policy with the Rastrakutas and Nolambas. They seemed to be subordinates of the western Chalukyas of Kalyani. As the western Chalukyas were on the verge of their extinction, the Vaidumbas could consolidate their power in Cuddapah district<sup>28</sup>. The Vaidumba chief Mahamandalaswara Malla Maharaja is mentioned in two inscriptions at Alampur in Mahaboobnagar district dated A.D. 1078 and 1080 as the ruler of *Aize-300* under the control of Vikramaditya VI<sup>29</sup>. The chief is also said to be the

lord of Kalukada. *Rayadevamarajaya*, also known as *Rakkasa Ganga*, was a powerful king of Vidumbas. He conquered some territory belonging to the Telugu Cholas of Nellore in or about 247 A.D., and occupied a part of it extending as far at least as Jyoti in Siddavatam taluk.

Another Vaidumba chief, Somideva ruled for nearly thirty five years. In one of the inscriptions at *Chinalapattur* near Pushpagiri in Cuddapah taluk dated 1268 A.D., he figures as a joint ruler with another chief called Murarikesavadeva Maharaja and both are styled as the lords of Kalukada<sup>30</sup>. According to *Yallareddipalli* inscription (Kamalapuram taluk), Somidevi was ruling in 1267 A.D., over *Muliki-300*, *Honnnavati-90* and *Pemdekallu-800* from Vallurupattana, his capital in Cuddapah taluk. Another inscription found at Gundluru in Rajampet taluk dated 1284 A.D., shows that Somideva brought subsequently under his control Pottapinadu also. He was defeated by Kayastha prince Ambadeva. Ambadeva refers to his victory over the Vaidumba chiefs in his Tripurantakam inscription dated 1290 A.D.<sup>31</sup> According to an inscription of 1287 A.D., found at Attirala in Rajampet taluk, Ambadeva was ruling from his capital *Valluru pattana* over Gandikota, *Muliki-nadu*, *Renadu*, *Pendekallu*, *Eruva*, *Sakali* and *Pottapi*<sup>32</sup>. This shows that the *Kayasthas* gained over the Vaidumbas and the Vaidumbas lost their control over Rayalasima.

## 12. The Kalyani Chalukyas (973 - 1198 A.D.)

The Chalukyas of Kalyani started their rule in the Rayalasima area in 973 A.D., which reached its zenith under Vikramaditya VI. There are many epigraphs to confirm their rule in this region. According to an inscription dated 1124 A.D.<sup>33</sup>, Vikramaditya is referred to have been associated with *Peddamudiyam*. This inscription also mentions his subordinates Ayatanachola Maharaja and Chidona Chola Maharaja, who both belonged to the Cholas of *Renadu*. This clearly shows that the Cholas of *Renadu* lost their power.

After Vikramaditya VI, his son Someswara III (1126 A.D.) became the king. His subordinate Mallideva issued two epigraphs dated 1139 A.D., found at *Pushpagiri*, which mention that Someswara III ruled Valluru (Cuddapah district). Some inscriptions from Valluru and Kurnool region mention the rule of Someswara III. An inscription found at *Kolimigundla* (Kurnool district) dated 1134 A.D., refers to their subordinate chief Vankanachola Maharaja, ruling *Renadu*, *Pendekallu* and *Kannenadu*. All the above inscriptions clearly show that the north-eastern parts of Kurnool district, including Cuddapah were under the rule of Someswara III. According to an inscription found at *Devagudi* (Jammalamadugu taluk), Someswara's son Jagadekamalla II (1138- 1155 A.D.) ruled some parts of Cuddapah. The inscription of Tailapa II dated 992 A.D., found at Kogili<sup>34</sup> (Bellary taluk) records his rule of *Redda* identified as Roddam in Penukonda taluk (Anantapur district). Some more inscriptions of this king found at Bellary record that Tailapa II seized a portion of Nalambavadi, which remained under his control till 997 A.D.

The inscriptions found in the Anantapur region refer to the reign of Vikramaditya II (1076-1126 A.D.) and his subordinates. His son Someswara III recaptured *Gangavadi*, *Nalambavadi* and *Banavasi* and established his rule over these parts. An inscription found at *Astasivaram*<sup>35</sup> (Madakasira taluk) refers to Someswara III who destroyed the Kalachurya race. It is also mentioned that during his reign, Hoyasala Ballala II invaded his empire and defeated the last king named Someswara IV (1184-1200 A.D.) and captured his capital Kalyani.

## 13. The Rastrakutas (753 A.D. - 974 A.D.)

The Rastrakuta king, Dantidurga overpowered the early Chalukya king, Kirtivarma II and became master of Karnataka and conquered the rulers of Kanchi, Telugu Cholas of Srisailam. Thus



Srisailem region came under the control of the Rastrakutas in the 8th century A.D., and continued to be a part of their kingdom till the 10th century A.D. The expansion of Rastrakuta empire into the Cuddapah district and further south is attested to by a number of inscriptions. Indra III was probably the first Rastrakuta monarch to rule directly over the Cuddapah region. The Chittoor and Cuddapah districts were ruled by the Rastrakuta king, Krishna III, who defeated the Chola king Parantaka I (907 - 955 A.D.)<sup>36</sup>. Krishna III visited some temples in his kingdom and made some liberal grants. An inscription found at Pushpagiri records his gift of land to all temples at Pushpagiri, while returning from a pilgrimage to Jyoti (Siddavatam taluk). Another inscription of the time of Krishna III found at Rameswaram (Cuddapah) temple<sup>37</sup>. It describes the genealogy of Rastrakuta kings i.e., Dantidurga, Krishna, Prabhutavarsha, Dhruva, Jagattunga and Krishna.

The Rastrakuta power was eclipsed after Krishna III. The Kalyani Chalukyas became more powerful and king Tailapa II put pressure on Rastrakutas in 973 A.D., and overthrew them. Though the Rastrakutas were replaced by the Chalukyas of Kalyani, the region of Rayalasima continued to be under the rule of the Cholas for some years.

#### 14. The Kakatiyas (1000 - 1323 A.D.)

As the successors of the Cholas, the Velanadu Cholas established their authority in this region. During their reign, the Kakatiya king Rudradeva (1158 A.D.- 1198 A.D) invaded the territories belonging to the Velanadu Cholas and conquered Srisailem region in the South. By 1162 A.D, Srisailem became the southern boundary of the Kakatiya kingdom<sup>38</sup>. Then onwards, Srisailem formed a part of the Kakatiya empire upto 1323 A.D. A number of inscriptions are found at Tripurantakam in the reign period of Rudradeva (1199-1261 A.D.). Ganapatideva, the son of Rudradeva was the first ruler of the Kakatiya dynasty, who conquered the Cuddapah region and ruled over it. He conquered the region with the help of the Telugu Cholas of Nellore. He defeated the Vaidumba ruler who occupied Pottapinadu for the benefit of Manumasiddi<sup>39</sup>. This was the first time that Ganapatideva had a contact with Cuddapah district. The earliest epigraph of the Kakatiyas dated 1275 A.D., found at Gangavaram (Kamalapuram taluk) refers to Ganapatideva<sup>40</sup>. He appointed the Kayastha chief Gangayasahini as the Governor of this region. From this incident onwards, Cuddapah region became a part of the Kakatiya empire upto 1323 A.D. The Gangavaram inscription of Ganapatideva also registers the gift made by the Chief Gangayasahini and his wife Kamalabai to the Pushpagiri temple. There are some more inscriptions found at various places in this district belonging to the period of his grandson Prataparudra. An inscription of Kayastha Chief Tripurari II (1304 A.D.) records that the chief ruled from Valluru in *Mulikinadu*, a sub-division of Cuddapah region. Another inscription dated 1308 A.D. found at Kurnool<sup>41</sup> records that Tripurari II controlled almost all the portions of Cuddapah region.

The Kakatiya Kings and their subordinates ruled over Rayalasima. They undertook temple - building and other welfare activities on a large scale and also made religious charities towards temple development in this region. An inscription dated 1185 A.D., belonging to the king Rudra, found at Tripurantakam<sup>42</sup> informs us that he donated a village *Revuru* for Tripurantakeswara of *Sripavata* (identified as Tripurantakam). The king also paid a visit to Srisailem and was later on blessed with a son. By the grace of Mallikarjuna of Srisailem (as claimed by Rudra) the prince blessed by Mallikarjuna became an illustrious king called Ganapatideva<sup>43</sup>. Ganapatideva was a powerful king. He was equally spiritual - minded and was responsible for many religious establishments in his kingdom. The subordinate chiefs of Kakatiyas also equally participated in contributing for the development of temples in this period.

During the periods of Rudramadevi (1262-1289 A.D.) and Prataparudra (1289-1323 A.D.), the religious activities were carried on with enthusiasm. The ministers, royal officers and religious pre-

ceptors equally patronised the Saiva religion. The ladies of the royal family also contributed to the development of temples. Potamba, wife of Somabhupala caused the erection of a Dhvaja of the Tripurantakam temple<sup>44</sup>. A record from Srikalahasti<sup>45</sup>, engraved on a stone in front of Manikanteswara temple, registers the creation of an endowment for the sake of offerings to Srikalahastiswara by Samantabhoja. This man was described to be a minister of Ganapati-deva, according to one inscription found at Kanchipuram<sup>46</sup>.

#### 15. The Kayasthas (1239 - 1304 A.D.)

The *Kayasthas* seem to have been associated with the rule of Rayalasima from the 13th century A.D., according to their inscriptions. They described themselves as *Kshatriyas*. Though they were feudatories under the Kakatiyas, they proclaimed independence now and then under favourable conditions. Their inscriptions are available in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. The inscriptions attest the fact that they ruled the region between *Panagallu* and *Marjavadi*<sup>47</sup>.

#### 16. The Yadavas (C 12th - 13th Cent. A.D.)

The Western portion of Kurnool region came under the control of the Yadavas in the last quarter of the 12th century A.D., and the eastern portion fell into the hands of the Kakatiyas. The Yadava Kings occupied some portions in Cuddapah and Anantapur districts as attested to by some inscriptions. The reign of Singana, a Yadava ruler (1210-1246 A.D.), is attested to by two inscriptions found at *Peddakottaliki* and *Devarabatta* in Adoni taluk<sup>48</sup>. Two inscriptions of Hoyasala Ballala III, dated 1178 A.D., and 1205 A.D., found at Parigi (Hindupur taluk) and *Hemavati* (Madakasira taluk) record a conflict between the Yadavas and Hoyasalas. The position of Yadavas in the Cuddapah district was disturbed by the Kayasthas.

#### 17. The Vijayanagara Kings (1336 - 1674 A.D.)

After the Kakatiyas, the Srisailem region in Kurnool district was occupied by Prolayavema Reddy, the founder of the Reddi kingdom. It is included in *Puginadu*, which formed the nucleus of his kingdom. But in 1339 A.D., the Vijayanagara king Harihara I conquered and occupied Srisailem. After the death of Harihara I, the Velama Chief Lingamanayaka occupied this area and held it for some time. Between 1363 A.D. and 1364 A.D., Bukka I, the successor of Harihara I, re-conquered this area and entrusted it to his chief who belonged to the *Recherla* family. After the downfall of the Reddi kingdom in 1422 A.D., Srisailem region became a permanent part of the Vijayanagara empire. The Chittoor region was administered by Kampana II, a Viceroy under his uncle Harihara I and his father Bukka I<sup>49</sup>. During the reign of Kampana II, his General Mangideva Maharaja had the central shrine of the *Koyil-Alvar* gilded and got the golden pinnacle placed on Tirumala temple. This is recorded in an inscription found at Tirumala<sup>50</sup> dated 1359 A.D. When Kampana II ruled over Chittoor district, Sayanna Odayar, brother of Harihara I was appointed as the Viceroy of the Udayagiri region. Harihara I also appointed his brother Bukka I and put him in charge of the Gooty fortress. Bukka I then conquered the Penukonda fortress from the subordinates of Viraballala III of Hoyasala dynasty and changed his headquarters from Gooty to Penukonda<sup>51</sup>. From all these evidences, it is known that the kings of Vijayanagara dynasty ruled portions of Rayalasima from 1339 A.D.

There are a number of inscriptions found in Rayalasima region to attest their rule. Some inscriptions of those rulers dated between 1408 A.D. and 1417 A.D. are found at Gaurivaripalli (Hindupur taluk), Gulapalayamu (Gooty taluk), Dharmavaram, Kadiri, Lepakshi and other places in Anantapur district<sup>52</sup>. During the reign of Devaraya I, the western part of Udayagiri in Cuddapah region was ruled by Abobala of Apartimalla family. This Chief ruled the *Udayagiri rajya* in the vicinity of Pushpagiri.

This is confirmed by an inscription dated 1420 A.D., found at *Goturas* near Pushpagiri<sup>33</sup>. This inscription registers the gift of land to the temple of Bhairaveswara at this place for the spiritual benefit of his parents. During the period of Saluva Narasimha, an inscription issued by an officer, Annamarusayya dated 1477 A.D., found at *Attirala*, records the restoration of the temple lands at *Poli* for the temples of Parasurameswara and Bhairava by that officer, who was on a pilgrimage to Siddhavatam and Attirala.

A large number of inscriptions, issued by Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara are found in Anantapur and Kurnool districts. Achyutaraya, the next successor of Krishnadevaraya also issued many inscriptions which are found in this district. The next ruler, Sadasivaraya also issued inscriptions in this district. Numerous inscriptions of Achyuta and Sadasiva found in Cuddapah bear ample testimony to the fact that the authority of Vijayanagara over this area continued unabated during their reigns.

During the reign of Sadasiva, the *de facto* ruler of the empire was his brother-in-law Ramaraja of the Aravidu family. He was assisted by his brother Tirumala. On the fateful field of *Rakshasa-Tangadi* in January 1565 A.D., a fierce battle took place between the combined forces of the Muslims and the Vijayanagara forces. In this battle Ramaraja was killed and the Hindu army was disturbed very badly. These fateful events brought about the end of Vijayanagara empire.

Even after this tragedy of *Rakshasa-Tangadi*, the Vijayanagara power, however, lingered on for nearly a century more. Tirumala, the brother of Ramaraja, succeeded in preserving his dynasty, the bulk of his empire, no doubt, included the whole of Cuddapah. The capital was shifted from Vijayanagara to Penugonda in the Anantapur district, though the empire still retained its old name.

Tirumala was succeeded by his son Sriranga I. According to an inscription at Ponnatotala (Jammalamadugu taluk) dated 1574 A.D., Sriranga was ruling Penugonda. This is the first known inscription of this king. Sriranga I was succeeded by his brother Venkatapatideva Maharaya. According to 'Vijayanagara Samrajyam' (described in Mackenzie manuscripts), Venkatapatideva's coronation was celebrated in the year 1585 A.D. One of his inscriptions dated 1589 A.D. is found at *Kokatam* (Kamalapuram taluk)<sup>34</sup>.

From the account given by a historian, we learn that during the time of Venkatapatideva Maharaya, the forces of Golkonda led by Amir-ul-mulk, the Minister of Quly Qutb Shah, succeeded in occupying the whole of Kurnool, portions of Cuddapah and Anantapur districts<sup>35</sup>. This was only a temporary success for the Muslims. For, in a short time, Venkatapati mustered all his available forces, made an all-out attack on the enemy and succeeded in liberating all the territories mentioned above from the Muslims. It is said that the Muslim garrisons were chased across the Krishna and Sultan Quly was forced to recognise that river as the boundary between his kingdom and the dominions of the emperor of Vijayanagara<sup>36</sup>.

Close on the heels of this external menace, Venkata II seems to have been confronted with a serious internal revolt of the nobles in the Rayalasima area. Nandyala Krishnamaraju of *Gandikotasima* joined by Kondaraju Tipparaju of Pottapi and Siddhavatam simas, raised the banner of revolt against Venkata II. But the emperor with the help of some of his faithful nobles like Yallamaraja, Devappanayaka and Pemmasani Timmana promptly put down the rebellion. *Gandikota* was now handed over to the house of Pemmasani Timmana and *Siddhavatam sima* to Yellamaraja on behalf of Venkata II in the battle of Utukuru as described in an inscription dated 1527 A.D.<sup>37</sup>

After the death of Venkata II in 1614 A.D. his nephew, Sriranga II succeeded him. The weak and incompetent rule of this king resulted in several palace intrigues which ended up in his death and also of many members of his family. The next ruler was Ramadeva, son of Sriranga II. Ramadeva

was fortunate in having the help and able guidance of Yachamanayaka, son of Velugoti Kasturiranga. An inscription at *Papayapalli* (Jammalamadugu taluk) dated 1623 A.D. mentions Ramadeva as the overlord of that area.

It was only in the time of Sriranga III, who ruled from 1642 to 1681 A.D., that the whole of Cuddapah region passed under the Muslim rule. Mirjumla, the Minister of Sultan of Golkonda, laid siege to the fort of *Udayagiri* about 1645 A.D., and captured it without much trouble due to the traitorous behaviour of Chinnana who was sent against him by Sriranga. Later, the victorious Mirjumla attacked the principality of Chittiveli, Porumamilla and Kamalapuram Matlikumara, Ananta, the ruler of the above territories as feudatory of Sriranga could not prevent the loss of territory as he could not repel these aggressions. He had to purchase peace by offering the aggressor a large sum of money. Thus came about the end of Vijayanagara rule in this region.

During the period of the Vijayanagara kings, they undertook building of new temples and patronised the temples which already existed in their empire. Krishnadevaraya's donations in cash and kind to many temples in Rayalasima are attested to in his inscriptions. There are many inscriptions recording his donations to Tirumala temple and Srikalahastiswara temple. He visited the Pushpagiri temple and came to know that the priests of the temple were *tambula* by caste and not Brahmins<sup>54</sup>. He later on replaced the *tambulas* with Brahmins and granted them two *Agraharas*, Goturu and Pushpagiri. An inscription of Krishnadevaraya, dated 1510 A.D., registers the gift of eight hundred *panam* (money) for the purchase of land to create an endowment for making offerings of food, flower-garlands and for keeping lamps for the God, one during day and another during night in the temple of Srikalahastiswara. Not only Krishnadevaraya, but also other Vijayanagara kings, their royal officers and royal ladies contributed much for the development of temples.

## 18. Other Chiefs

In the Kurnool region many local families such as Velugodu, Nandyal, Owk, Kundurpi and Kandanavolu chiefs ruled over different portions. They, as their overlords did, contributed to the development of their respective areas and donated liberally to temples.

### A. The Velugodu Chiefs:

During the hegemony of the Vijayanagar rulers, a few local families such as the chiefs of Velugodu, Nandyal, Owk and Kandanavolu ruled over portions of Kurnool district.

The first member of the Velugodu family called after Velugodu, a village in Atmakur, an independent sub-taluk, was Rayappa (also called Peda Raya). He was a subordinate of the Gajapatis of Orissa and Kapilesvara Gajapati conferred on him the title of 'King of Velugodu'. He is said to have lost his life in a battle fought with an enemy, whose name is not ascertainable, in the neighbourhood of Mahanandi in this district. Another member of the family Gani Timma, called after his capital *Gani* (Nandyal), was a subordinate of the Vijayanagar rulers, Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya. He marched against Santa Linga, the head of the *Bhikshavritti Math* at Srisailem. He is a religious fanatic, who believed in the persecution of the *Svetambara* Jains. At the instance of Krishnadevaraya, Gani Timma fought and defeated him. He helped Achyutadevaraya in repulsing the Qutb Shahi and the Gajapati attacks against the Vijayanagar empire. He received the title of 'the lord of the Manne chiefs' from Achyutadevaraya in appreciation of his services. In A.D. 1544, Timma, who came into conflict with Havadi Avubalaraja, the head of a section of the Nandyala branch of the Aravidu family, was killed in a battle. The other important members of the family were (1) Yara Timma, son of Gani Timma, (2) Kasturi Ranga, (3) Chenna, (4) Yacha or Yachama, son of Kasturi Ranga, (5) Kumara Yachama, son of Yacha, and (6) Singa. They supported their sovereigns loyally and took an



active part in putting down the internal rebellions and repulsing the attacks of the Qutb Shahi Sultans. Their estates were, however, subsequently conquered by the Qutb Shahi forces and they were compelled to become the subordinates of the Qutb Shahis.<sup>39</sup>

## B. The Nandyala Chiefs

The Nandela or Nandyala family, a branch of the Aravidu dynasty, the fourth in the line of rule over the Vijayanagar empire, was named after Nandyala, its hereditary estate. Several members of this family figure in as governors of a number of estates. During the reign of Sadasiva, the Nandyala chief Mahamandalesvara Aubhalesvara was governing the *Koilkuntla-sima*, while *Mahamandalesvara Nandyala Timmayadeva Maharaja* was holding the *Gandikota-sima*. This was probably due to the favours conferred on them by the ruling Aravidu chiefs Aliya Ramaraja and Tirumala to whom they were related. The epigraphs of these chiefs are found scattered over a number of places in Kurnool district.

These chiefs, who were loyal to the rulers of the main line till the reign of Sriranga I, turned hostile to Venkata II and instigated the local nobles to rise in revolt. In A.D. 1597-98, Nandela Krishnamaraja refused to pay the usual tribute to Venkata II and asserted his independence. He was joined by Kondaraju Tirupatiraju, the ruler of Pottapi and Siddhavatam or Sidhout (both in Cuddapah) and Gopalaraju, the chief of Kandanolu. He was defeated by Venkata II, and his estates were confiscated and divided between Hande Devappa Nayaka and Pemmani Timma Nayaka. Krishnamaraja was confined at Chandragiri (Chittoor) till his death and little is known about the subsequent history of the family.<sup>40</sup>

## C. The Kandanolu Chiefs

The chiefs of *Avukusima* known after *Owk* in Koilkuntla taluk and the chiefs of *Kandanolu* called after *Kurnool* were the next in importance. Tirumala or Timma was the progenitor of the *Owk* family. He rose to prominence under Vira Narasimha and Krishnadevaraya. His third son Mahamandalesvara Chinna Timmadeva appears to be the first chief to hold the *Avukusima* as 'nayankara'. Little is known about the subsequent history of the family.

The chiefs of Kandanolu and *Gani simas* are mentioned in two epigraphs dated S.1469 (A.D. 1547) in Kurnool taluk. These epigraphs refer to Mahamandalesvara Ramaraja Venkatadri Ayyadeva Maharaja as governing the *simas* of Kandanolu and *Gani*. He was followed by Rangaparajayadeva Maharaja and Gopalaraja in succession. They held sway over *Kandanolu* and *Gani* but remitted a number of taxes to several *agrarahas* in them. Gopalaraja joined the rebellion of Nandyala Krishnamaraja against Venkata II. He was defeated and kept in prison at Chandragiri. He was, however, set free after some time and sent back to rule over his fief. His estates were twice attacked by the Bijapur Sultan in A.D.1619-20 and A.D.1624. He offered stubborn resistance but failed to protect his estates and fled from the dominion. His estates were occupied by the Bijapur Sultan who appointed Abdul Wahab, a general, as the governor of Kurnool.<sup>41</sup>

## D. Matlis

Historical knowledge of this region will not be complete unless we study the contribution of Matlis to the socio-cultural growth of the place.

In the decades following the battle of *Rakshasa-Tangadi*, the family which endeavoured to continue the traditions of the Vijayanagar empire in varied spheres of activity is that of the Matlis. The association of this family with this district covered almost three centuries. These Matli or Matla chiefs, hailing from the village of Matli on the Mandavi river in Rayachoti taluk, are also known by the

numerous tanks they constructed, and the temples they built and the number of villages named after them.

Of all the Matli chiefs, Varadaraja's association with this district is significant in view of the influence he wielded during the reign of Sadasiva. The chief who had enhanced the prestige of the Matli family was Ananta. Ananta was a great scholar and was deeply devoted to the Visishtadvaita School of Ramanuja. He was also an able warrior and a good sportsman. He was a shining example in respect of practising religious tolerance. He succeeded in suppressing the rebellions which confronted him during the initial stages of his rule. His own brother who was involved in them was imprisoned in the Sidhout fort but was later pardoned.

Two epigraphs of S.1550 (A.D.1628) at Alipiri at the foot of the Tirupati hills recount both his deeds of valour and acts of charity. He built a large tank near Chennuru (Cuddapah) and established the villages of Chennamambapura and Chennamambasamudra. He established a dozen free feeding houses and constructed *gopuras* and *mandapas* at various places in the district. He also fought fierce battles at Palagiri, Animala, Chappalle, Vempalle and Gundluru against the palegars. This *lord of Anantarajapura* seems to have exercised authority over the country lying between the hills of Tirupati (Chittoor) and Ahobila (Kurnool). His gifts to temples at Udayagiri (Nellore), Tiruvallur (Chingleput) and Kalahasti (Chittoor) and his numerous acts of charity including a *Tula-dana*\* have lent an aura of greatness to him. It may be said that the Matli principality reached its zenith during his reign.<sup>62</sup>

On Ananta's death, his adopted son, Kumara Ananta II, succeeded him. He carried on the administration of the kingdom with the help of his paternal uncle Ellama. During his time, the Matlis lost a sizeable portion of their territory including Kalitur, Duvvur, Chennuru, Badvel, Porumamilla and Mamalapuram to the Sultan of Golconda. In spite of this setback, Ananta's sway extended fairly over a vast area comprising *Pulugulanadu*, *Pottapinadu* and *Siddhavattamsimas*. When his principality was attacked for a second time by the army of Golconda under Mir Jumla, Ananta succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat on them. He had, however, to abandon his principality for fear of reprisal by Mir Jumla and retreated to Ikkeri-Basavapuram in Mysore. Mir Jumla then marched with his army to Sidhout, occupied the town and posted a garrison to keep the conquered territory under control.

MAHARASHTRA

ANDHRA PRADESH

ORISSA

TELANGANA

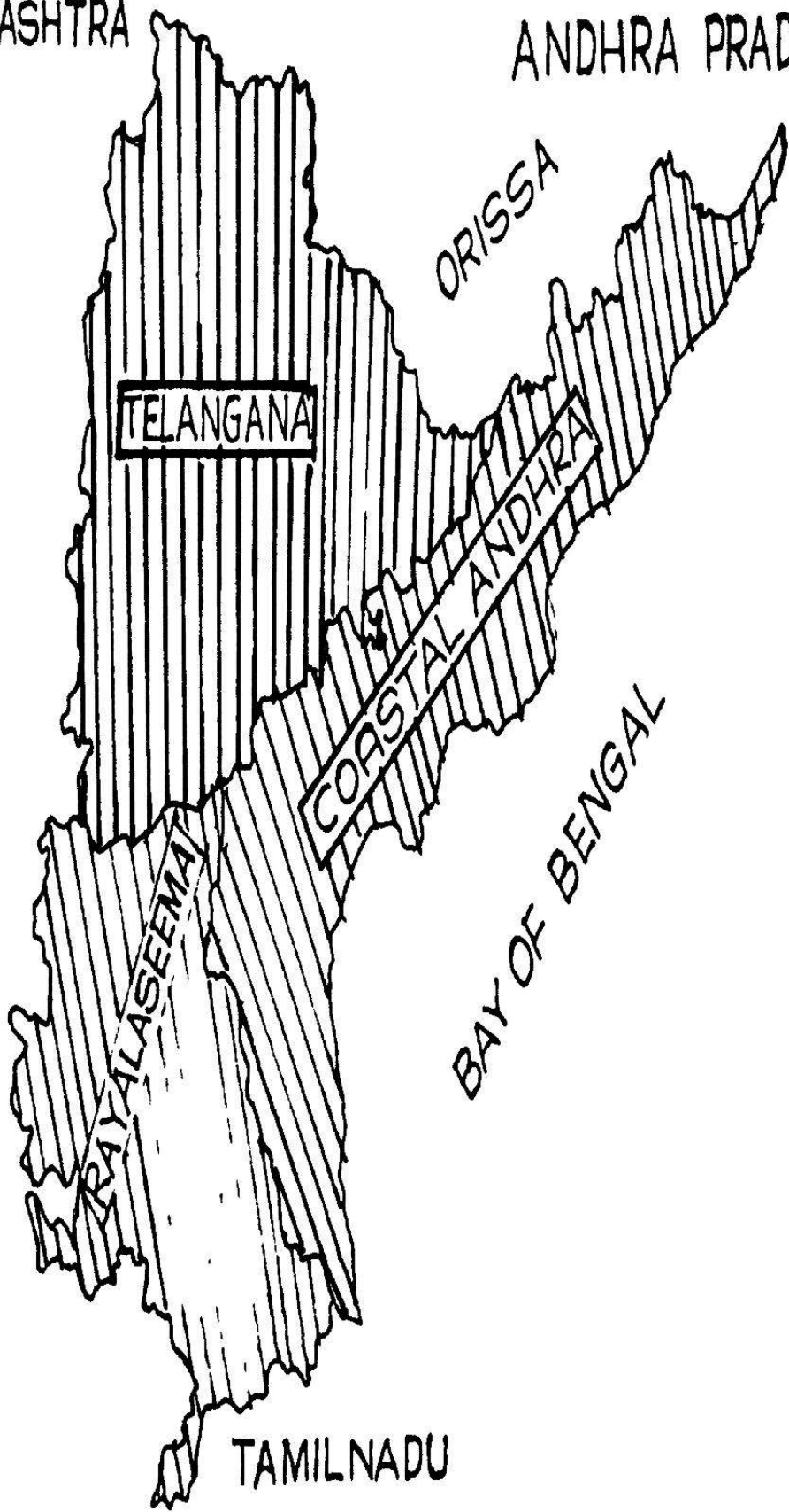
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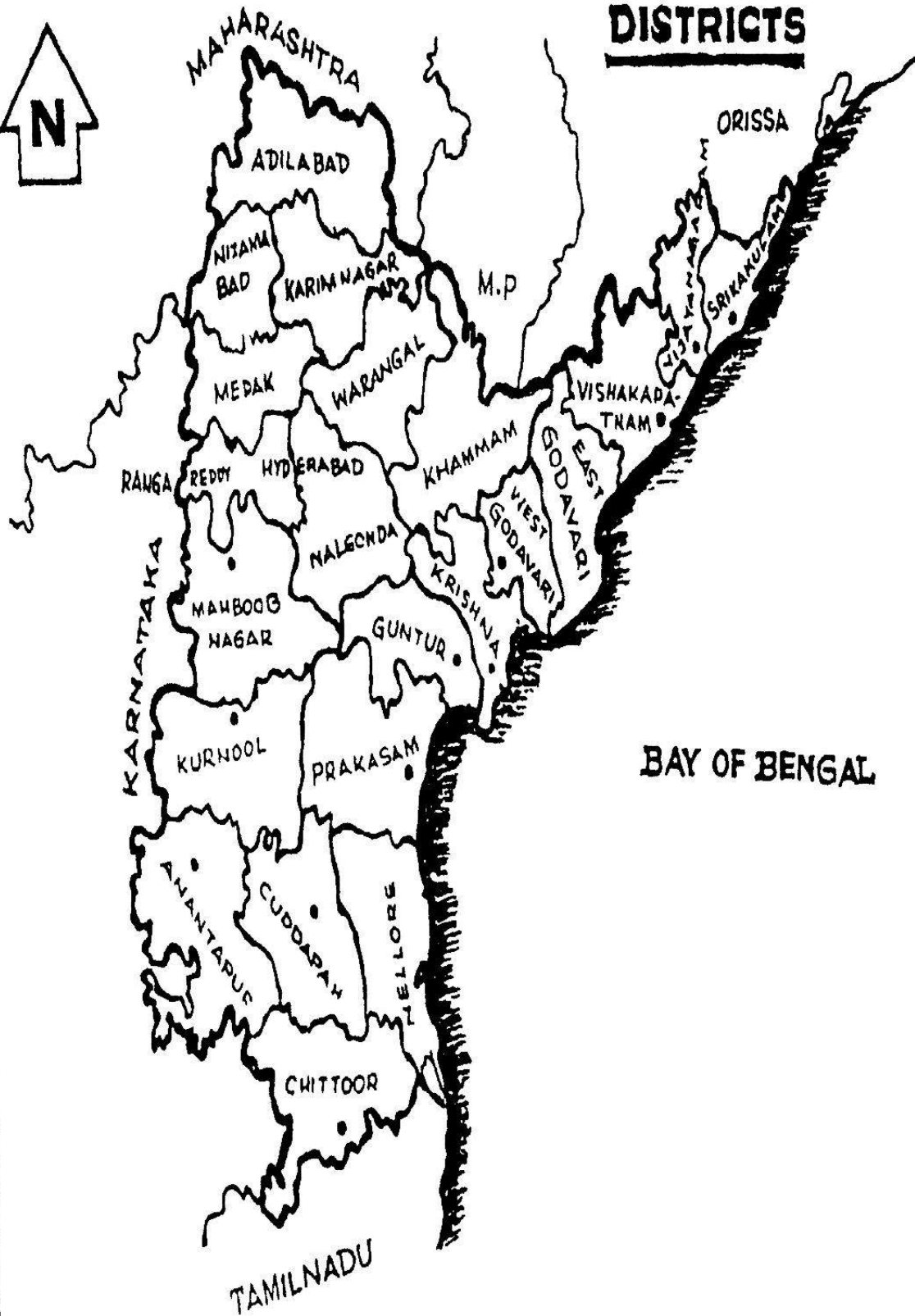
KERALA

TAMILNADU



# ANDHRA PRADESH

## DISTRICTS





MAHABOONAGAR

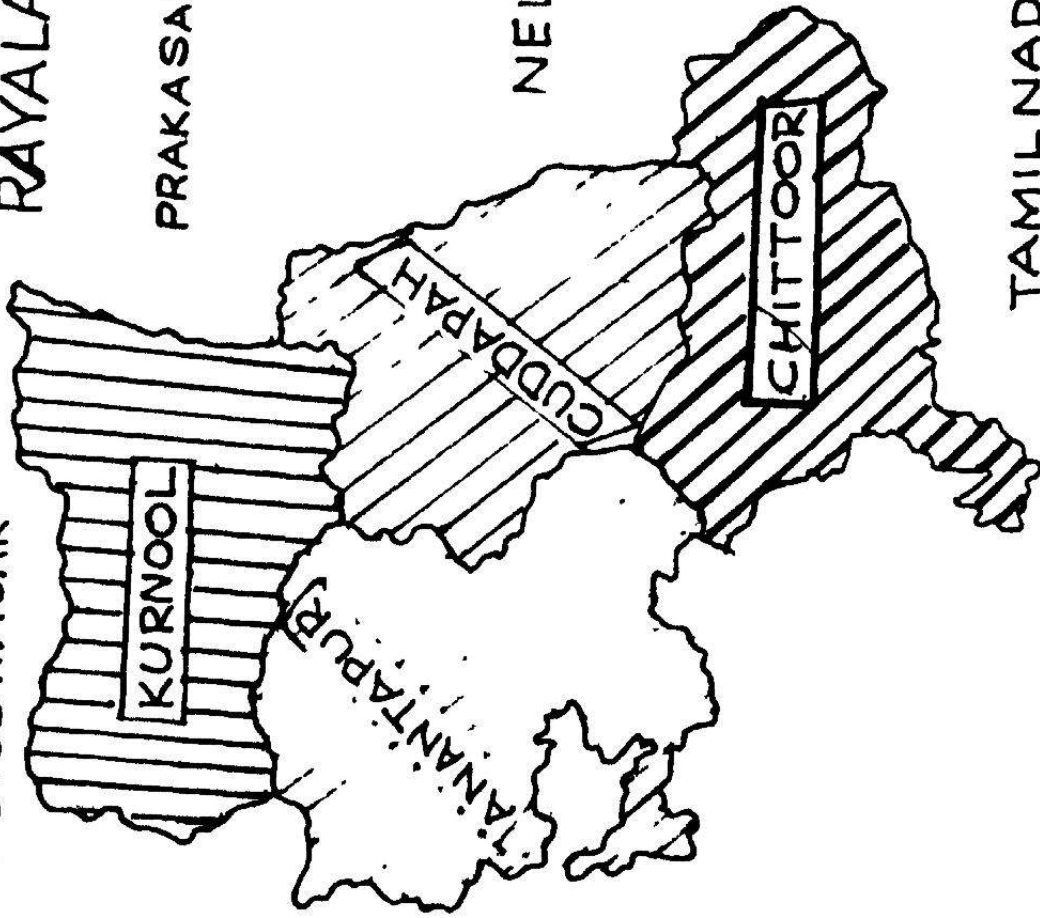
RAYALASEEMA REGION

PRAKASAM

NELLORE

TAMILNADU

KARNATAKA

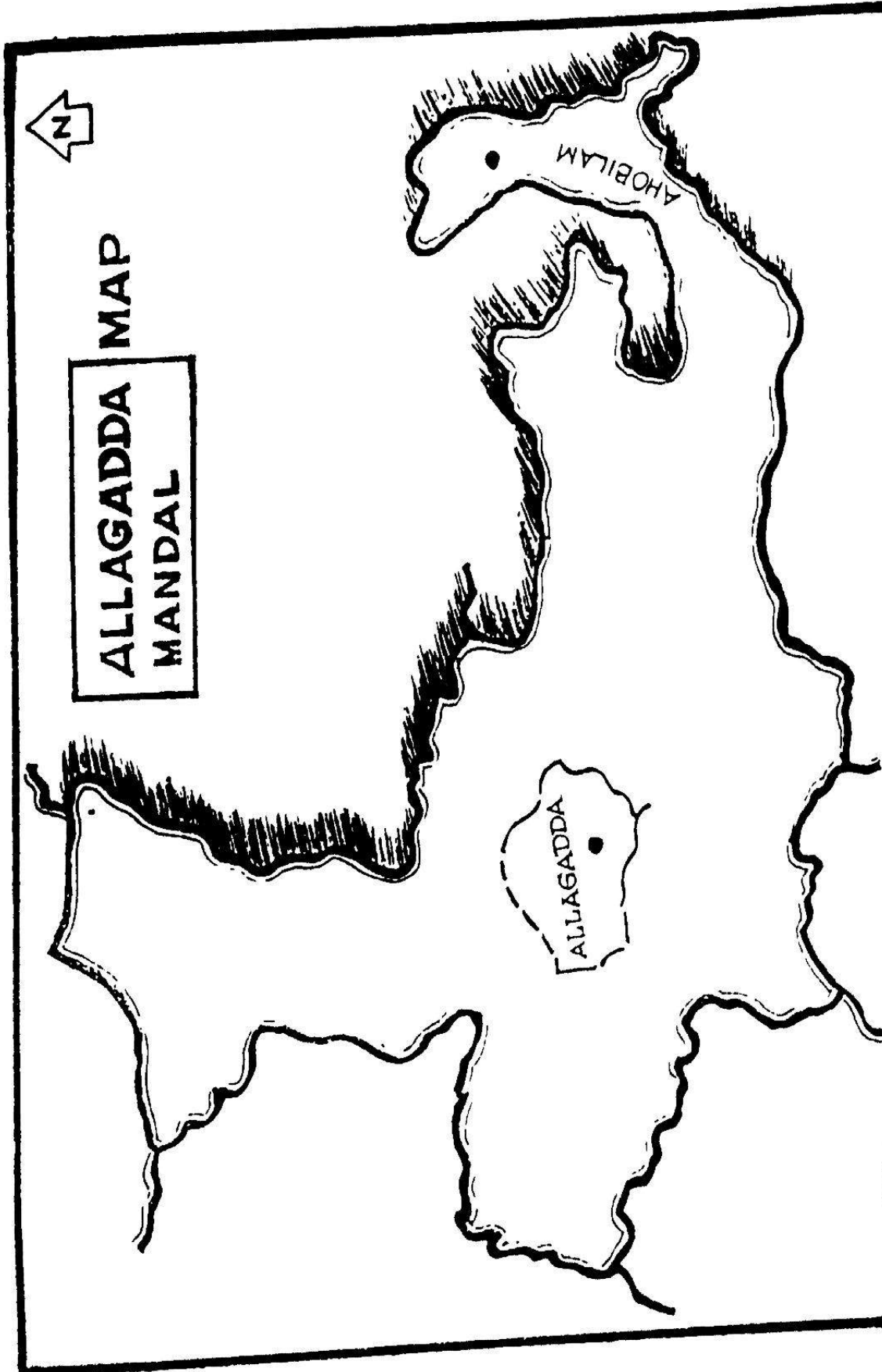




# ALLAGADDA MANDAL

## MAP





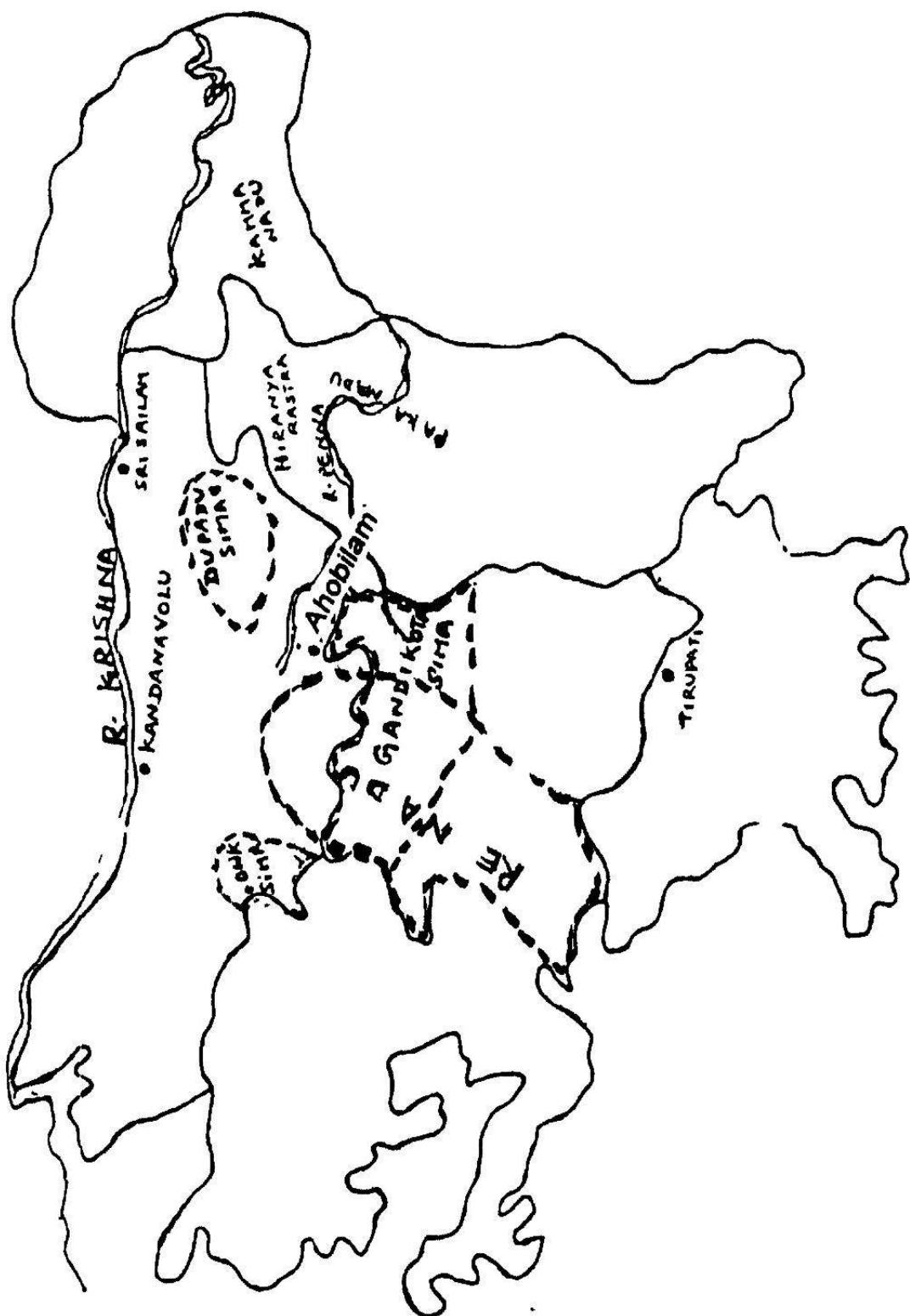
ALLAGADDA MAP  
MANDAL



AHOBIAM

ALLAGADDA

A hand-drawn map of the Krishna region in Andhra Pradesh, India. The map shows the Krishna River (R. KRISHNA) flowing from the north to the south. Key locations marked include SAI BILAM, KANDANAVOLU, AHOBILAM, and TIRUPATI. Several areas are enclosed by dashed lines and labeled as 'SIMA' (Santhi), including 'DUPADU SIMA', 'GANDIKOTA SIMA', and 'POKKA SIMA'. Other labels include 'HIRANYA RASTHA', 'KANDU', 'POKKA', and 'NALLA'.





### 1. History of Srivaishnavism

As Ahobilam and the Narasimhaswami shrines are intimately associated with the history and affairs of Srivaishnavism, it would be beneficial to have a short background of Srivaishnavism itself

#### A. Pre-Ramanuja Vaishnavism

Though Srivaishnavism took a definitive shape in the hands of Ramanuja (C 1017-1137 A D ), it has a hoary background. The whole system is based upon complete surrender to god Vishnu, a concept which was already current in some sections of the pre-Ramanuja Vaishnava faith. In fact, this religious movement can be traced ideologically to the rise of the *Bhagavata* system and the *Bhakti* cult. The seeds of the religious and philosophical ideas could be traced to the *Bhagavadgita* itself.

#### B. The Alvars

But it was in Tamilnadu that this form of staunch *Vishnu-bhakti* became a powerful movement due to the efforts of a continuous line of teachers who are celebrated in the tradition as *Alvars*. 'Alvar', a Tamil term, literally means, 'one who rules', and in this context it is one who rules the world of the faithful. They were the spearhead of the Vaishnava movement in the South India and through their philosophy of complete surrender to God, gave a distinctive shape to a form of Vaishnavism which later became famous as Srivaishnavism. The *Alvars* adopted the local Tamil language for expression of their religious fervour in their intensely devotional songs and appealed to the hearts of the people.

The date of the *Alvars* is much disputed. Traditional accounts put their date at the beginning of the *Kaliyuga*. Prof. S. Vayyapuri Pillai opines that the *Alvar* period falls between the 7th and 9th century A D<sup>1</sup> while according to some others they seem to have flourished between the 2nd and 8th century A D. According to the tradition there are 12 *Alvars* and they are placed in the following line of order.

- 1 Poygai Alvar
- 2 Pudattalvar
- 3 Pey Alvar
- 4 Tirumalisai Alvar

5. Kulasekhara Alvar
6. Tondaradippodi Alvar
7. Tiruppan Alvar
8. Tirumangai Alvar
9. Periya Alvar
10. Andal
11. Nammalvar
12. Madurakavi Alvar<sup>2</sup>

The First three, Poygai, Pudattar and Pey Alvars, born in Kanchipuram, Mamallapuram and Mylapore respectively, form the earliest group. They are placed in a period not later than the 5th or 6th century A.D. Their teachings are very gentle and so simple to understand.

Next comes Tirumalisai. He takes his name from the village of his birth in Chingleput district. He is said to have been a senior contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendravarman I.<sup>3</sup> Before he accepted Vaishnavism, he practised Jainism, Buddhism and Saivism. It was only later that he ultimately embraced Vaishnavism and became an *Alvar*.

Next in order is Tirumangai, one of the most celebrated among the *Alvars*. He, a chieftain of Alinadu in Tanjore district, took to robbery in order to pay for the renovation of the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam, the most celebrated Srivaishnava temple in the South India. In his hymns, he mentions the siege of Kanchipuram by Vairamegha (Rashtrakuta Dantidurga, 735-756 A.D.) and hence he may be placed in the middle of the 8th century A.D.<sup>4</sup> He has composed a large number of poems, forming the bulk of the collections of the hymns of the *Alvars*. The religious trend of the day is well manifest in his compositions. He attacks Buddhism and Jainism, but shows a friendly attitude to Saivism.<sup>5</sup>

A little later than Tirumangai, about the close of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century, came Periya *Alvar*, a Brahmin from Srivilliputtur in the Tirunelveli district. He was originally known as Vishnuchitta. He is said to have established the supremacy of Narayana in a religious disputation held in the court of the Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha (815-862 A.D.). He is the foster father of Goda, another *Alvar*.

Goda or Andal, the only woman to attain the status of *Alvar*, is a magnetic personality among the Srivaishnava devotees, especially known for her intense unsullied love to god Ranganatha of Srirangam. The story goes that she was found as a baby by Peri *Alvar* and he brought her up in his house in which Andal was exposed to the ecstasy of religious devotion displayed by her father. It is said that when Andal was young she used to decorate herself with the garlands prepared by her father to offer to the deity and replace the same before sending them to the temple. When once her father came to know about it, he felt that the flowers worn by a mortal were unfit for offering to the god and did not take the flowers to the temple on that day. That night the god appeared to him in his dream and chided him for not offering the garlands which were doubly dear to him due to the fact that they had been used by Andal. Thenceforth Peri *Alvar* began to take the same garlands to offer to the God. On this account, it is said, Andal came to be known as *Sudikudutta Nachchiyar* (the lady who gave what she had herself decorated with).<sup>6</sup> Andal was intensely devoted to Vishnu and dreamt of her marriage with the God. She describes this experience in a beautiful song which is sung even to this day as part of the marriage ceremony in Sri Vaishnava households. Andal is said to have achieved her desire of the mystical union with the God: She entered the *garbhagriha* in the temple of Srirangam and disappeared there. It is said that by this *Peri Alvar* also gained the honour of being considered the father-in-law of god Ranganatha of Srirangam. Andal's songs are appealing to the masses and the elite alike

due to their intensely human but spiritually elevated touch. Her hymns are replete with allusions to the stories of Sri Krishna.

Tiruppan Alvar belongs to the same period. He is a minstrel of the low caste. As he had not been allowed to enter the temple according to the then existing social practices, he used to go on singing songs in praise of the God from outside the precincts of the temple at Srirangam. His devotion was so great that the Vaishnava belief about the supremacy of devotion over caste or creed is proved in his case. He is said to have been totally absorbed in God.

Tondaradipodi (the dust of the feet of the devotees) was a Brahmin whose real name was Vipranarayana. A story is told about him that he fell in love with a dancing girl and god Ranganatha himself paved the way to consummate their union. Tondaradipodi was as much intolerant to Jainism and Buddhism as he was devoted to Vaishnavism.

In contrast to the various Alvars who came from the different sections of the lower and middle classes of the then society, comes Kulasekhara Alvar, a King of Kerala. He was proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil. He was not averse to sing songs in praise of Nataraja at Chidambaram. He abdicated the throne and spent his last days at Srirangam.

Nammalvar, the last of the Alvars, was born in a family of Vellalas (a caste of agriculturists) at Kurugur near Tirunelveli. Because of his association with kurugu, the village became famous later as Alvar-Tirunagari. Nammalvar was originally known as *Maran*. He was initiated into spirituality in his 35th year at which time he gained the title *Salagopa* (the destroyer of ignorance). Nammalvar's songs are regarded as "embodying the deepest religious experiences and philosophical thought of one of the greatest seers of the world".<sup>7</sup> His songs are the second largest in number among the compositions included in the compilation of the hymns of the Alvars.

The philosophy of the *Alvars* is deeply indebted to the Vedic and *Puranic* scriptures. The study of these *Alvars* not only makes one understand the spiritual atmosphere of the *Bhakti* school, but also gives a background to the Visistadvaita philosophy.

The *Alvars* are primarily staunch devotees of God and they rarely sought royal patronage. They are leaders of the people, and strove to spread their beliefs among the larger populace rather than conveying them to the kings and elite only.

## 2. The Acharyas

### A. Pre-Ramanuja Acharyas

The Srivaishnava Canon received its definite shape at the hands of a succession of *acharyas* from the 9th century onwards.

Nathamuni (9th century A.D.) is reputed to be the first among these. He collected the Tamil devotional hymns of the Alvars numbering about 4000 and divided them into four sections of thousand stanzas each. This is famous as *Nalayira-prabandam* and is respectfully described by the Srivaishnavas as the *Dravida Veda*. Nathamuni arranged for their regular recitation at Srirangam. Thus he popularized the Srivaishnava religion.

*Alavandar* was next in the succession of Srivaishnava *acharyas* of the period. He is said to have lived during the time of king Raja Raja (985-1012 A.D.). The *Koyil-olugu*, an ancient temple manual of Srirangam, says that he was entrusted with the management of the Srirangam temple which he ably conducted for a long time. Alavandar has written four books in Sanskrit viz. *Siotraratna*, *Siddhitraya*, *Agamapramanya* and *Gitarhasamgraha* elucidating the doctrine of Visishtadvaita.

Also, during his time Srivaishnavism began to receive attention and patronage from the Chola kings and generals.

## **B. Ramanuja**

Ramanuja is the next great *acharya*. He was born at Sriperambudur near Madras in the first quarter of the 11th century. He first studied under Yadavaprakasa of Kanchipuram, who belonged to the school of Samkara. But disagreeing with his teachings, he studied under Tirumala Nambi a disciple of Yamunacharya. In due course of time Ramanuja succeeded Yamunacharya as the pontiff of his math at Srirangam. He engaged himself in systematising the new philosophical ideas, and wrote several works of which the three, viz. *Vedarthasamgraha*, *Gitabhashya* and *Sribhashya*, are considered to be the most important.

Ramanuja's genius and contribution lie in his systematic presentation of the philosophy of Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) which emphasises that the absolute is endowed with all the auspicious qualities (*Saguna*) in contrast with the simple Advaitic concept of the abstract non-dualistic Absolute (*nirguna*). This Absolute of the Visishtadvaita is no other than Vishnu and the achievement of proximity to Him is the goal of human life i.e. *moksha* and the way to achieve this is through complete surrender (*prapatti*) to Him.

Ramanuja further emphasized that the achievement of *moksha* through surrender is not the prerogative of any particular creed, community or sex but all human souls can achieve this. This concept opened up a new avenue of far reaching social reforms. Ramanuja himself engaged in many acts boldly in going against the then social framework of caste system by throwing open the gates of entry to Srivaishnavism to all, irrespective of the caste in which they were born.

Ramanuja introduced a number of reforms in the temple rituals also to suit the needs of Srivaishnava theological ideas, adding colour and pomp and pageantry making them attractive to the devotees. In short, at a time when the ancient *Bhagavata* doctrine had, through the course of centuries acquired several incoherencies and had lost its lustre, Ramanuja brought a fresh look and appeal to that by his carefully planned religious reformations. In order to propagate his philosophy, he travelled throughout India.

## **3. The Post-Ramanuja Period**

### **A. Successors of Ramanuja**

It is said that Ramanuja prepared 74 set of *sankham* and *chakram* and 4 copies of *Sri Bhashya*, placed them first at the feet of god Varadaraja of Kanchi and distributed them among a number of disciples. Those who received a set of *sankham* and *chakram* came to be known as *Simhasanadhipatis* ('Throned Monarchs' of the kingdom of the Good law). This was a way to spread the message of Srivaishnavism far and wide. The main personalities among those who received the *Sri Bhashya* were his close disciples Varada Vishnu Acharya, Pranatartihara, Andan and Pillan.

These disciples and their successors took active interest in further elucidating and disseminating the Srivaishnava ideas. In course of time, the varied degrees of emphasis laid by the Srivaishnava teachers on the relative importance of *Sri Bhashya* and *Divyaprabandham* led to a schism in Srivaishnavism. Thus in the history of Srivaishnavism two schools rose: the *Sri Bhashya school* with its emphasis on the importance and authority of *Sri Bhashya* for the understanding of the Srivaishnava tenets, and the *Prabandhic school* laying emphasis on the *Divya Prabandhas* for the same purpose. Among the teachers of *Sri Bhashya* school Kurukesa and Engal Alvan of the 12th century and Nadadur Ammal and Atreya Ramanuja of the 13th century are famous. Similarly the

*Prabhandic school* was promoted by Bhattar and Nanjiyar of the 12th century and Perivachchan Pillai and Vadakku Tiruvudhi Pillai of the 13th century. By the end of the 13th century the ideological differences between the two schools became pronounced with the exertions of two towering personalities of the day, Vedanta Desika (1268-1369 A.D.) propounding the *Sri Bhashya school* and Pillai Lokacharya (1264-1327 A.D.) propounding the *Prabandhic School*.

Vedanta Desika wrote several works renowned for his analytical acumen, persuasive logic and beauty of diction in his writings which earned for him several titles such as *kavitarkikasinha* and *Sarvatantrasvatanttra*. He wrote more than hundred works out of which *Satadushini*, *Sankalpa Suryodaya*, *Yadavabhyudaya* and *Yatirajasaptati* are famous. It is during this period that the Srivaishnava leaders were compelled to leave that place. Vedanta Desika moved to Satyamangalam near Coimbatore and visited Melkote.\*

Pillai Lokacharya is equally famous for his scholarship in logic and prolific writings. Some of his famous works are *Tattvatraya*, *Mumukshupadi* and *Sri Vachana Bhusana*. He often adopted a style in his writings suited to his teachings, in which Sanskrit passages interspersed with Tamil ones appear (the Manipravala style).

#### 4. The Rise of the Mathas

From the middle of the 15th century A.D. the history of Srivaishnavism gains a new turn. From this time onwards a number of distinguished *Acharyapurushas* and Vaishnava leaders begin to figure in as influential personalities on the Socio-political scene. Another important development, was the rise of various religious *mathas* like the *Van-Sathagopa-Jiyar matha*, *Parakala matha*, *Alagiya Manavala-Jiyar matha*, *Vanamamalai matha*, *Yatiraja matha*, etc. A distinctive feature of these *mathas* is that they began to propagate either the *Sri Bhashya school* or the *Prabandhic school* individually, thus bringing in a definite division in the srivaishnava faith. Those who adhere to the *Sri Bhashya school* came to be known as *Vadagalai* and those who owed allegiance to the *Prabhandic school* were known as *Tengalai*.

The primary function of these *mathas* is to serve as repositories of sectarian ideology and the propagation of the same among a wide range of its adherents. *Mathas* also acted as centres of learning. The monks of the *mathas* taught not only the scriptures of their respective creeds but also secular literature. The duty of educating the society rested with the *mathas*.

The constitution of the *mathas* was based upon the monarchic principle. The head of the *matha* was the supreme authority of the institution. He had the power to nominate his own successor from among his disciples. The monks of the *matha* were under his control and they acted as the final authority concerning all matters relating to the religious activities of their adherents. They had the authority to initiate people into monkhood and accept new disciples.

Though these *mathas* played a major role in the socio-religious life of the country from about the 15th century onwards, the history of these *mathas* is yet to be properly studied by the historians. However, every *matha* maintains its own historical account and a few facts drawn about Ahobilamathas be mentioned here.

##### A. Van-Sathagopa Jiyar matha (Ahobhila matha)

This *matha* is popularly known as *Ahobila matha* and this association is because of its headquarters being placed at Ahobilam in the 15th to 18th centuries.

This *matha* was one of the influential *mathas* of the *Vadagalai* sect. The *Jiyars* of this *matha* appear to have played an important part in popularising Srivaishnavism.



Van-Satagopa Jiyar (1436-1516), the founder of the *matha*, is said to have been born at Melkote and did his studies at Kanchi and is believed to have received initiation into *sanyasa asrama* at the hands of god Narasimha of Ahobilam.

According to the *Matha Guruparmparai*, this happened way back on the fifth lunar day of bright fortnight in the Saka year 1320 (1398 A.D.) - *Bahudanya, purattasi* - exactly when he was 20 years old. According to tradition, it appears that, an idol of Lakshminarasimha was found to have landed into his hands. This is the processional deity that Ahobila Jiyars have been worshipping since then and found carrying wherever they go for religious propagation.<sup>9</sup>

Ramanuja is said to have classified the *Jiyars* into three categories, namely *aradhana Jiyars*, like the Ahobila *Jiyars*, *Adyapaka Jiyars* like the Vanamamalai *Jiyars* and Tirupati and Srirangam *Jiyars*, and Paricharaka *Jiyars*. Sri Satakopa *Yati* has been chosen as the Chief *Archaka*.

Sri Satakopa *Yati*, as he was called hence forward, settled at Ahobilam in the inhospitable regions and finding that the Chenchus (the tribals) were already the votaries of the Lord, he decided to work amongst them and uplift them. He also appointed a class of missionaries known as '*Ahobila Dasars*' to work among them and bring about a transformation in their life.

He organised regular worship at Ahobilam. The nucleus of the Ahobila *matha* may be said to have been laid with Sri Satakopa *yati* becoming the custodian of worship and ritual in the Ahobilam temple.

Ahobilam, unlike with their din and bustle of the celebrated places like Kanchi or Srirangam or Tirupati was a holy place distinguished for its serene atmosphere. He stayed there and arranged for the regular worship and other rituals.

A shrine for the founder of the Ahobila *matha* was built to the West of the Nammalwar shrine, and he then set out on a tour which took him to Melkote (his birth place), Tirupati, Kanchi, Tuppul, Sholinghur and Srirangam. In Srirangam, he established a *matha* and a shrine for Desika within the Sri Ranganath Temple. He returned to Tirunarayanapuram (Melkote) where he shed the coils of the mortal existence on Saturday, the eleventh day (*Ekadasi*) of the dark fortnight in the month of *Chaitra* in the year *Bahudanya* corresponding to *Kali Yuga* 4560 (April 1458 A.D.). He was entombed at Tirunarayanapuram.

The following are some of the literary sources, which reveal that,

1. Allasani Peddanna known as the *Andhra Kavita Pitamaha* and the author of *Manu Charita* - was his disciple. He described the first *Jiyar* as a refuge of learning and a dispeller of the thick darkness of ignorance through the moonlight of his kindness.
2. Krishnadevaraya himself is said to have praised the efforts of reading the *Jiyar* in spreading Vaishnavism in the Empire.
3. The famous divine music composer Tallapaka Annamacharyulu was his contemporary and his disciple.
4. The *Jiyar* was a disciple of Nainacharya, the apostolic head from 1371-1410 A.D.
5. Manavala Mahamuni (1370-1444 A.D.), Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar, the first, second and third Brahma Tantra Swatantra *Jiyars* of the Parakala *Matha* were his other distinguished and eminent contemporaries.

The inscriptions of Saluva Narasimha, who usurped the Vijayanagar throne, throw light on the activities of the first *Jiyar*.

Dr. S.K.Ayyangar observes that the first Pontiff's activities in Tirupati are borne out by these inscriptions beyond a shadow of doubt and also that he had established his reputation as an *Acharya* and attracted a number of devoted followers in the temple town.

His connections with Kanchi are revealed by an inscription 411 of 1919<sup>10</sup> in Kanchi Varadaraja Temple.

A copper plate found at Tonnur in Karnataka State mentions Srinivasa *Yati* as the *Guru* of Krishnadevaraya.<sup>11</sup>

Two inscriptions at Srirangam Temple<sup>12</sup> throw light on the commendable activities of the *Jiyar*.

All these established the activity of the *Jiyar* in the temple town and the commemoration by Krishnadevaraya himself by providing for taking out the Deity (*Nam Perumal*) on the *Jyeshtha Asterism* Day and the distribution of a share of the offerings to the disciples at the *Jiyar matha* at Srirangam.

Sri Ahobila *matha* has the proud privilege to offer spiritual service and humanitarian relief to one and all right from its establishment by the *Jiyar* Sriat Adivan Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan. The rulers, the laity, the *Pandits* and the pious people were equally entranced by the personality and the musical powers of the *Jiyar*.

Not only the Orissa Kings, but also the Pandian and Vijayanagar Kings, apart from many feudatories and chieftains of several regions were disciples and admirers of this *Jiyar* as well as subsequent *Jiyars* of Ahobila *matha*. The dawn of Vijayanagara Kingdom heralded a new era in the annals of the history of Andhra Pradesh, says Dr.M.Narasimhacharya in his book on the Narasimha cult. "They were not only popular as patrons of art and letters but they were also staunch devotees and upholders of the Hindu '*Dharma*'. They adopted stern measures to defend and protect lands and temples from the onslaught of the Muslim invaders. Srimad Adivan Satakopa who appeared on the scene at this right moment on the specific command of Lord Lakshminarasimha. He donned the robes of *Sanyasi* gifted by God and made Ahobila (part of Vijayanagara Kingdom) his centre of activities. He rallied a large number of Srivaisnavite disciples and set up a number of *mathas* at different places to popularise the works of Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika".

The divinity in him helped to restore the kingdom to Orissa King. He was able to help Pandian king realise the spiritual aspects and converted him into Srivaishnavism. Krishnadevaraya was so overwhelmed with this *Jiyar* that when he poured out his devotion for Andal in his famous grand literary piece *Amuktamalyada*, he makes a special mention of Sri Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika and, of course Sri Adivan Satagopa *Jiyar*. He heaps a shower of praise on Satagopa *Jiyar* and sings his glory. Allasani Peddanna, one of the eight scholars (*Ashtadiggajas*) had dedicated his *kavya* *Harikathasara* to the first *Jiyar* of Ahobila *matha*. He also showers his reverential praise on the *Azhagiyasingar* in his another *kavya* *Manucharitra*. The grant he received from Krishnadevaraya was a village called '*Gogatam*' which he renamed as *Satagopapuram* in honour of Adivan Satagopa. Allasani Peddanna who adorned the royal court of Krishnadevaraya had his *Samasrayana* and *Mantra-upadesam* at the feet of this first *Jiyar* and henceforth called himself as "*Peddanna Iyengar*".

Likewise, another staunch devotee of Adivan Satagopan was the famous Annamacharya, whose songs on Lord Venkateswara are marked by devotional fervour and philosophical profundity. He also had his *samasrayanam* under this *Jiyar*. A gist of the song of Tallapakkam Annamacharya on Adivan Satagopa Yateendra Mahadesikan is given below:

"Behold! This is our revered Satakopa *Muni*, who is easily accessible to all and to whom Lord Hari Himself is the guide and refuge! He is our golden path for the final abode of beatitude, the last word in scriptures, the soul pure and free from sin, and the boat with which to cross the river Viraja in

Vaikuntha He is the divine lamp of wisdom illuminating all the worlds, the redeemer from sins and the raft which enables us to cross this ocean called *samsara* He is an ardent devotee of the presiding deities of Snrangam, Kancheepuram, Venkatagiri and Ahobilam and a prince among ascetics!"

Having established Sri Ahobila *matha* and having displayed dynamic leadership in managing it, the first *Jiyar* Sri Adivan Satagopa Yateendra Mahadesikan made the task easier for his successor to carry on the challenging job of spiritual ennoblement. The fact that the second *Jiyar*-Sriman Narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan was the one chosen to lead is evident from the title given to him as *Shashthi Prabhandha Nirmatha* - (author of sixty books) a title given by the first *Jiyar* in recognition of his versatility. It is remarkable that like the first *Jiyar*, this 2nd *Jiyar*'s birth star was also *Jyeshtha*. He built a prosperous village called *Maduramangalam* and by duly installing the image of his master in the temple of Selvapillai (at the command of that God) and another in the *Brindavan* (a lodgement of the astral body of a saint) of his master at Melkote (again at the command of Sri Lakshminarasimha), the *Jiyar* had amply carried out the noble tradition of the first *Jiyar*, his *Guru*. His *sanchara* took him to places like Kancheepuram, Sholingapuram, Tirupati and Ahobilam, Snrangam and Melkote where, after a reigning period of 15 years, he attained *paramapada*. His *Brindavanam* is also at Melkote.

Sri Parankusa Yateendra Mahadesika was the third *Jiyar* in the line of succession. He spent his days in teaching *Sribhashya* and *Srimad Rahasyatrayasara* to numerous disciples at Kancheepuram. His contribution was the creation of villages like Neeralur, Uragadam, Nemmily, Kadankarai, Pilaaputhur and Kalathur. By a divine command, he went to Srimushnam where he was instantly attracted to the Lord there as also Sri Ramanuja whose grace he abundantly derived and breathed his last there in tranquility.

The fourth *Jiyar* Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Mahadesika needs special mention because he undertook *padayatra* to as far-off places as Ayodhya, Gokul and Brindavan, all in the North India before he settled down at Singar Kovil, spreading the message of Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika. He realised that his days were drawing to a close in this world and was in search of a worthy successor. The Lord appeared in his dream saying, '*Sarvatantra Svatantra* is coming to take the *Peetam* and hence do not be concerned' whereupon the fourth *Jiyar* was jubilantly awaiting him. Lakshminarasimha similarly appeared in the dream of one *Kandalur Svami* asking him to proceed immediately to the fourth *Jiyar*'s camp. They exchanged the substance of their respective dream messages. However, since *Kandalur Svami* happened to belong to Tenkalai sect, the fourth *Jiyar* asked him to have his *Barasamarpanam* done then and there at his (4th *Jiyar*'s) feet and having done this the *Sanyasa asrama* was given to him. It is a gesture of magnanimity on the part of both the *Jiyars* in that while the fifth *Jiyar* respected the *Vadakalai* tradition by having *Barasamarpana* at the 4th *Jiyar*'s feet, the fourth *Jiyar* directed that during the time of the 5th *Jiyar*'s reign, both the *sampradayams* would be respected. *Kanadalur Svami* was then duly installed as the fifth *Jiyar* bearing the *asrama* name *Sarvatantra Svatantra Satagopa Yateendra Mahadesikan*.

The fifth *Jiyar* made tours mostly in the north of India and when his period ended, he was laid to rest on the banks of the river Krishna. It is again the magnanimity of this fifth *Jiyar* that he, in turn, initiated the famous *Shashtha Parankusa Svami* of the *Vadakalai* into *Sanyasa asrama*.

### ***B. Shashtha Parankusa Yateendra Mahadesika, The Sixth Jiyar***

After the first *Jiyar*, the sixth *Jiyar* Srimad Shashtha Parankusa Yateendra Mahadesikan became equally famous for his spiritual and miraculous powers. S N Venkatesa Aiyar writes in his '*History of the Ahobila Math*' "This *Jiyar*," he says, "is deservedly considered as one of the most powerful personages that adorned the pontifical seat. Even at the outset, in connection with this *Jiyar* we meet with another well known personage *Panchumathabhanjanam Tatachariar* (sister's son of this *Jiyar*

in his pre-sanyasin life). This Tatachariar was also noteworthy as being the father of the great Lakshmikumara (Kotikanyakadanam Tatachariar) - the famous person who gilded the Varadarajasvami Temple, Kanchipuram. He was a person of great importance and influence - being the Guru of Venkatapathiraya (Venkata I) 1575 to 1614 A.D. and also of Venkata II 1630 to 1642 A.D. - both Kings of Vijayanagara in its later days of decline. Any student of the Araveedu dynasty of Vijayanagara cannot afford to miss this Tatachariar family in the study of the outstanding spiritual teachers of the time. This Lakshmikumara Tatachariar has claimed himself as having crowned both Venkata the First and Venkata the Second and used the valuable presents given to him by the Emperors - for gilding the Tirupati and Kanchipuram temples. The sixth Jiyar with whom we are now particularly concerned was the *guru* and teacher of the Tatachariar - the original founder of the family. Inscriptions both at Tirupati and Kanchipuram state that the sixth Jiyar founded a settlement at *Bhashyapuram* in Cuddapah district, on the banks of the north Pennar. He was a very learned man and taught *Vedanta* and other philosophies to numerous disciples. The Ahobila *matha* became quite wealthy during his tenure, possessing a large number of villages granted in *Sarvamanyam*, besides numerous herds of cattle, number of elephants, camels and other paraphernalia of a rich *matha*. The sixth Jiyar travelled upto Badarinath in the Himalayas and visited all the famous Vishnu shrines in India. The modern Vaishnavite *agraharams* of Injumedu and Thaiyar trace their origin to this Jiyar.

A reference is made to this Jiyar in the *History of the Cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh* wherein it is said that "both during the period of the fifth Jiyar and the sixth Jiyar, Ahobila *matha* was the nerve-centre of Srivaishnavism in Andhra Pradesh and brought many influential families as well as the masses into its fold. It is stated that the fifth Jiyar was the spiritual preceptor of the Nandyala Chiefs who were Vijayanagara feudatories..." The sixth of the apostolic line of the Ahobila Math, *Shashta Parankusa*, says Dr.M.Narasimhacharya, was respected by King Mukundadeva of Kalinga and he instituted the worship of *Alvars* at Purushottam (Puri) which is also known as Jagannatha shrine. An epigraph of 1555 A.D., during the reign of Sadasiva, mentions that Shashta Parankusa was the trustee of the Ahobila Temple and the agent of Aliya-Ramappadeva Maharaja. This Jiyar is stated by the *Satsampradaya Muktaavali* to be the contemporary of Sadasivaraya and he received from Sadasiva the village of Bhashyapura on the banks of the river Pennar. He was the author of a number of works including *Narasimha-stava*. Tradition has it that this sixth Jiyar while fervently worshipping at Ahobilam was commanded by the god, Lakshminarasimha to be ever present there to do *pooja* (ceremonial worship) to Him. In order to do that, he had disappeared into the cave of Ahobilam which now remains closed (This place is shown to pilgrims at the Upper Ahobilam Temple where it seems that even now early in the morning the pealing of bells and chanting can be heard by the devout.) He was, however, never again seen afterwards though we are told, very pathetically that his *Sishyas* - particularly Tatachariar - stayed outside the cave for several days without meals and water, wept and cried out for him requesting him to come out - but it was all in vain.

### C. 7th Jiyar - Sri Satagopa Yateendra Mahadesikan

Like the first Jiyar, this seventh Jiyar also became a *sanyasi* at the young age of twenty five. His scholarship was very high and he earned many titles. "An inscription of S.1501 (A.D. 1578-79) from the Lower Ahobilam, records certain stirring political events that happened at the time, at the initiative of Van Satagopa Jiyangaru, the seventh head of the *matha* of Ahobilam, the recapture of Ahobilam from the Muslims. The Jiyangaru approached the King Ranga I of Vijayanagara and appealed to him to recover the temple from the Muslims. As the King had regard for the Jiyar, he issued orders to his chief, who, proceeding with the Jiyar to Ahobilam, defeated the Muslims, repaired the temple and established the Jiyar at Ahobilam." Dr. M.Narasimhacharya records further in his '*History of the Cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh*' that this is no mean achievement for the

*Jiyar*, who took the lead to drive away the Muslims from the temple. This *Jiyar* was not only famous for this act of resuscitation of the Ahobilam temple, but also popular as the author of a Sanskrit Drama *Vasantika Parinayam*. The theme of the drama is the marriage of Lord Narasimha with a Chenchu woman. The importance of his work is that it is the first of its kind in Sanskrit literature, which mentions the association of God Narasimha with Chenchita, a tribal woman. The story of Narasimha and Chenchita became popular not only among the Chenchus but also among the rural folk. It made the Chenchus feel even now that Chenchita is their woman and God Narasimha is their tutelary deity. Prior to the beginning of the *Brahmotsavam*, even today it is the custom for the *Utsava* Narasimha to tour several villages around Ahobilam and accept their hospitality. After touring from Ahobilam to Srirangam, this seventh *Jiyar* found his resting place at Srirangam itself where his *Brindavanam* lies.

The *Jiyars* of Ahobila *matha* from 8th to 45th occupy an important place in the history of Ahobilam and Srivaishnavism. Various development programmes and religious activities were carried out by 44th and 45th *Jiyars* of Ahobila *matha*.

The most important work is the construction of the *Gopuram* in 1985 to Srirangam temple, with thirteen tiers. Built at a cost of 15 million rupees, the *Rajagopuram* is the tallest tower in Asia, measuring 165 feet in length and 150 feet in breadth, the tower rises upwards by 226 feet in height.

## 5. Ahobila Math

The presiding deity of the *Matha* of course, is Sri Lakshmi Narasimha better known as Malola-Narasimha. The glory of this ancient idol has been sanctified by touch and by daily *aradhana* three times a day performed right from the first *Jiyar* Sri Adivan Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan upto the present Holiness. Srivan Satagopa Sri Narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan.

1. Malola Narasimha is the centre piece of attraction in the mobile silver Mandapam seated on the jewelled *Dolai* with His consort on His lap, holding *Sankha* and *Chakra* and with His right foot adorned with sandal (*Paduka*). The other equally famous idols that are enshrined therein are : 2. *Swarna Narasimha* said to have been given to the first *Jiyar* by King Prataparudra. There is a legend behind it. It seems that the King's daily routine included moulding a Linga in gold and presenting it to a Brahmin before he partook food. One day when he ordered the smith to mould a Linga as usual, the goldsmith found, to his surprise, that the mould turned out a golden Lakshminarasimha instead of the Linga. He melted the idol and cast it again which also turned out to be that of Lakshminarasimha. This was brought to the attention of the king in whose presence it happened once more. It was then that some pious men brought to his notice that a great saint by name Sri Adivan Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan was camping in the vicinity worshipping the Lakshminarasimha of Ahobilam. The king taking the idol went thither and prostrated before the *Jiyar* and narrated the miracle, and then and there became a convert to Srivaishnavism on seeing the lustre of divinity on the *Jiyar's* face. He duly presented the idol of *Swarna Narasimha* to the *Jiyar* and also grants for daily worship. 3. Mangalagiri Panaka Narasimha : This was donated by a devotee to the 42nd *Jiyar*. 4. Kannan (Krishna) to whom *dolotsavam* is usually done. *Beejakasharams* are found on this idol and as per tradition, Ramanuja was performing the puja of this icon. It is believed that the barren women beget children on performing *dolotsavam* to this image. 5. Sri Ranganathan reclining on Adishesha with Lakshmi. 6. Atthigiri Varadan which was with the great scholar Nadathur Ammal and later given to Sri Adivan Satakopa Svami by the former's grandson Gatikasatam Ammal. 7. Srinivasa with Alamelu Mangathayaru seated in His chest. 8. Sampath Kumaran with Yadugiri Nachiyar. 9. Parimalarangan with Sridevi and Bhudevi; 10. Lakshmi Varahan; 11. Bhuvarahan; 12. Adikesava with His Consorts; 13. Sudarshana; 14. Sri Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana; 15. Aravamudhan;



16. Hayagreeva; 17. Sri Andal; 18. Rangamannar. A number of Salagraamas and idols of Vishwakshena, Nammalvar, Kaliyan, Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika, Sri Adivan Satagopa Yateendra Mahadesika and the subsequent Jiyars- all together present a scene of the utmost divine plane.

The 45th *Jiyar* the present *peetadhipathi* of Ahobila *matha*, is 'Srivan Satagopa Sri Narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan'. The ceremonial appointment took place on Oct. 21, 1991, He has been carrying on his duty, guidance, training and propagation of the ideals and thus bearing on the torch of the glorious traditions of the Ahobila *matha*.

In the history of Ahobila *matha*, Gadwal occupies an important place. Because of its proximity to Ahobilam and because of the abundance of scholars around these parts, Gadwal became a beehive of Vaishnavite religious activities. The *Samasthanadhipathis* of this place generously patronised the spiritual and cultural activities and Raja Somabhupal became a disciple of the 24th *Jiyar* - Srivan Satakopa Sri Parankusa Yateendra Mahadesika (1764- 1776). This is the first reference in the *Guru Parampara* and this Raja is said to have presented the *Matha* many villages, silver palanquins and the usual paraphernalia. The 25th *Jiyar* had won the hearts of Raja Sarabhoji of Tanjore, the Mysore Maharaja and naturally the Gadwal Maharaja too.

The Raja of Gadwal went personally to Ahobilam where the 25th *Jiyar* was camping, and after prostrating before him, invited the *Jiyar* to visit Gadwal and escorted him to Gadwal with full honours and retinue. *Guruparampara* records an incident which bears out *Jiyar's* vast powers of learning and disputation. As this *Jiyar* escorted by the Gadwal Raja was on his way to Gadwal, near Surapuram, a village in Cuddapah district, he was accosted by one Kireeti Venkatachariar, a reputed scholar and a famous disputant who defiantly challenged the *Jiyar* on *Visishtadwaita* principles. It seems the debate lasted for fifteen days. When the Swami felt himself flagging, by a divine command *Satadushini* and *Srutiprakasika* the records of authority were brought into play leading to the irrefutable triumph of the *Jiyar*. Venkatachariar fell at the feet of the *Jiyar*. Removing the bell of victory from his palanquin, Venkatachariar tied it to the palanquin of the *Jiyar*. He became an ardent disciple of the *Jiyar* who in a gesture of magnanimity variously honoured Venkatachariar. Having witnessed this, the reverence of the Gadwal Raja towards the *Jiyar* increased multi-fold.

The shrines of Narasimha at Ahobilam and other places in Andhra Pradesh received royal patronage as the Narasimha Cult gained momentum under the *Jiyars* of Ahobila *matha*.

The present day Gadwal has now completely lost the glory. The last Raja of Gadwal left for Hyderabad where the royal family settled down permanently. The fort though the palace-building, now houses the Rani Adilakshmi College though parts of the building are dilapidated. The Kesava Temple is in ruins. In its vestigial form only, the worship goes on. Many idols are kept in a row (as if in display) uncleaned and undusted in the main temple precincts. The priest, though employed by the royal family perhaps is ill-paid. As a result, regular worship cannot be carried on. The Ahobila *matha* is in a much worse condition having been ravaged by the passage of time. The *Pedda Agharam*, which once abounded with Brahmin scholars still exists but without the old tradition. Not more than six to ten brahmin families live there. The land adjoining the *matha* has now been retrieved by the Math Agent and a Committee has been formed with Sri Rajagopalachari, as the President and Sri Ramakant as Secretary. Sri Ramulu Gowd, a leading Advocate of Gadwal has shown a lot of interest and as the member and Legal Advisor of the committee is quite keen on renovating not only the *Matha* but also the *Brindavan* of the 27th *Jiyar* situated on the banks of the Krishna river which is also totally devastated.

**Letters of Nawabs, Rajas and Residents connected with the Ahobila Matha is appended**

Mysore Residency

21.10.1812

Sri Ahobila Swamy, a Brahmin High Priest proceeds from Mysore to Kumbakonam via. Salem, Srirangam etc. with three elephants, one camel, four horses, three palanquins, sixty bullocks, two hundred Brahmins and about one hundred servants and attendants.

All officers in authority under the British Government are requested to allow him to pass without molestation.

(Sd) COLE,

British Resident

21.10.1812

From

The Honourable Mr. COLE,

The British Resident,

MYSORE.

To

The commanders of Forts, commandants of Garrisons, Thasildars, persons guarding mountain passes and out houses and such like persons in Authority in the British territories (2) Sri Ahobila Swami Etc., Etc., (3) You should get them all the things that they require for Proper prices. Sri Swamy is a very respectable man.

He should be received with all Honours.

P.S: The Swami and his party are to be allowed to pass freely through your respective divisions.

(Sd) Cole.

21.10.1812.

To

Ayyalur Ramachandra Naidu,

Police Superintendent, Etc., Etc.,

You are hereby informed that as (1) Sri Ahobilaswami is coming on a tour and as he is a very great and respectable person coming with all and every equipments you are to issue strict order to the peons and servants within your jurisdiction to go and wait upon him and render him all the assistance he may want, to be very careful that there is no disturbance from others during the time the gentleman stays there and you are to arrange that the Honours customarily shown him in the places within your jurisdiction are properly shown him. As this is a necessary matter, you are to issue strict order to your peons and servants not to conduct themselves with indifference towards him in the least degree.

(Sd) Dt. Collector

Chingleput, 4th May 1808.

N B Even in 1944 when His Holiness the 42nd Jiyar stayed in my native village Singanallur, near Coimbatore City he had with him (1) Sri Karyam, Secretary 2 Manager and his assistants 3 One Elephant and a very big tusker it is 'Oh! What a lot of trouble and anxiety it gave us 4 One Camel, which unfortunately died during the Chaturmasya 5 two horses 6 23 double Bullock carts and 46 stout-bulls to drag them 7 a dozen and more of Brahmins to chant the litanies-morning-day and night-*Viswa Rupam* (morning song) *Abigamana* (Noon day puja) *Ijya* (mid-afternoon), Night Puja 8 Brahmin Pandits to discourse on the Sastras to the laity 9 several advanced students to learn the Rahasyatrayasara of V Desika 10 Cooks, peons, cart drivers etc (in all) about seventy (11) 4 police constables with guns etc to guard the Gadi Jewels etc (These police are paid by the Nizam state as per mamool and are part of the Nizam's police force )

### Mysore Rajah's letter to Pontiff XXVI

Extract from a letter addressed to Sri Ranganatha Yatindra Maha Desikan to the then Head Priest of Ahobilam Mutt by His Highness Krishna Rajah Odayar, the Maha Rajah of Mysore on 28 12 1813

(We) Krishna Raja Odayar of Mysore (known as) the greatest of all kings, the king of kings, very powerful, Peerless, styled the king of Angles and Men (Deva Narapathi), the greatest Warrior in all the world, who shines like the moon sprung from the ocean of Yadukula (dynasty) and honoured with the following emblems, viz, sankha, (conch), chakram (circle) Ankusam (the instrument used by the elephant driver), the axe, the Makara (fish), Sarabha (bird), Ganda Bhairunda (bird), Bhuvaraha (pig), Hunuman (monkey), Garuda (kite) and kathiwar (the lion) and such like, (supplicate as follows after making Sastanga Namaskarums (complete limbs prostration at your feet)

By the Grace of Swamy, I and all others are doing well up to Tuesday, the 6th day of Pushya Sudda of Srimukha year (28th December 1813), you must be pleased to direct the sending of Srimukhams (letters) always, about the honours and blessings gained by virtue of your penance The Prasadam (fruits), Mantrakshata (blessed Rice) and cloth which you were graciously pleased to remit through Bhashyakara (Religious quarters) having reached us with the Sreemukham, we have been saved and raised to salvation We have placed the same over our heads We are filled with joy, having been blessed with full particulars of the splendid manner with the chaturmasya festival after the receipt of yearly payments, Shawls, Kashaya Vastram (red-coloured cloth) sent through Mukum Srinivasachariar most learned in the Vedas As we shall annually send before the commencement of the said festival money, Shawls and Kashaya Vastrams according to custom, you must be pleased to accept them and use them for the worship of God and direct the sending of Sreemukhams (letters) always showing in detail the manner in which your penance is being performed daily In this manner (We) supplicate making complete prostration

Signature of Maharaja of Mysore

28 12 1813

N B - The Poligars of Vanaparti and Gadwal (vide further letters) are Hindu poligars in the Hyderabad State, but they are anterior to the (Asaf Jah) Present Nizam's dynasty They along with Mysore, Madura, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, were part of the Vijayanagar Political System Even today, the Palanquin-bearers to the Ahobila Muth are supplied by the Raja of Gadwal

### Letter No.5

Seal of Mahomed Akbar Shah,

Police Superintendent of Nizam's Police Force

Notice is hereby given to all Gumustahs in the service of jaghirdars, Faujirdars, Choukedars, watchmen, toll-gates men etc That one Narasimha Swamy, a Hindu Priest, accompanied by 150 adherents with palanquin and 16 holy bearers, bandies, elephants, camels, horses, cows, etc Will shortly proceed through and in the direction of Bijapur and you are therefore, hereby warned not to interrupt for the toll-tax during his passage and to afford every facility to pass him safely

Written and dated the 18th Jamadee - Oossanee 1250 Hijn (10th November 1833)

Signature in Persian Characters

N B - The above Narasimhaswami can only refer to His Holiness - the 28th Jiyar (1833-1836)

### Letter No. 6

Letter addressed to Sri Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Satagopa Yatindra Maha Desikan, The Head Priest (28) of Ahobila Muttam by Raja Chandu Lal the Prime-Minister of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad on 16th September 1833 (Translated from Persian)

Raja Chandu Lal, the servant of your servant's offers his complete prostrations at all times in the day and night By the unbounded favour of your divine grace, your servants etc, are doing well till Friday the first Adhika Bhadrpadu month You must be pleased to favour me with sacred letter from time to time letting me know, how, the daily feeding of Brahmins and the inculcation of the Religious Vedas and Sanskrit Theology and Philosophy are progressing at your sacred quarters The sacred letter which your divine grace has been pleased to favour me with, was duly put into my hands and its contents were understood and I was elated with joy

When your divine grace advances towards the northern countries you must be pleased to pass by this road and thereby remove the sins of myself and others by casting upon us a mere sidelong of your Muttam at these quarters, ardently waiting for your divine arrival for a complete expiation of their sins I am elated with joy and consider that it is the fruitful result of the performance of several virtuous acts in my former births that made me an object to be favourably treated by your divine pleasure

What can I write more to a person, able, who is omniscient and master of all learning?

Friday the 1st Adhika Bhadrpadu suddha of Vijaya (16th September 1833)

The Persian seal of Raja Chandu Lal, Dewan of His (Exalted) Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad

### Letter No.7

Raja of Vanaparthi's letter

Letters, addressed to Sri Satakopa Sri Veeraraghava Yatindra Maha Desikan, the then Head-priest of the Ahobilam Muttam (32) by His Highness the Raja of Vanaparthi on 19 7 1852

I, who being the seat of a thousand faults, am drowned in the middle of the dreadful sea of family life without any means of escape, come to your protection And Oh! God! keep me under your control by thy simple mercy This is true and no falsehood Listen to a single humble prayer of mine If you

do not show me pity you cannot find any other object worthy of your Grace. Rameswara Raja, the king of Vanaparte Desam (country) the humble servant of Ramanuja, who classing himself with one of your favoured disciples, is ever expecting your instructions, makes to you prostrations in conjunction with his wife and all his people in accordance with the saying - My prostrations to him who is beyond description or imagination who shines like an ocean both for words and fancy, who is possessed of great and endless salvation and who is the great ocean of boundless mercy.

By the Grace of your feet, I have been living happily with my wife and child and followers at Kanthamal village up to the 3rd Sukla of Sravana of the current Pandhavi (19th July 1852). A letter was sent by the chief agent of your sannadhi. In that letter, it was written that your noble personage felt a little sick and that a physician should be sent. I am sorry for it. Two persons Ramanuja and Lakshmana have been sent to give medicine to you. Please take medicine from them, keep good diet and you will be all right in seven days. I pray that you will give me joy, who am your chief disciple by directing a letter to be written to me immediately regarding the present state of your health. Why write more. The servant of the worshipper of Lakshmi Narasimha.

The seal and signature of Rameswara Ramanuja Dasa.

#### Letter No.8

Maha Raja of Gadwal's letter - December 1814

Letter addressed to Srivan Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Yatindra Maha Desikan, the then head priest of Ahobilam Muttam (Head Priest XXVI) by His Highness the Maharaja of Gadwal, December 1814.

Raja Rama Bhoopla Rayadu your most obedient and humble servant offers his adorations. Myself and all my retinue are doing well here up to 4th Margasira Sudha of this year. You must be pleased to favour me from time to time with sacred letter letting me know to good progress in the daily feeding of Brahmins and advance made in the cultivation and inculcation of sacred Vedas and Hidnu Theology and philosophy at your sacred quarters. The sacred letter which your divine pleasure has been pleased to send in the month of Sravana Suddha through A. Raghavacharlu and Venkata Dikshithilu was received with all honours and due dignity on the auspicious day of 10th Karthika Bahula.

I placed it on my head and thereby I was absolved from all sins. I was directed to send camels, peons, and palanquin bearers to enable your divine grace to travel to the Northern countries to dispel all gloomy darkness of ignorance and spread lustre by the glorious rays of your divine learning and thus achieve universal triumph. A little delay was caused in procuring a pass-port from the town of riches (Hyderabad) and it is herewith sent as per your directions. Be pleased to place your sacred feet in this part of the country and absorb all your servants from sin. All the remaining circumstances would have been brought to your divine knowledge by the letters addressed to your divine grace by Ramanujacharlu, the Muttam agent at this place. Thus I tender my endless adorations to your sacred feet.

Royal seal of the Raja of Gadwal.

(Courtesy: History of the Ahobila Mutt - An Outline by S.N.Venkatesa Iyer)



**Particulars regarding the Tirunakshatrams (birth-stars) etc. Of the Azhagiyasingars of Ahobila Math**

Peetham and Tirunamam	Tirunakshatram	Commencement of Asthanam	Departure to Tirunadu	Duration of the Administration of the Asthanam	Location of Brindvanam
1. Sirmad Adivan Sathakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Siddharthi Month : Purattasi Sukhla Paksham; Panchami, Thursday, Star : Kettai Dhanurlangam (September 1379 A.D.)	Year : Bahudhanaya Month : Puruttasi Sukhla Paksham; Panchami, Thursday; September 1398 A.D.	Year : Bahudhanaya Month : Chittirai Krishna Paksham Ekadasi Saturday at 14-15 Nazhagai, April 1458 A.D.	Year - Months  59-7	At the Tirukkalyana Teeram, Tirunarayanapuram
2. Sri Van Sathakopa Sriman-narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Avani Kettai Nakshatram	Year : Bahudhanaya April, 1458 A.D.	Year : Nandana Month : Panguni- Krishna Paksham Dwiteeyai, March 1473 A.D.	14-11	Tirunarayanapuram
3. Srivan Sathakopa Sri Parankusha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Thai Star : Tiruvonam	Year : Nandanam Month : Panguni - Poomimai March, 1474 A.D.	Year : Krodhi Month : Thai Krishna Chaturthi January, 1485 A.D.	11-10	Sri Mushnam
4. Srivan Sathakopa Srinivasa Mahadesikan	Month : Margazhi Star : Chittirai	Year : Krodhi Month : Thai (January, 1485 A.D.)	Year : Pramadeeshaa Month : Cittirai - Krishna Paksham Chaturthi April 1493 A.D.	8-3	Singhar Koil
5. Srivan Sathakopa Sri Sarvatantra Swatantra Sri Sathakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Karthigai Star : Thirukarthigai	Year : Pramoduta Month : Chittirai April 1493 A.D.	Year : Kalyukthi Month : Thai Krishna Paksham Navami (January 1499 A.D.)	5-9	Krishna Teeram

6.	Sri van Satakopa Sri Shasta Parankusha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Thai Poorattasi	Year : Kalyukthi Month : Thai January 1499 A.D.	Year : Angeerasa Month : Masi Krishna Paksham February, 1513 A.D.	Years - Months 14-1	Entered into the Guha (Cave) at Ahobilam
7.	Sri van Satakopa Sri Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Vaikasi Star : Vishakam	Year : Angeerasa Month : Masi February 1513 A.D.	Year : Visha Month : Panguni Poomimai April, 1522 A.D.	9-2	Srirangam
8.	Sri van Satakopa Sri Parankusha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Margazhi Star : Ashwani	Year : Visha Month : Panguni April 1522 A.D.	Year : Hevilambi Month : Margazhi Krishna Paksham Panchami January, 1538 A.D.	15-9	Srirangam
9.	Sri van Satakopa Sri van Narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Ani Tru-Adirai	Year : Hevilambi Month : Margazhi January, 1538 A.D.	Year : Sobhakrit Month : Ani Krishna Chaturthi July 1542 A.D.	4-6	Sri Ahobilam
10.	Sri van Satakopa Sri Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Vaikasi Vishakam Star	Year : Sobhakrit Month : Ani July 1542 A.D.	Year : Siddharthi Month : Ani Krishna Paksham Dwadshi July 1559 A.D.	17-0	Triunaranapuram
11.	Sri van Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Ayyappasi Star : Moolam	Year : Siddharthi Month : Ani July 1559 A.D.	Year : Vilambi Month : Chittirai Krishna Paksham Chaturdasi April 1598 A.D.	38-9	Srirangam
12.	Sri van Satakopa Sri mannarayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Purattasi Poorva Phalguni	Year : Vilambi Month : Chittirai April 1598 A.D.	Year : Angeerasa Month : Purattasi Krishna Paksham Shashti September, 1632 A.D.	34-5	Triunaranapuram

13. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veera Raghava Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Ani Uturadam	Year : Angeerasa Month : Purattasi September 1632 A.D.	Year : Nala Month : Aypassi Krishna Paksham Shashti October 1676 A.D.	44-1	Srirangam
14. Srivan Satakopa Srimannarayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Adi Uturadam	Year : Nala Month : October Year : 1676 A.D.	Year : Akshaya Month : Adi Amavasyai August, 1686 A.D.	9-10	Tirukkandiyar
15. Srivan Satakopa Kalyana Sri Veeranaghavan Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Thai Chittrai	Year : Akshaya Month : Adi Poomima August, 1686 A.D.	Year : Bhava Month : Puruttasi Krishna Paksham Ekadasi October 1694 A.D.	8-2	Penumal Koil Kancheepuram
16. Srivan Satakopa Sri Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Margazhi Mrigaseersham	Year : Bhava Month : Purattasi October 1694 A.D.	Year : Bhahudanya Moth : Vaikashi Sukhla Paksham Ashtami June 1698 A.D.	3-8	Tirukkudanthai
17. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeranaghava Vedartha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Purattasi Sathayam	Year : Bahudhanya Month : Vaikashi June 1698 A.D.	Year : Pramadeeha Month : Thai Krishna Paksham January 1734 A.D.	Years - Months 35-7	Tirappul-Kuzhi
18. Srivan Satakopa Srimannarayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Purattasi Aylayam	Year : Pramadeecha Month : Thai January 1734 A.D.	Year : Rakshasa Month : Adi Krishna Paksham Ekadasi July, 1735 A.D.	1-6	Srirangam
19. Srivan Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Masi Makha	Year : Rakshasa Month : Adi July 1735 A.D.	Year : Krodhana Month : Masi Sukhla Paksham Chaturthi February, 1746 A.D.	10-7	Pullamboothankudi

20. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraghava Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Purattasi Moolam	Year : Krodhana Month : Masi February 1746 A.D.	Year : Prabhava Month : Panguni Krishna Paksham Sapthami March, 1748 A.D.	2-1	Northern Region
21. Srivan Satakopa Sri Parankusha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Panguni Hastham	Year : Prabhava Month : Panguni March, 1748 A.D.	Year : Eeswara Month : Karthigai Krishna Paksham Chaturthi November 1757 A.D.	9-8	Palamedu
22. Srivan Satakopa Sri Mannarayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Adi Rohini	Year : Eeswara Month : Margazhi January 1758, A.D.	Year : Bhahudanya Month : Adi Krishna Paksham Shasti August 1758, A.D.	0-7	Palamedu
23. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraghava Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Avani Uthiradam	Year : Bahaudanya Month : Adi Krishna Paksham August 1758 A.D.	Year : Swabhanu Month : Thai Sukhla Paksham Dasami February 1764, A.D.	5-6	Srirangapuram
24. Srivan Satakopa Sri Parankusha Ramanuja Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Chittirai Punar Poosam	Year : Swabhanu Month : Thai February 1764, A.D.	Year : Manmatha Month : Masi Thirtheeyai March 1776, A.D.	1-1	Kokkarayan Pettai
25. Srivan Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Adi Swathi	Year : Manmatha Month : Panguni March 1776, A.D.	Year : Projothpathi Month : Karthigai Pournami, Saturday, Nov. 30, 1811 A.D.	35-8	Sri Narashimhapuram

26. Srivan Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Adi Pooram	Year : Projothpathi Month : Karthigai Saturday, 21.11.1811 A.D.	Year : Sarvadhari Month : Margazhi Sukla Chaturdasi 10.12.1828	17-1	Sri Narashimhapuram
27. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraraghava Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Vaikashi Avittam	Year : Sarvadhari Month : Margazhi 10.1.1829	Year : Kara Month : Avani Sukhala Paksham Ashtami(Wednesday) 17.8.1831 A.D.	2-7	Gadwal
28. Srivan Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Avani Moolam	Year : Vijaya Month : Ani 7.7.1833 A.D.	Year : Durmathi Month : Margazhi Date : 3, Saturday Krishna Paksham Chaturthi 16.12.1837	3-5	Sri Madhuranthakam
29. Srivan Satakopa Sri Parakusha Ramanuja Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Chittirai Chittrai	Year : Durmathi Month : Karthikai 17.11.1836	Year : Hevilambi Month : Margazhi Date : 3, Saturday Krishna Paksham Chaturthi, 16.12.1837	1-1	Tirupakkadal
30. Srivan Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Vedantha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Margazhi Vishakam	Year : Durumukhi Month : Panguni 15.3.1837	Year : Subhakritu Month : Purattasi Date : 13, Krishna Paksham Chaturthi, Tuesday, 27.9.1842	5-6	Sri Narasimhapuram
31. Srivan Satakopa Srimannarayana Vedantha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Karthigai Magham	Year : Subhakritu Month : Karthaigai	Year : Parabhava Month : Panguni Date : 19, Sukla Paksham, Tuesday 30.3.1847	4-4	Thyagarajapuram on the banks of the Kaveri

32. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraraghava Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Chittirai Star : Pooradam	Year : Prabhava Month : Purattasi Date : 21, Sukhlā Paksham Chaturthi Wednesday 5.10.1847	1853 A.D. September	6-7	Tiruvallloor
33. Srivan Satakopa Sri Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Purattasi Star : Visakham	Year : Pramadeecha Month : Avani 12.9.1853	Year : Pramadhi Month : Avani Date : 27, Krishna Paksham Dasmi Wednesday 10.9.1879	26-0	Tiruvallloor
34. Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Divya Paduka Sevaka Srivan Satakopa Sri Satakopa Ramanuja Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Srimukha Month : Karthigai Star : Uthiradam November, 1813	Year : Pramadhi Month : Avani 12.9.1879	Year : Chitra Banu Month : Purattasi Date : 21, Krishna Paksham Dasami Thursday, 5.10.1882	3-1	Tiruvallloor
35. Srivan Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Karthigai Star : Kettai	Year : Chitra Banu Month : Purattasi 3.10.1882	Year : Saravadhari Month : Adi Date : 28, Friday Sukla Chaturthi Poorva Palguni Nakshatram	5-10	Tiruvallloor
36. Srivan Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Adi Star : Pushyam	Year : Saravadhari Month : Adi 13.8.1888	Year : Vilambi Month : Margazhi Date : 14, Tuesday Mrigaseersha Nakshatram 27.12.1898	10-4	Padoor
37. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Krodhi Month : Masi Star : Pushyam	Year : Vilambi Month : Thai 31.1.1899	Year : Vikari Month : Margazhi Date : 2, Saturday Poomimai Asvini Nakshatram 16.12.1899	0-11	Sri Narasimhapuram



38. Srivan Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Siddharthi Month : Thai Tiruvadhira! Sukla Dwadashi Friday January 1860	Year : Vishvasu Month : Adi Date : 2, Poonimai Monday, Uttarada Nakshatram 17.7.1905	Year : Soumya Month : Chittirai Krishna Paksham Ashtami, Wednesday 12.5.1909	3-10	Sri Narasimhapuram
39. Srivan Satakopa Sri Parankusha Yateendra Mahadesikan	Month : Vaikashi Star : Bharani	Year : Soumya Month : Vaikashi 21.5.1909	Year : Rakshasa Month : Vaikashi Date : 7, Wednesday Sukla Sapthami 20.5.1915	6-0	Sri Rajamannar Kovil
40. Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Divya Paduka Sevakta Srivan Satakopa Sri Ranganatha Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Virodhikrit Month : Margazhi December 1851	Year : Pramadeecha Month : Chittirai 17.4.1913	Year : Dundubhi Month : Thai Date : 1, Krishna Paksham Trayodasi 14.1.1923	9-9	Tuvaniman Agraharam near Madurai on the bank of River Vaigai
41. Sri Satakopa Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Ananda Month : Margazhi Star : Poorattadi December 1854	Year : Dundubhi Month : Thai 17.1.1923	Details are not clearly known October 1941	18-9	Srirangam
42. Srivan Satakopa Sri Sriranga Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Bahudanya Month : Thai Star L. Uttaradam 21.1.1879	A) Sweekaram Year : Sukla Month : Chittirai (1929) B) Pattabhishekam Year : Visha Month : Ayyappasi Date : 8, Sukla Panchami, Friday 24.10.1941	Year : Nandana Month : Masi Date : 1.3.1953 Sunday	23-10	Tiruvallloor

43. Srivan Satakopa Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yateendra Mahadesikan	Year : Plava Month : Karthigai Star : Pooradam 1901	A) Sweekaram Year : Vikrodhi Month : Thai Date : 27, Friday 9.2.1951 B) Pattabhishekam Year : Nandana Month : Masi Date : 30, Friday 13.3.1953	Year : Hevilambi Month : Karthigai Date : 9, Sunday 24.11.1957	4-10	Naimisharanyam
44. Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Diyya Paduka Sevaka Srivan Satakopa Sri Vedantha Desika Yateendra Mahadesikan	Hasta August, 1895	Sweekaram Year L Hevelambi Month : Kartikai - Sravanam Pattabhishekam Kartigai 6.12.1957	16-8-1992	34-8	Srirangam
45. Srivan Satakopa Sri Narayana Yateendra Mahadesikan	Akshaya Kartigai-27 Uthirattadi Sunday 13.12.1926	Sweekaram Year : Prajotpathi Month : Ippase 21.10.1991	—	—	—

(Courtesy : This compilation done by Sri D. Gopala Krishna appeared in *Nrisimha Priya*, 1992).

### 1. Mythological Accounts from the *Sthalapurana*

Like many other famous temples, Ahobilam also has a *Sthalapurana* which gives a detailed account of the mythological origin of the temple. Its *Sthalapurana* forms a part of the *Bramhanda Purana*, with ten chapters consisting of 1046 stanzas.<sup>1</sup> The *sthalapurana*<sup>2</sup> of Simhachalam temple discusses the four important shrines dedicated to Narasimha. These four<sup>3</sup> are *Ahobilam*, *Kritasancham*, *Harapapam* and *Simhachalam*. This recounts how Narasimha, the God at Ahobilam, manifested Himself born from a pillar to kill the demon, Hiranyakasipu.<sup>4</sup> The *Kurma Purana* gives an account of Vishnu tearing Hiranyakasipu to pieces. "The circumstances in which Vishnu had to assume the furious form of the man-lion" are not mentioned in this *Purana*.

An account given in the *Padmapurana* is in agreement with what is found in the *Vishnu Purana* and some other *puranas* also. It tells us that "Hiranyakasipu had in his earlier life adored Brahma and obtained from Him boons to the effect that he should be so invulnerable as not to be killed by man or beast, that he should not die either in the day or at night, and that no weapon of any kind should injure him. After he obtained these boons, he naturally became haughty and irrepressible in his worrying behaviour towards the Gods, and it became imperative that he should be killed. But at the same time the boon conferred by Brahma on him had to be respected. Consequently, Vishnu assumed the form of a man-lion, and tore Hiranyakasipu with the claws at the time of lingering twilight forming the junction between day and night, himself being seated upon the doorsill of the mansion of Hiranyakasipu. It is obvious that, in so causing the death of the demon, not one of the boons bestowed on him by Brahma was counteracted and shown to be futile". The mythological account of the place Ahobilam and its importance as narrated in the *Sthalapurana* runs as follows. This sacred place was the kingdom of Hiranyakasipu in the *Krtayuga* and Lord Narasimha came out of a pillar from the palace of the demon. This place is variously known as *Vedachalam*, *Garudachalam* and *Virakshetram*. It is also known as *Singvelkunram*. Tirumangai Alvar, a famous Vaishnavite saint, praised this Lord as "except the Lord nobody can enter this Narasimhakshetra. This place, which is Ahobilam has two popular legends, for the derivation of the word "Ahobilam". It is stated that the devas (Gods), while witnessing the terrible aspect (*Ugra Kala*) he took on in order to tear to pieces Hiranyakaspu, sang in His praise as "Ahobala" (Lo! the stupendous strength). Hence this place has come to be known as Ahobalam". The Gods praised Lord Narasimha exclaiming at his strength.

The other version is that because of the great cave, it is named Ahobila. There Garuda worshipped the Lord of Ahobila. Besides Brahma; Lord Sri Rama and Lord Srinivasa, the most popular

deity of Tirumala-Tirupathi, also worshipped Lord Narasimha. The Lord of Ahobila Narasimha is referred to as "*Peria Perumal*" (God of gods) in Srivaishnava tradition. It is stated that when Sri Rama was in the forest, we know from *Seshadharmam* that he prayed to the Lord of Sri Ahobila with *Panchamrta stotra*. In *Archavatara*, Lord Srinivasa had married Padmavathi, only after offering worship to Sri Narasimha of this mountain. It is held that the Shrine of Lord Srinivasa, to the south of Narasimha's temple within the enclosure, lends credence to the view.

The *Sthalapurana* of Ahobilam also gives an account of the nine forms of Narasimha worshipped here. In short, the *Sthalapurana* of the temple, which is said to be *Bramhanda Puranataragata* (part of Brahmanda Purana) with ten chapters, described the greatness of the *Kshetra* in the first chapter. The second chapter of the Purana narrates the performance of the penance of Garuda for the *darshana* of the Lord. The third chapter gives an account of the sacred ponds of the place. The fourth chapter furnishes an account of the Nine temples of Narasimha in his nine forms and performance of the penances by *Bramha*, *Bharadvaja*, *Gobhila* and *Bhargava Rama*. The fifth chapter relates the traditional story of *Jaya* and *Vijaya* and their birth as *Hiranyaksha* and *Hiranyakasipu* respectively and the assurance given by the Lord to the gods for their protection. The sixth chapter describes, at length, the childhood of Prahlada and the atrocities perpetrated against him by his father. The seventh chapter narrates the devotion of Prahlada to the Lord, birth of God Narasimha and the destruction of the demon, *Hiranyakasipu*. The eighth chapter mentions the *Sarabhavatara* of Siva and his destruction by Lord Narasimha. The ninth chapter states explicitly the untiring efforts of Bairava for the river *Bhavanasini* and his becoming *Kshetrapala* of the place. The last chapter clearly states that worship to the idol of the Lord is the only means for attaining salvation to the common people.

## 2. Traditional accounts depicted in Ahobilam Kaifiyat

The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*<sup>1</sup> (28th July, 1810) forming part of Mackenzie collections gives very valuable information regarding the Ahobilam temples. The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat* gives the legendary account substantiating the name of Ahobilam. "In the cosmic expanse and in the fourteen worlds is the earth; on this and in the '*abhinava jambu dweepa*' and to the south of the area of the mount *Meru* and near Sri Sailam, the Southern Varanasi, a part of Karnataka country is to be found the Nallamala mountain range. On one of these mountains, eight *amadas* from *Srisaila Kshetra*, Garuda commenced silent penance to obtain a vision of Lord Narasimha who destroyed *Hiranyakasipu*. The Lord, in His grace, after long years of the penance of Garuda, manifested Himself in the cave of a mountain".

"Ten *Paruvus* to the north-east of the mountain where *Garuda* was doing penance, a vision of His manifestation was then granted to *Garuda*, who after obtaining a sign of the location of the mountain cave, gladly travelled thither and saw the embodiment of the *Satswaroop*."

Mahapurusha, Lord Jwalanarasimha is not easily accessible to common people. Garuda then worshipped the Lord and praised Him that '*Ahobilam is mahabalam*' (Ahobilam is a great sustainer with great strength). The Lord's *Divya mangala vigraha* was worshipped by *Garuda* with several *stotras*. Garuda then considered himself as blessed after a vision of the Lord. This divine place thereafter obtained the deserving name of Ahobilam".

"The mountain on which Garuda performed *tapas* became famous as *Garudachala*. In the days of yore when truth and *dharma* prevailed, great heat was observable near the mountain-cave of Ahobila. According to legend when green grass was put in the cave, it caught fire and smoke emitted. Several great *rishis* lived there for a time. After sometime, with the knowledge that great places would become common *janapadas* in the *Kali* age, they left for the northern lands, covering up the

Narasimha cave with boulders. Traditionally therefore this place is being called the Narasimha Kshetra. There are thus nine forms of Narasimha installed and worshipped.

*Jwala Ahobila Maha Lola |*  
*Kroda Karancha Bhargava |*  
*Yogananda Kshatravata |*  
*Pavaneya Nava Moorthayah ||*

The nine Narasimha sthalas are - 1. *Jwala Narasimha*, 2. *Ahobila Narasimha*, 3. *Malola Narasimha*, 4. *Kroda Narasimha*, 5. *Karanja Narasimha*, 6. *Bhargava Narasimha*, 7. *Yogananda Narasimha*, 8. *Kshatravata Narasimha* and 9. *Pavana or Holy Narasimha*.

The *Jwala Narasimha* is ten *paruvus* "to the north-east of *Garudachalam* hill. To the south-west of this place is *Ahobila Narasimha* in *Garudadri* hill-cave. To the north of this place at a distance of one mile is to be found *Malola Narasimha*. To the south of this place at a distance of one mile is *Kroda Narasimha*. To the north-west of this place at a distance of three *paruvus* is *Karanja Narasimha*. In the direction of Kubera, at a distance of two *paruvus* is *Bhargava Narasimha*. To the west of this place at distance of three *paruvus* is *Yogananda Narasimha*. To the south-west of this place, at a distance of six *paruvus*, is *Kshatravata Narasimha*. To the eastern side of this place at a distance of one *amada* is *Pavana Narasimha*. To the north-east of this *Ahobila* temple at a distance of five *paruvus* is to be found the *Ukkukambam* (steel pillar) on a mountain, the place where Lord manifested Himself out of a pillar on *Prahlada's* prayer. This is by tradition the place of *Hiranyakasipu* where *Hiranyakasipu Vadha* took place".

This is the account given in the *Ahobila Kaiyyat* regarding the *Narasimha Kshetra* of *Ahobilam*.

### 3. Temple and early traditional legends

There is a tradition that a few kings and preachers visited this shrine. But there is no authentic evidence in support of their visit to the temple. However, the tradition furnishes some information about this temple, which may be taken into account with utmost care and caution.

1. It is stated in the *Guruparampara*<sup>6</sup> that the great preacher and philosopher of *Srivaishnavism*, *Ramanuja* visited this temple. (11th Cent. A.D.) 2. Besides this the great king, *Vikramaditya* (1076-1106 A.D.) of the Western Chalukyas, is said to have worshipped the "main deity" of the temple.<sup>7</sup> 3. According to the *Srivaishnava* tradition, *Vendanta Desika* (1268- 1379 A.D.), while on his religious tour, visited *Ahobilam*. 4. The *Ahobilam Kaiyyat* clearly states that *Prataparudra* (1296-1322 A.D.) probably the last king of the *Kakatiyas*, gave a gift of the idols and renovated the mandapas of the temple and made arrangements for conducting the processions of the temple of *Ahobilam*.<sup>8</sup> There is another interesting and popular tradition about *Prataparudra's* veneration to god *Ahobaleswara*.<sup>9</sup> The tradition says that 'on his return from *Srisailam*, *Prataparudra* halted at a place called *Rudravaram*, which is 20kms away from *Ahobilam*. The king wanted to cast a gold *Siva-linga*, for conducting his daily pujas. But, whatever the cast was, the final figure that emerged was the figure of *Narasimha*. The king was perturbed and during his meditation, the Lord appeared before him and asked him to worship the Lord of Upper *Ahobilam*. Another tradition says that "the king worshipped that deity and gave that small golden *vighraha* (idol) in charity to the saint of *Ahobila math* and became his disciple. In accordance with the instructions given by his *guru*, *Adivan-Satagopa Jiyar*, *Prataparudra* renovated the *Garbhalayam*, endowed several lands for the maintenance of the temple and gave a gift of a number of ornaments to the Lord.<sup>10</sup> It is mentioned that another king of the 14th Cent., *Prolaya Vema Reddy* (1324-1353 A.D.), the founder of the *Reddy Kingdom* of *Kondavidu*, is said to have built

a *Kalyana mandapa* with twenty eight pillars, rich in architecture.<sup>11</sup> According to the tradition, Chaitanya (Gauranga) visited Narasimha at Ahobilam in 1513 A.D.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Chenchu Parinaya in folklore

There are a number of popular legends about Narasimha, which are widely current among the Chenchus, who are closely associated with Ahobilam. The popular legend is that "when Lord Vishnu took on the incarnation of Narasimha, the Golden Lakshmi was born in the Chenchu tribe and both were living very happily. On account of this, the Lord is said to have refused to go back to *Vaikuntam*.<sup>13</sup> The love-making of Lord Narasimha with Chenchita, a tribal woman is famous in many folk songs of the place.<sup>14</sup> The sculptures of Narasimha and Chenchita on the pillars of the temples of Upper and Lower Ahobilam and *Vasantika Parinayam*,<sup>15</sup> a Sanskrit drama, written by *Jiyar*, the seventh pontiff of Ahobila math, describing the marriage of the Lord Narasimha with Chenchita, lend support to the popular legend.

There are several folk songs on the lips of many people of this region. These folk songs are more imaginative than historical and add various episodes to the story of Chenchita. These depict the love episode between Narasimha and Chenchita. A few popular songs are appended at the end of the chapter.

The mythology and legends are more the creations of fertile minds for the satisfaction of the curious interested in the common human desire to know about the antecedents of anything. They also served as the means of enhancing the popularity and glory of the institution concerned. They hardly stand the test of historical scrutiny, though sometimes some legends may have been woven round a grain of fact.

#### 5. Historical Account

##### *A. Nature of sources and the scope of the present account*

In the context of the reconstruction of the history of Ahobilam and its temples, the authentic historical sources like epigraphs are very few. First of all there is no foundation inscription relating to these temples. So it becomes necessary to take recourse to various other sources also, like the legends, but they must be subjected to the scrutiny of the historical eye. Fortunately, connected with the legends of this temple and amenable to verification are a few historical personalities about whom a lot of material is available in other sources.

Thus, in the present section, we aim mainly to have a glimpse of the origin and growth of this temple, by way of assessing the historicity of traditional accounts and reviewing the epigraphical data.

##### *1. The beginning*

It is a matter of utter disappointment that the temple and its surroundings at Ahobilam are absolutely devoid of any inscription of the early period. The earliest epigraphical record now we find here is of the mid-14th Century A.D. in the period of the Reddy monarchs. Obviously one has to believe that some intentional destruction<sup>16</sup> of the old epigraphs and for that matter even of the structures, took place probably in the course of frequent renovation works, as we notice usually in the case of similar religious centres. The greater the religious importance of the place, the more extensive would be the loss of its antiquarian evidence of the structural and epigraphical nature. Only some icons may survive, if the renovator does not venture to strike them out of reverential fear in breaking the idols. As a clear indicator of the loss of all previous records, the copper plate grant of Anavema Reddy datable to 1378



A D issued from Pedda Palakalur, which is 10 kms from Guntur, states that he has constructed flights of steps both to Srisailem and Ahobilam for the benefit of the pilgrims. This clearly indicates, at that time, Ahobilam was a prominent pilgrim centre visited by several pilgrims.

Assessing the extent of influence of Ahobilam on the other parts of the state, helps us to fix the upper limit to the place. An inscription<sup>17</sup> of Chalukya Kirthivarman II, found at Peddapeta, a hamlet of Yadiki, refers to the name of a person as *Vobula*. The word *Vobula* is a colloquial form of Ahobila.

Also, the Tamil saint, Tirumangai Alvar, who lived in the 8th Century A D has composed ten Tamil poems in praise of the God of Ahobilam (See Chapter-I for details).

Another very interesting fact which attests the existence of Narasimha sculpture in this region as early as the 6th Century A D, is Peddamudiam, a place which is situated nineteen kms, north of Ahobilam.

The chief interest attaching to the place lies in the fact that it seems to have been the place of birth of Vishnu-Vardhana, who founded the Chalukyan Empire. It was variously known as Trilochanapura, Brahmana Mudiam and Mudiam. There are two temples dedicated to Narasimha on the outskirts of the village. One temple of Ugra (Vidarana) Narasimha Svami is on the bank of the river Kunderu and the other is devoted to Yogananda Narasimha Svami at a distance of two furlongs to the east of the above temple. It is said that the former is earlier than the latter.

There are four inscriptions which give some information about the temple of Narasimha. It appears that the temple, on the bank of the river, was surrounded by the houses, which are now in ruins. The history of the antiquity of the cult of Narasimha of this place, can be gleaned from a stone plaque, which is found at this place. In it, there is a representation of nine deities, including Narasimha, which is third in order from the left and it belongs to the fifth or sixth centuries A D, at the latest. Sivaramamurti states that this sculpture belongs to the 6th century A D.

"On the slopes of a hill two miles from Piduguralla in the Palnadu taluk of Guntur district, the State department of Archaeology excavated and brought to light a lime-stone plaque bearing representations of the early icons. This plaque was originally installed inside a rectangular bench which was unfortunately lifted for building materials by the neighbouring villagers. No plan of the temple was made by the explorers but a graphic description was made available by the former Director of Archaeology, Sri Abdul Waheed Khan<sup>18</sup> and the plaque<sup>19</sup> having Narasimha figure is dated to 3rd-4th Century A D.

Further, at Ahobilam, we find cave shrines which are either cut in or cut out of boulders or hillocks [See Jwala, Pavana, Ahobila and Bairava mandapas]. We have many evidences<sup>20</sup> to show that the Brahminical cave temples sprang up under the patronage of Vishnukundins, Eastern Chalukyas, Pallavas of Kanchi and Telugu Cholas, in the eastern regions of the Deccan plateau. Historians<sup>21</sup> also opine that the cave temples in this region might have been built as early as in the 2nd or 3rd Century A D.

Thus possibly the Ahobilam caves may be placed between the 3rd and 4th Centuries A D. The exact date within this short span is not easy to establish.

We may also note here that the icon at the Upper Ahobilam appears to be earlier than the Peddamudiam sculptures. (For details see Chapter 6). Also, there are a number of Narasimha icons at Ahobilam, the delineation of the figures, drapery and ornamentation, are typical of the Chalukyan school of art.

## 6. Further development of Ahobilam under different rulers

Traditional accounts also connect the history of the temple with Pratapa Rudra Mahadeva of the Kakatiyas. While there is no epigraphical basis to this traditional account, the presence of the early Kakatiya influence on the pillars of the Mahamandapa of the Upper Ahobilam temple gives support to the traditional account of the connection of the temple with Kakatiyas. The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat* also mentions that one Nandana Chakravarti - in the lineage of Parikshit, Janamejeya, Satanika, Aswamedat, Mahakshemendra, Rajanarendra, Somendra and Uttangabhuja. Uttangabhuja, being the father of Nandana Chakravarti was the king in whose reign, worship of Ahobila Narasimha Svami was being performed regularly. Similarly such worship is mentioned during the time of the Chalukya kings Jagadeka Malla, Bhuvaneka Malla and Tribhuvana Malla rajas. The *Kaifiyat* also mentions that worship was also going on during Ganapati's reign; and thereafter in the reign of Pratapa Rudra Deva Maharaja of Warangal. The reference is obviously to Kakatiya kings of Warangal. The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat* mentions that the *Utsava Vighrahas* of Ahobilasvami were got moulded and made by Pratapa Rudra Mahadeva. It also mentions that local people say that he did some work for the temples and mandapas of Ahobilam.

Ahobilam played an important role in shaping the course and destiny of the Vijayanagara Empire. The Lord of Ahobilam is believed to have saved the Empire on two crucial occasions. Sri Adi Van Satagopa Yatheendra Mahadesikan, the first *Jiyar* of Ahobila Math, made Ahobilam the centre of his activities. He rallied a large number of Maths to popularise the works of Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika. According to the Ahobilam inscriptions of 1584-85, the God of Ahobilam Himself bestowed the robes of a Sanyasin on Van Satagopa *Jiyar*. He declared himself to be the servant of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha of Ahobilam and carried the idol of Malola Narasimha throughout the country for propagating Vaishnavism. He was essentially good and extended lots of privileges to all sections of society in the temples and instituted a class of missionaries for the benefit of the hill tribes. His Holiness had a lot of influence on Devaraya II who ruled the Empire from 1422 to 1446.

The sixth *Jiyar* of the Ahobila Math, Sri Parankusa Yatheendra Mahadesikan, was highly respected by Mukunda Harichandam, an independent sovereign of Orissa. The king was an ally of Rama Raya of Vijayanagara. The *Jiyar* Svami instituted worship of the *Alvars* at *Purushotham* (Puri) where the presiding deity is called *Jagannath*.

Sometime during the 14th century, the Vijayanagara Empire was declining in importance but by the grace of the Lord of Ahobilam, the kingdom was resurrected through Saluva Narasimha. Saluva Mangu, who restored the idol of the temple of Srirangam, had a son called Gautha who was then ruling Chandragiri. Gautha's son Gunda had a wife called Mallambika. They did not have any children for a long time. To get their desire fulfilled, they had observed to a number of vows and finally retired to Ahobilam for performing penance. Pleased with their penance, Lord Narasimha appeared to the king in a dream and blessed him with a son possessing of all virtues and ordained that he should rule the Empire. The king, later, narrated this to his wife. The king was blessed with a son whom they named Narasimha after the God of Ahobilam. In due course, Saluva Narasimha proved to be a very great king of the Vijayanagara Empire and protected the Hindu culture and *dharma* from the onslaughts of the neighbouring Muslim kingdoms. He infused rare vigour into the body politic in rescuing the state from destruction. The birth of Salva Narasimha is considered to be an expression of Divine Will. It is interesting to note that the Divine Will expressed itself at a very crucial time in the history of Vijayanagara.

From the time of Saluva Narasimha onwards, the rulers of Vijayanagara were very much devoted to Lord Narasimha of Ahobilam. One of the rulers of Vijayanagara called himself Ahobila Raja. He built a Gopuram and a Mandapam for the Vittalasvami temple at Hampi. In 1338 A.D. foot steps

to the Upper Ahobilam were built by a king of Vijayanagara. In 1515, Sri Krishnadevaraya, visited Ahobilam. By about this period, the Bahamani Sultans could not tolerate the only Hindu Kingdom flourishing in the South and they joined together in 1565 at Tallikota and defeated the forces of Sadasivaraya of Vijayanagara. The defeat of the forces of the Vijayanagara Empire threatened to put the future generations of the Hindus of the South in dismay. Tirumala, who succeeded Sadasivaraya, re-organised the shattered kingdom and shifted the capital from Vijayanagara to Penukonda. Time and again, the Muslim forces were attacking the territories of the Vijayanagara Empire and harassing the people. Ranga Raya I, who succeeded Tirumala, also was not able to stop this. In the year 1579 A.D., the forces of Ibrahim Ali Kutub Shah, the Sultan of Golkonda, attacked Ahobilam, completely demolished the temple structures and plundered the jewel-studded idols of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha and carried it to Golkonda. This was a sequel to the Tallikota war in which Rama Raya had been killed. The Sultan's son Kuli Kutub Shah too had a hand in the further destruction of the Ahobilam temples. The idols were brought into the presence of the Sultan by one Murahari Rao. When the idol of Narasimha which was made of gold and silver and studded with precious rubies was shown to him along with the other treasures looted at Ahobilam, the Sultan was perplexed and stunned. He could not speak from that moment onwards and that night, he vomitted blood and died. According to some, the exact circumstances in which Ibrahim Kutub Shah, second in succession to Kuli Kutub Shah died, remained mysterious. Farista, a contemporary historian, states that it was rumoured in the Golkonda Fort by the Muslims that the Hindu demons of the Ahobilam temple had killed the Sultan while the Hindus said that the death of the Sultan was brought about by the wrath of Lord Narasimha of Ahobilam. One indisputable fact is that the Sultan died suddenly and as Sherwani has put it, as per the available historical evidence, Ibrahim Kutub Shah had spent seven years of his life in the Vijayanagara Empire, before he became the Sultan and he was very well aware how the Vijayanagar kings were devoted and attached to the God of Ahobilam. He must have seen the magnificent stone idol of Lakshminarasimha at Hampi and must have been bewitched by its captivating beauty and power. Although the Sultan had participated in the Tallikota war, he was not directly responsible for the sacking of Ahobilam. The sacking must have taken place without his sanction. With this background of the Sultan, it is not, therefore, surprising to believe that the sight of the looted holy idol of Lord Narasimha shocked the Sultan and caused haemorrhage in him. This appraisal is perhaps relevant and significant after with this event, the attitude of the subsequent rulers of Golkonda underwent a remarkable change towards the Hindus, the Hindu Temples and the Hindu culture.

The Sultan died on the 5th June, 1580 and the reign of Golkonda was taken over by his son Kuli Kutub Shah. As stated earlier, Kuli Kutub Shah had led the attack on Ahobilam. He had also witnessed the tragic death of his father and must have pondered over the mysterious circumstances of his death. It is no wonder, therefore, that he had to adopt a softer policy towards Hindusim. He gave some of the important posts to the Hindus and this policy was continued by the subsequent rulers of the dynasty. In fact, the last Sultan of Golkonda, namely, Abul Hassan Tanisha, extended royal patronate to the temple of Lord Rama at Bhadrachalam. This policy, however, provoked the wrath of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb.

It may be further interesting to note that even after Kuli Kutub Shah took over the reign for a period of five years, *poojas* were not performed in the temples of Ahobilam. Vijayanagara, which was a mighty Empire earlier, was then declining. As history would reveal it, we find a strange pattern emerging at that juncture. Once again it was Ahobilam which gave strength to the fallen Empire. His Holiness Sri Van Satagopa Sri Satagopa Yatheendra Mahadesikan, the seventh *Jiyar* of Ahobila Mutt, visited the court of Ranga Raya of Vijayanagara and requested him to restore the original glory of Ahobilam. Ranga Raya pleaded his helplessness in view of the powerful position held by the Sultan of Golkonda. But the *Jiyar's* words were quite purposive and persuasive. He reminded the king of the

age-old connections of the Vijayanagara dynasty with the Ahobilam temple. The temple's financial position was in a bad shape as it had lost its lands to the enemies. The *Jiyar*, therefore, pointed out that it was the duty of the king to restore these lands to the temple. The *Jiyar* wanted him to give up the policy of appeasement and drive out the aggressors just as his illustrious predecessors like Saluva Narasimha had done. As a result of this, Ranga Raya was very much inspired and he offered himself to lead an army into the then Ahobilam district and drive out the enemy. The High Priest said that there was no necessity for his direct intervention. It was enough if he entrusted it to his subordinates Kondaraju Venkataraju and Kondaraju Tirumala Raju. The God of Ahobilam appeared to the *Jiyar* in a dream and mentioned that these two warriors were the fittest persons for the purpose. The king acquiesced in Divine will and he presented the two chiefs with jewels and titles and asked them to march against the enemy.

Sri Van Satagopa *Jiyar* led these military leaders of the Vijayanagara Empire along with their troops and directed them how to attack the enemies and also gave instructions regarding the field placements. The Golkonda forces were routed by the forces of Vijayanagara Empire at Ahobilam and the temple area was cleared of the enemies. It was said at that time that the army of Kuli Kutub Shah was captured. An inscription at the Ahobilam temple dated 1584 A.D.<sup>22</sup> bears testimony to this event.

An account of the war described already would reveal the great historic role played by Ahobilam in resurrecting Hinduism and in the maintenance of the glory of the Vijayanagara Empire.

## 7. Munro and Ahobilam

There is also a mention that the English Collector (actually a Scotsman) Col. Munro arranged for an annual payment of 100 varahas from Rudravaram village in the East India Company Taluq to be paid to Ahobilam temple.

Alafa Khan, son of Munawar Khan, it is said was appropriating the Hundi collections and the kanukas offered to the Lord both at the Upper Ahobilam and the Lower Ahobilam. The *Kaifiyat* also mentions that there was no one (in 1810 A.D.) to support the temples, and that only the *Garbhagudi* and *Prakaram* of the temple were in good condition whereas the mandapas and gopuras were in ruins. The *Kaifiyat* also mentions that Sri Parankusa Sriman Satagopa Jiyangar of Ahobila Math who was the then Guru of the Pitham was staying at Kumbakonam and that *Pancharatra* pujas were being performed in Ahobilam then. The absence of the Jiyangar in Ahobilam is also mentioned. In 1810, the Upper Ahobilam temple had one *pujari* and two *sudras*, and these were staying there on festival days only. There were *pujari* brahmin houses and ten huts of *sudras* in the Lower Ahobilam. Worship was being offered to Sri Narasimhasvami in the Upper Ahobilam and also for the Chinna Ahobila Narasimhasvami. The festivals for the Svami at both the places were being performed from the 15th day of *Suddha Phalguna* month upto the 12th day of *Bahula* fortnight.

The Ahobilam temple continues to be under the *Jiyars* of the Ahobila Math even to-date. The Endowments' Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh has not yet taken over the temple. In the year 1963, a Renovation Committee of several members was formed with Dr.N. Sanjeeva Reddy as its Chairman. Renovation work was then started. The Tirumala-Tirupathi Devasthanams also released funds for constructing a choultry at Ahobilam. Several works were then taken up for the renovation of the temple. The Upper Ahobilam Rajagopura Vimanam had Maha Samprokshanam, after the renovation on Friday, the 20th June, 1978. However, there is need for more renovation work, better transport, lodging and boarding facilities to be provided by the Endowments Department and the Temple authorities.

The works taken up and completed by the Renovation committee so far are :

#### **A. Lower Ahobilam**

- (i) Debris removal around the temple.
- (ii) Renovation of three *Prakaram* walls in the main temple.
- (iii) Cut stone flooring inside the main temple.
- (iv) Black topping of the Main Street (*sannidhi* Street) from Allagadda Road to *Mondi Gopuram*.
- (v) Cut stone flooring around *Dhvajasthambham* area in front of *Rajagopuram*.
- (vi) Renovation of the *Vimana* of Sri Venkateswara Svami.
- (vii) Renovation of Sri Adivan Satakopa Svami *Sannidhi*.
- (viii) Renovation of "*Putta Bangam*" - *Mandapas*.
- (ix) Renovation of the *Ranga Mandapas* flooring (with 5 line dressing)

#### **B. Upper Ahobilam**

- (i) Renovation of the *Koluvu Mandapa* along with the provision of *Vimana*.
- (ii) Renovation of the flight of steps with the parapet wall.
- (iii) Concrete road from the *Koluvu Mandapa* to the *Rajagopura*.
- (iv) Renovation of flooring inside the temple with cut stones.
- (v) Renovation of the Western and the Eastern *Rajagopurams*.
- (vi) Renovation of *Sri Svami Vari Vimana*.
- (vii) Construction of *Sri Ammavari Shrine* with a new *Vimana*.
- (viii) Renovation of the *Kalyana Mandapa*.
- (ix) Renovation of *Garuthman*.
- (x) Providing all the main *mandapas* with ornamental grills.
- (xi) Renovation of the *Gadwal Mandapas*.
- (xii) Retaining wall from the Western *Rajagopuram* to the *Koluvu Mandapa* in the West on the Northern side of the concrete Road.
- (xiii) Renovation of the Upper Ahobilam *Sannidhi Pushkarani* near *Bhairava gundam* and its surrounding *mandapas* are under execution.

#### **C. Other works executed**

- (xiv) At a cost of Rs. Fifty-six thousands the *Bhargava Temple* and the steps leading to the temple were renovated by Sri N.D. Bangur, Calcutta.
- (xv) Sri Raghava Reddy, Proddatur provided two grill doors to Sri Chathravata Svami.
- (xvi) Renovation of the temple kitchen at the Upper Ahobilam. (xvii) Renovation of temple kitchen at the Lower Ahobilam.
- (xviii) Weather proof course at the Upper Ahobilam.
- (xix) Water supply scheme at the Lower Ahobilam by providing Jet pump and over-head tank. This is wholly donated by Sri Sanda Venugopal of U.S.A. S/O Sri Sanda Subba Rayudu, P.A. to Collector, Cuddapah (retd.,).

## FOLK SONGS

1. నీలావర్ణము లెయవో నిజమూర్తి లెయవో  
నిజదాసులొద్దాడు నిదురా పాలించు  
మేలుకో ఓ ఓబులేసా  
పాలావర్ణము లెయవో - పరమాత్మ లెయవో  
పరదాసులొద్దినాడు - పరకసాలించూ      "మేలుకో"  
నందికొండల నుంచీ - పెన్నెటి గంగా  
ఉదిరిపించులతోనే - ఉదకాలు తెచ్చే      "మేలుకో"  
నీగాలి గోపాలు - నీరెండలెగాసె  
దేపాలగోపాము - పాలెండలెగాసె      "మేలుకో"  
తిరుపతి తిమ్మపు - తిరుమాల అంపే  
గోయిందరాజులు - గొడుగంపినదే      "మేలుకో"  
కదిరీ నరసంహులు - కమ్మూరి అంపే  
గడికోన అంజనేలు - గంధోడి అంపే      "మేలుకో"  
పెన్నోటలము నుండి - పెన్నా బలేసుడు  
పెనుమాల అంపెను - పరగ వేగమే      "మేలుకో"  
సెంచు మాలచ్చిమి - సీరిగంధ మిచ్చూ  
అదిమాలచ్చిమి - అరతులిచ్చూ      "మేలుకో"
  2. మానురో కొండాల రెడ్డి మామిడి పూవంటి దేహం  
నాయముంటే నవేసుకోరాదా కొండాలరెడ్డి  
సాయమివరీ పాలు తేతురా      "మానురో"  
ఇంతలింతలు సేరగట్టి - ఈతసేళ్ల రయిక తొడిగి  
పొద్దుమైన సొద సేలోని కొండాలరెడ్డి  
దోసనీయకు మోసుబోతిరా      "మానురో"  
ఓబులేసుని కోనలోన వంగి గడ్డి కోయబోతే  
వగలమూరి ఓబులేకుడే కొండాలరెడ్డి  
వంగదోసర మంగ పొదలోకి      "మానురో"
  3. నరసంహ : పెళ్ళాడు పెళ్ళాడు సెంచోలెపల్ల  
ఓబుళము పోదమే ఓ భామా  
చెంచులక్ష్మి : అరెరె నల్లంగ ఉండావు      ఓబుళో  
నీకు నామాలు గలవయ్య      ..  
అయ్యనల్లంగ వుండావు      ..  
నీకు నామాలు గలవయ్య      ..



	నిన్ను జూచేనాకు ఓబుళో అబ్బ వాసనా వచ్చాది నాసామి	
	అబ్బ యూడుగాదూ పోర అరెజోడుగాదుపోర	ఓబుళో ..
	అమ్మ మూతెల్ల నరిసింది నువ్వుముసిలోని గుండావు	.. ..
	నాసావసగాళ్లంత ఓబుళూ నన్ను ఎగతాళి చేయరో ఓసామి	
నరసింహ	భామ అవతార పురుషుడ్ని నా అవతారమే చూడు	ఓ భామ ..
	అవతార పురుషుడ్ని సెంచోల్ల పిల్లా యాదినారాయుడే ఓ భామ	
	ఒడ్డికలా పెళ్లారు నీకు వైకుంఠమమరునే	ఓ భామా ..
	కూడికతో పెండ్లారు కొడుకన్న పుడతాడే	.. ..
	అరెరె ఉక్కు స్తంభము కాడ ఉయ్యాల గడదామె	.. ..
చెంచులక్ష్మి	: అరెరె పెళ్లి పెళ్లంతావు నన్నుబో బాధపెడతావు	ఓబుళో ..
	బోయింప బెడతావు అడదాని ముగమూను	.. ..
	నువ్వు సూసింటివా లేదా	..
నరసింహ	అదిలచ్చిమి దేవి పెళ్ళాడి ఉంటిని	ఓ భామ ..
	భామ అదిలచ్చిమిదేవి వనమెల్లి పోయినాది	.. ..
	అలివుంటే నాకు సెంచోల్లపిల్లా అడగనూ వచ్చునా ఓ భామా	
చెంచులక్ష్మి	: అయ్య పెళ్లి పెళ్లంతావు నా పైటల్లు యిడవయ్య	ఓబుళో ..
	నామాలు గలవయ్య నువ్వు దాసరిగుండావు	.. ..
నరసింహ	: దాసరి అనబాకు నీకు దండములు చేసేను	ఓ భామ ..

అవతార పురుషుడే సంచోల్లపిల్ల  
యాదినారాయుడై ఓ భామ

చెంచులక్ష్మి

అయ్య బానకడుపూవార  
అబ్బ దొప్పి సెవుల వార  
అరెరి నిన్ను చూచే నాక  
అబ్బ వాసనా వచ్చాది  
నాసా వాసగాళ్లంత ఓబుళో  
అబ్బ ఎగతాళి జేయరే ఓబుళో

ఓబుళో

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నరసింహ

నీసావాస గాళ్లంతా  
ఈడు బాగుందాది  
జోడుబాగుందాది  
యిద్దరికి అయితేను  
బోగ పెండ్లయిన జేతురే

ఓ భామ

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చెంచులక్ష్మి

: అబ్బ పెళ్ళి పెళ్లంతావు  
నీకు పామన్న కరవరా  
నువు బోయే దారిలోన  
నాగుపామన్న కరవదా

ఓబుళో

..

..

..

నరసింహ

భామ పాము పామంటావు  
భామ పామెక్కడున్నాది  
భామ నాగుపాముల బట్టి  
నీకు నడుమూకు దాబులా  
భామ పసిరిక పాములే  
నీకు సేతల్ల గాజులే

ఓ భామా

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జనం

: అయ్య సూర్య చంద్రులనింక  
అయ్య అనలే వెట్టిండు  
అయ్య భూదేవినింక  
భలే సాక్ష్యంబు వెట్టిండు  
అయ్య తంగెదాకులు రెండు  
భలే తాళులెజేసిండు  
బందెరాకులు రెండు  
భలే భాస్కరులు చేసిండు  
బందెరాకుల తోన ఓబుళో  
బాసికాలు కట్టేనే ఓబుళో

ఓబుళో

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## 1. A Description Of The Temple Complex

The Ugra-Narasimha temple at the Upper Ahobilam and the Prahladavarada Narasimha temple at the Lower Ahobilam are the most important and magnificent structures in the whole of Ahobilam<sup>1</sup>.

### A. Ugra-Narasimha temple at Upper Ahobilam

The Upper Ahobilam temple is situated at a distance of 8 kms from the Lower Ahobilam temple. The road leading to Upper Ahobilam winds its way through the reserve forests and the Forest Department has laid an excellent road<sup>2</sup> upto the temple. The mountains on both the sides tower up straight high into the sky and between them stretches the narrow valley with luxuriant verdure of trees. Along one edge of this valley, like a glossy serpent carelessly creeping on, glides the sacred *Bhavanasini* with its holy crystal water hissing against the boulders. As we pass along this valley, a modest gateway welcomes us. Entering it, we find ourselves in an enclosure with *mandapas* all around. Probably, this might have housed the Ahobilam math once. Further proceeding on keeping to the mountain side, we meet the *Sannidhikoneru*. From the *Koneru* as we proceed still further, we find a group of scattered *Mandapas* and *Bairavagundam*. Entering the main gate (*Rajagopuram*), we come to the main complex of the Ugra Narasimha temple.

### B. General Layout of the temple

The temple proper is rectangular in plan (measuring 201' x 101'9") and faces east, but whereas the *Garbhagriha* faces north, because of the orientation and situation of the natural cave. In general, it consists of a main control unit with a *garbhagriha* (in this case a natural cave), on its either side studded with small shrines, and preceded by a *mahamandapa* and a pillared *mukhamandapa*, all axially aligned east-west, except *garbhagriha*. In the same axial line, abutting the *mukhamandapa* is a *dhvajastambha* (21'10") with a *balipitha* (6'7") in its front. This unit is located in a large open area, with cloistered *mandapas* on all the sides, and the eastern gateway leads to the Malola and Jwala shrines.

### C. The Main Unit

#### 1. Garbhagriha

This forms the original cave of the temple. This is a natural cave, with no definite shape, the Western Wall of the cave is the continuation of the mountain *Garudadri*, measuring 9'7" x 16' x 5'9"

and with north - south orientation. The main deity is placed, on a raised platform, approximately 4' high and the idol (2' high) faces east.

The door frame of the *garbhagriha* is very crude and short. There appear no decorative details, except the *vaishnava Dvarapalakas* at the base of the door jambs. On either side of the door jamb is a life size *dvarapalaka* figure measuring 8'6", now kept standing against the front wall of the *Garbhagriha*, but these were not part of the original cave. They might have been added during the later periods.

In its external elevation, the *garbhagriha* is a plain cave on the eastern and the western sides. The southern side is not at all visible and in the northern side, the only visible wall has an *adhistana* supporting a plain *bhitti*. The concrete roof over the cave is a recent construction. The *garbhagriha* is crowned by a tower.

The *Adhistana* consists of a series of functional mouldings. *Upana*, the lowermost moulding, projects beyond the vertical norm and is surmounted by the *Jagati*. Over this is the *Kumba*, which is three-faceted (*tripatta-kumuda*). Next is the *Kantha*, a recessed moulding, oblong in elevation, and connecting the other mouldings above. The *Pattika*, which is above the *Kantha* is thick. The topmost members of the plinth is *Vedi* (also called *Prati*).

The *Pranala* meant to drain out water from the *garbhagriha* is visible on the western side at the *vedi* level. This projects out of the wall for about 1'8" and has a lion's face at the end.

Above the roof, the *tritala sikhara* part of the *vimana* superstructure is visible. This *sikhara*, however, is of brick and cement and is obviously of recent times.

## ii. Side-Shrines

To the left of the Ahobila-Narasimha cave (to the east) is a smaller cave (4'8" high), in which a few idols are kept. They are the idols of Shiva linga, Ganesh, Sri Devi and Bhudevi. The most significant of all the assemblage of the idols is the idol of Lakshmi Narasimha tearing the demon Hiranyakasipu.

There is a small rectangular shrine measuring 6'x6'10", for the goddess, Chenchulakshmi. The shrine is to the right of the main shrine, situated at the Western corner of the main unit.

It is worth noting that there is another small shrine beside the cave of Ahobila Narasimha. Actually one has to climb up a height of 6' to the west of the main cave to enter this small shrine, where the Sudarshana Yantra is installed. The shrine of Chenchulakshmi is further to the west of the Sudarshana yantra.

According to the earlier plan, (old plan of 1916) we find another room (now not to be seen), by the side of the goddess's shrine. It appears that a huge number of copperplate records were placed in this room along with the temple jewels and ornaments.

## iii. Mahamandapa

Axially in front of the *Garbhagriha* is a sixteen pillared Mahamandapa. The Mahamandapa is to the north of the main shrine and has sixteen pillars. On the floor space, in the centre of the Mahamandapa, is a circular piece of black granite, called *Brahmagundam*<sup>1</sup>. There are three entrances to the mahamandapa. The eastern entry is regularly used and the other two are permanently closed. In external elevation, the Mahamandapa has an *adhistana* supporting a *bhitti*. The *kapota*, *prastara* and *hara* portions are now embedded in a concrete roof recently constructed.

The *Adhistana* consists of a series of functional mouldings, *upana*, *jagati*, *patta*, *urdhva padma*, *kantha*, *kampa*, *tripatikumuda* and another broad *patta* with rectangular blocks having different

sculptural motifs. The wall is decorated with niches and pilasters. There is a *bhadra-koshta* in the centre with *Karnastambha* at each end and two *kudyastambhas* on either side of the *bhadra-koshta*. The *kudyastambhas* and *karnastambhas* are of the *bhadra-koshta* type. They rise straight from the *vedi* without having any distinct base. The shaft is plain and rectangular in cross-section but their upper half is well carved. The first member above the shaft is a rectangular panel (*malasthana*) mostly decorated with pearl strands hanging down. Above this member are the *Lasuna tadī Kumba*, *Phalaka* and *Potikas*. The *lasuna* portion is plain. The cushion-shaped capitals (*Kumba*) are roughly square. The *Padma* and *Phalaka* are also rectangular. The brackets are three-pronged with grooved frontal sides (*taranga-potika*).

The *bhadra koshtas* are rectangular niches flanked by a pilaster on either side. These pilasters are also of the same type as the *Kudyastambhas* but are shorter and carry a lintel, above which on the wall is a beautiful *ek-tala-Vimana*, with a *stupi* carved in Dravidian style. In the Central apex a *grasa head* (*Kirtimukha*) is carved.

The northern and eastern entrances of the *Mahamandapa* are flanked by *Vaishnava dvarapalakas*, one each on either side. The *dvarapalakas* on the eastern side are 7' 10" high and the pedestal measures 3' 5" x 2' x 11". The *dvarapalaka* on the northern side is a little taller measuring 8' 6" and the base measures 3' x 2' 6" x 2' 5".

At the entrance of the *Mahamandapa* in the eastern side, is a high platform, where an agent sits and collects tolls from the pilgrims. Hence, the platform is named *Undil platform*.

On all the three sides of the *Mahamandapa*, there is an open pillared corridor having 36 pillars. But recently this is covered on all the three sides by iron grills.

#### iv. Dhvajastambha and Balipitha

In front of the grilled entrance are a *Dvajastambha* and a *balipitha*. The *dhvajastambha* is made up of wood installed on a small *adhistana* made of solid stone. The *dhvajastambha* (21' 10" high, 5' 3" x 5' 4" base) is a tall pillar with a star-shaped base and circular shaft and the bottom portion is now covered with gold plated brass plates and is decorated with a metal flag at the top. The *balipitha* (5' 4" x 5' 4" x 6' 7") has three divisions viz. a *pitha*, a *padma* and a *karnika*, the lowest being square in shape, the central, octagonal and the topmost, circular. In front of the *Dvajastambha*, is a small *Garuda Shrine*, measuring 5' x 4' 10" x 10' 9".

#### v. Vahana - Mandapa

(New plan) is the site plan of the *Vahana mandapam* of the temple. Though it is called *Vahana mandapam*, now this place is used as a place of rest for officials and important people. At present, the *vahanas* are placed in the grilled pillared corridor of the temple. This *mandapa* is square in shape (33' x 27' 7") having sixteen pillars.

#### vi. Kalyana Mandapa

The open space in front of the *Vahana mandapa* has a flight of steps at one corner and that leads to the *Kalyanamandapa*. The *Mandapa* measures 42' x 31' and has a small platform at one end measuring 42' x 31' and the *mandapa* has 28 pillars in four rows. Special festivals like *Kalyanotsava* etc. are conducted here.

#### vii. Uyyala mandapa

In the site plan is the *Uyyalamandapa* in the upper storey of the temple. It appears that this *mandapa* was used for *Uyyala* festival of the Lord, in olden days. The *mandapa* is square in shape measuring 25' x 25' and has sixteen pillars in four rows.

For example, the cost of rice is stated to be one *gajjana* and 1 1/4 *rukhas* for 7 *tumus* and 3/4 *kunchas*.

Item	Rate		Quantity	
	Ga	Ru	Tumus	Kunchas
Rice	2	1 1/4	7	3/4
Blackgram	2 1/2	5 1/4	6	1/4 pulses

Another inscription of 1563 A.D.<sup>11</sup> which adds land and cash to the temple treasury is looked after by the *jiyar* of Ahobila *matha*. The specifications registered in the inscription are that 600 *varahas* are given by an officer to the temple treasury to purchase some wet land measuring 6 *marthurs* and the location of the land also is specified. In turn, the said chief Vobularaju is stated to have made a gift of the said 6 *marthurs* of land to the temple and agreed to submit the produce at the rate of 5 *puttis* for each *marthur* totalling to 30 *marthurs* of paddy to the temple as gift and this produce will be utilised for the daily offerings to Nammalvar at the rate of 1/4 *tumu* rice and *kotha rukha* per day. It is quite possible that the area of land was reckoned in terms of the quantity of potential produce raised in that extent of land. The total amounts to 4 1/4 *tumus* for *Amruthapadi* for the year and other expenditure 360 *rukha*'s per year. The cook charges 120 *kotha rukhas* and the amount totals upto 480 *kotha rukhas* per year. Another condition is that the offerings are to be made in the name of the said chiefs and *prasadam* is to be utilised for feeding 12 Vaishnavas daily.

Another inscription dated 26th August, 1563 A.D.<sup>12</sup> describes some more assets of the temple. This registers the gift of income from the village Kalutapalli situated in *Korakolasima* amounting to 230 *varahas*. Out of this amount, the *polivutu* offerings would cost 162 *Gajjanas* (*varahas*) and other offerings amount to 68 *varahas*, the total would be 230 *varahas*. Again Vobula Raju made a gift of 1 *putti* of land in Padakandla village which was equivalent to 40 *varahas* and another 2 *puttis* of land in Dornipadu village the income of which would be 40 *varahas* and another 2 *puttis* of land in the village Injedu, the income of which would be 40 *varahas*, and another wet land 4 *marthurs* in the village Bayyapagudur the income of which was 20 *varahas*. The total yield of these four items of land amount to 370 *varahas*. And this amount is to be spent for the offerings to the god during the period of stay of god in the mandapa constructed by the donor in Kamasamudram Narasayya's house. So far, the income and expenditure of the gift and lands and the offerings to the god are broadly stated. There follows a detailed description of certain items which are missing.

Some items extant may be given as follows :

S. No.	Item	Rate		
		Varaha	Rukha	Kanis
1	2 plate rice	1 <i>varaha</i>	1 <i>rukha</i>	-
2	Pepper (1/16 of one measure cost being)	-	-	2 <i>kanis</i>
3	Curd (3 measures cost)	1/4 <i>rukha</i>	-	2 <i>visas</i>
4	400 Betels	1 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
5	400 leaves	1 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
6	Sandal paste	1/4 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
7	Fire wood	-	2 <i>visas</i> of <i>Rukha</i>	-
8	Cook	1/4 <i>rukha</i>	-	-



The streets already mentioned lead to the car-street at its eastern end. The car-street also has a row of *mandapas* on either side and in the centre near this street, there is *Bigala Anjaneya Temple* and the *Lanja Koneru*. In this street, there is the car-platform which enables us to form an idea of the enormous size of the car used in olden days. This street with the central row of *mandapas* has been included in the preserves. Perhaps the car was dragged within this one street. Even now we can find that in many a town in the ceded districts the car is dragged only through a single broad street set apart for this purpose. But the car at Upper Ahobilam should have been stationary.

At right angles to the *Sannidhi Street* described already, runs the long front outer wall of the Lower Ahobilam temple. The four outer walls are as massive as those of a bastion in a hill-fort and the stones used in the construction are massive but not solid enough. Round these four outer walls are the ruins of the *Sannidhi Street*. In one of these streets, we can find some gigantic blocks of stone which were intended as beams for the unfinished *Mandapa*. How those ancients with no machinery to help them lifted those huge beams over the massive pillars is a subject of great curiosity. Perhaps, they must have made use of the principle of inclination and its engineering technique in order to lift heavy pillars on to the top of the Unfinished *Mandapa*. We also find the *Gollamitta Anjaneya temple*.

Entering the main gate of the temple the first thing that strikes our eye is the "*Tower of Victory*". This is a magnificent tall column of monolithic sand stone and is full of architectural carvings on its sides. It stands on a platform on the southern side of the entrance and the sides of the platform contain inscription commemorating the event of Victory of Ranganaya's army over the Mahammadans.

Proceeding a little further, we see the *Sannidhi Pushkarini* on the Southern side. The dilapidated *mandapas* round it, were said to have been formerly used as Vedic Schools.

Just opposite to the *Sannidhi-Koneru* is the *Bhashyakara Sannidhi*. It is a very spacious compound with massive stone-built walls now in ruins. The *Sannidhi* itself is a very fine piece of Dravidian architecture in all its sumptuous details. It was in a completely dilapidated state. In 1914, there was a proposal to rebuild it and it was one of the items mentioned in the printed notice circulated by the *math* during that year. The work of reconstruction was taken up in right earnest. The work of demolition preparatory to the rebuilding work has been ordered and the Ramanuja image was bodily removed to the *Ramulavari - Mandapa* and seated there with strict orders to remain there. So, probably, the above *Sannidhi* had been reconstructed. However, at present, the *Bhashyakara Sannidhi* is in a ruined condition.

From the outer *prakaram*, we enter the next one by a gate without a *gopura* and the gateway is full of architectural beauty. The *prakara* was covered with thick bushes and debris as it obtained in 1914. However, this *prakara* is kept tidy in recent days. There are some *mandapas* in this *prakara* also. One was used as a *Bheri mandapa* and another as a *Taligal mandapa* during the *Navaratri* festivals. The latter *mandapa* does not now exist at all. From this *prakara*, we enter the next one by a gate called the *Kanchu Gumma Toranam* so called from the bronze plates and knobs covering the doors.

## **B. The Main Unit**

### **i. Garbhagriha and Ardha mandapa**

These two form the original cave of the temple. The *garbhagriha* is rectangular in plan and measures 10'2" x 10'4". The outer walls of the *ardhamandapa* are slightly inset from the line of the outer walls of the *garbhagriha* which measures 28' x 10'2" with no circumambulatory path. Inside the *garbhagriha*, the main deity is placed a little behind the exact centre and directly opposite the

front doorway. In the interior, both the *garbhagriha* and the *ardhamandapa* are 10' in height and have flat ceilings. The ceiling of the *garbhagriha* has a central square panel with a concentric circular *padma* motif. The *ardhamandapa* ceiling does not have any decoration. The door frame of the *garbhagriha* has *Kumba* type pilaster on the jambs and some figures at the base and a *Lalatabimba* on the lintel. The figures at the base of the jambs are the Vaishnava *dvarapalakas* and *Lalatabimba* is that of Gajalakshmi. On either side of this doorframe is a life-size *dvarapalaka* figure now kept leaning against the front wall of the *ardhamandapa*, but these, however, were not part of the original planning.

In external elevation the *garbhagriha* and *ardhamandapa* have an *adhistana* supporting a *bhitti*. The *prastara* and *hara* portions are now embedded in a concrete roof recently constructed. The *garbhagriha* is crowned by a tower.

The *Adhistana* consists of a series of functional mouldings. *Upana*, the lowermost moulding, projects beyond the vertical norm and is surmounted by the *Jagati*. This is oblong in shape. Over this is the *kumba*, which is three faceted (*tripatta kumuda*). Next is the *kantiha* a recessed moulding, oblong in elevation, and connecting the other mouldings above. The *patitika* which is above the *kantiha* is thick. The topmost member of the plinth is the *vedi* (also called *prati*).

Immediately above the *adhistana* is the *bhitti* decorated with *karnastambhas* (Corner pilasters), *kudiyastambhas* (wall pilasters) and *devakostas* (niches).

The outerwalls of the *garbhagriha* and *ardhamandapa* contain some superb small reliefs. Incidents from the *Nrisimha Purana* are illustrated on neat little panels. These are set against a background, as it were, of restrained decoration on the wall surface. On the western wall, the surface is divided into three parts by pilasters. There are also *devakoshitas* and *kumbha panjaras*. Between them are three horizontal rows of reliefs.

The *Pranala* meant to drain out water from the *garbhagriha* is visible on the northern side at the *Jagati* level. This projects out of the wall for about 1'6" and has a lion's face at the end.

Above the roof, the *sikhara* part of the *Vimana* super-structure is visible. Though *vimana* is of recent times, it reflects features of the earlier components. The *Vimana* is in two *talas*. The *hara* on the first consists of a *karnakuta*, a *panjara* with an image in it, a *sala*, another *panjara* and another *karnakuta*. On the second *tala*, the scheme is a *sala* flanked by *karnakutas*. There are a number of self-imaginative images. The *stupi* rises from a four-petalled lotus.

## II. Small rooms

The *ardhamandapa* (28'x10'2" with six pillars) is continued by an oblong construction. On the northern side of this *mandapa* are placed bronze images of the temple, on the southern side, there are store rooms.

## III. Mahamandapa

Axially in front of the above *mandapa*, is an eight-pillared square shaped *mahamandapa* (22'8" x 22'8"). On the northern, southern sides of this *mandapa*, at its junction with the preceding unit, there are entrance porches. But, now the southern entrance is permanently closed and northern entrance leads to the *mahamandapa* of the Goddess shrine. The main entrance i.e. the eastern entrance opens out to the *rangamandapa*.

## IV. Amamavara shrine

This is somewhat small and consists of a *garbhagriha* and an *ardhamandapa*, (44'10"x33'6"). Besides, there are also rooms used for different purposes and also for keeping different bronze im-

ages. This is continued by a *mahamandapa*, which is uneven in size. At the north-western corner, Andal Shrine is located. According to the temple plan, (old) Andal Shrine was located in the southern side of the outer *prakara*. No one gives any reliable information about the shifting of the Andal shrine. The *mahamandapa* has 22 pillars which is also unevenly distributed. The northern entrance has a flight of steps, which leads to the first *prakara* of the temple. The eastern side is totally open leading to *rangamandapa*.

#### v. Rangamandapa

This mandapa is the most ornate part in the whole temple. There are 82 pillars distributed in ten rows. Each pillar is a work of extraordinary artistic merit, each ingeniously designed, most intricately carved and richly sculptured with mythological stories, most pleasing to the eye and instructive to the mind. As to their general pattern, most of these can be described as square shafts but some have cubical blocks divided by polygonal filets, but each part of it is minutely carved. Some are incut to display a central core with a number of subsidiary shafts to form its outer body. Some of them show the technique of undercutting. Each one of them is a type by itself and is marked by ingenuity of craftsmanship. They are better enjoyed visually than through any verbal description.

#### vi. The Mahadvara - Gopura

Though the upper part of the tower is modern, the lower part is considerably old. The whole tower is veritably a gorgeous creation. To a great extent, the upper part retains its original components. The outer face and inner face of the lower part have been sculptured exquisitely. The sculptures at the base are not mere architectural forms. They show a harmonious blending of figure along with architectural and decorative elements. Nothing is more remarkable than the manner in which vertical and horizontal lines have been combined on the inner surface of the *Gopura* in order to produce a rich effect. There are nearly seven horizontal rows of reliefs. The bottom contains *sikharas* which look as if they were the *vimanas* submerged. Then, a row of seated *ganas* apparently playing music, with a bold *adhishana* member, in which very small *vimanas* are inset. Then a number of elephants march by, one divided from the other by pilasters.

On the base of the *Gopura* outside, there are three niches each on the right and left sides. The pillars meant to serve as jambs are nearly 22' high and cut in single granitic blocks. These door jambs and the side structures, are adorned with beautiful sculptures, all elegantly carved with a singular precision and a unique proportion. The female figures standing on *makaras* and shown as hanging to the creepers flowing down from above are exquisite sculptures.

#### vii. Dhvajastambha and Balipitha

In front of the *Gopura* a platform extends further. On the extended portion stands a *dhvajastambha* and a *balipitha*. The *dhvajastambha* is a tall pillar with a square base and a circular shaft and is now covered with brass plates, and is decorated with a metal flag at the top. The *balipitha* has three divisions, viz. a *piṭha*, a *padma* and a *karnika*, the lowest division being square in shape, the central one being octagonal and the topmost being circular.

#### viii. Other mandapas and shrines

Beyond the open yard around the central unit are a few subsidiary structures. In all the four corners, we find different shrines.

#### ix. Kitchen

Kitchen is situated in the south eastern corner. This is square in shape measuring 37' x 37'. This is a plain structure.

### x. Kalyana Mandapa

This is situated in the south eastern corner, on a raised platform, measuring 100' x 31'7". It has fifty pillars, each being distinct and elegant. They form four rows of pillars with two rows bearing erect lions standing in the *Yali* posture. The other two rows of pillars are embedded into the stone walls.

### xi. Satagopayathi shrine

In the north-western corner is the shrine of Satagopayathi. This is a small structure having a *Garbhagriha* and an eight-pillared *mandapa* in front. This measures 32'2" x 21'8".

### xii. Ramalayam

In the north-eastern corner is the *Ramalayam*. This is quite a big structure measuring 36'8" x 90' and has 50 pillars distributed in 10 rows. A number of stone icons, which were placed earlier in this shrine, are now shifted and placed in the *Kalyana mandapa*.

### xiii. Mandapas in the second prakara

Beyond the open yard around the second unit is a broad pillared cloister running along the *prakara* wall on the western and the southern sides. This cloister is on a high base and consists of rows of pillars, the last row touching the *prakara* wall, thus providing two long bays running parallel all along the outer-wall on its inner side. These bayed corridors, however, are used as residential places by temple priests, manager and others connected with the temple.

### xiv. Mondl-Gopura

This is the second entrance to the temple. This is an *Unfinished Gopura* and has only a lower part. The upper portion remains incomplete. The lower portion is almost similar to that of the first *gopura* in its delineation.

### xv. Jayastambha and other structures

Right in front of the third entrance is a *Jayastambha*, a *Bhashyakarar sannidhi*, and a weavers' *chattram*. It is clear that the *Jayastambha* was erected to commemorate the victory of Sri Rangaraya over Ibrahim Qutbshahi.<sup>4</sup> There is an inscription displayed on the stone encircling the middle of the base of the *Stamba*<sup>1</sup>. Risking repetition, it is worth noting that the inscription registers the gift of a piece of land in the village Alamur purchased from Van Satagopa *Jiyar* and other officials connected with the management of the temple, for raising a garden with coconut and other trees in favour of God Ahobaleswara by Avubhalraju son of Timmayyadeva - maharaju of *Gargya-gotra*, *Apastamba* - *Sutra* and *Yajus* - *Sakha*. On the northern side is a dilapidated *mandapa*, in which Ramanuja idol was installed and called *Bhashyakarar sannidhi* in the early days. On the top of this shrine, abutting the *prakara* wall, is a newly built weavers' *chattram*.

## 3. Chronology And Development

### A. Chronological Data From Tradition and Epigraphy

#### I. Upper Ahobilam

The Narasimhaswami temples at Ahobilam as they stand now are the result of a continuous architectural activity through centuries from the time of their inception as can be made out from several pieces of evidence.

Traditionally it is believed that Tirumangai Alvar (7th-8th cent.A.D.) has composed songs in praise of the god of Ahobilam(Upper). Also the *Ahobilam Kaifiya* records that the Chalukyan kings (8th century A.D.) worshipped the deity of Ahobilam.

However, it is clear from the epigraphical evidence<sup>4</sup> that the Upper Ahobilam temple was in existence and also popular, earlier to Chalukya Kirthi Varman II (C.8th cent.A.D.).

The next record<sup>7</sup> (Inscription of Andhra Desa, No. 472) of any utility is of one Prolaya Vema's record, (1325-53 A.D.) which registers the construction of flight of steps to the Upper Ahobilam temple. Another inscription<sup>8</sup> (though not found now) refers to the construction of Mahamandapa in the Upper Ahobilam by Harahara II (1377-1404 A.D.).

Stylistically the pillars used in the Mahamandapa, however, is of a significant type and these pillars exhibit a style, which was in vogue in the Kakatiya temples.

From these evidences, we can presume that the cave temple at Upper Ahobilam might have come into existence earlier than 7th- 8th cent A.D. and the other components of the main unit of the temple may have been constructed between 11th-14th cent A.D.

## II. Lower Ahobilam Temple

An inscription of 1515 A.D.<sup>9</sup> states that Krishnadevaraya visited the temple and offered varieties of jewellerys to the god at the Lower Ahobilam.

Saluva Narasimha (1486-1491 A.D.) in his work *Ramabhyudayam* clearly mentions that he was born by the grace of god, Narasimha of Ahobilam. In another place, he calls himself as the disciple of Van-Satagopa Jiyar and as one blessed as *Vira-Narasimha*.

Very interestingly enough, an inscription of 1546 A.D.<sup>10</sup> names the main image of the Lower Ahobilam as Vira-Narasimha.

The *garbhagriha* and the *ardhamandapa* form a compact unified structure, both by way of the mode of construction and style. The *adhistana* and *prastara* of both these are continuous. The decoration of the *bhitti* is also identical on the two. Stylistically the *adhistana* is of the type regularly seen in the early Vijayanagara temples, the order and form of the Upana to *prati* here being almost identical with that seen in the Madhavaraya Svami temple at Gorantla, Ramalingeswara temple and Chintalaraya temple at Tadpatri. So, it appears that this unit of the Narasimhasvami temple, i.e., its *garbhagriha* and the *ardhamandapa* may belong to the early Vijayanagara tradition.

Stylistically, the pillar types found in the Mahamandapa of the temple are similar to the pillars found in the Ramalayam, Kalyana mandapa and Jiyar temple, and these pillars are identical with the pillars found in the Madhavaraya Svami temple at Gorantla, built by Saluva Narasimha (1485-1506 A.D.)

Also, we know clearly that, the early Vijayanagara architectural tradition has expanded in the Rayalaseema area during the Vijayanagara empire from its beginning to the downfall.

We may infer from the above evidences that the main unit of the temple along with the *mahamandapa*, may have been constructed during the time of Saluva Narasimha.

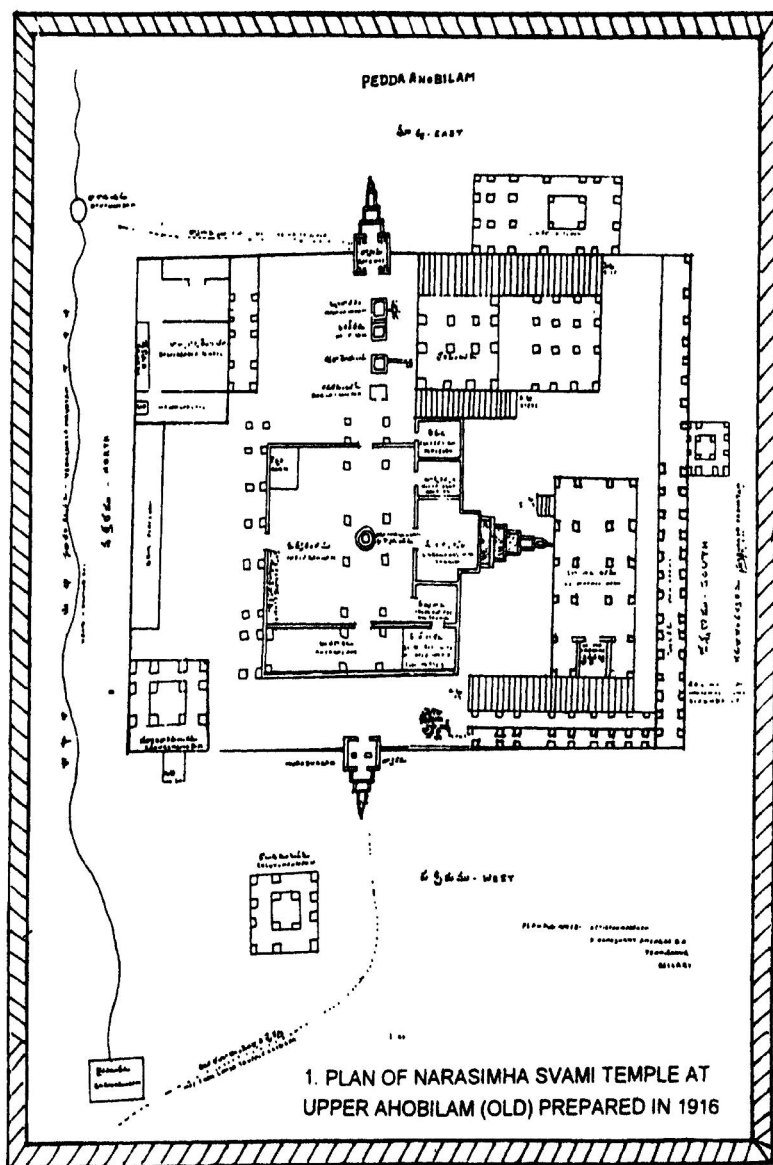
#### **4. TABLE OF CHRONOLOGY**

##### ***A. Upper Ahobilam Temple***

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. The Garbhagriha (main cave)<br>and the adjacent cave        | C 2nd-3rd Cent.A.D.   |
| 2. Chenchulakshmi shrine, Sudarshana<br>Shrine and mahamandapa | C 11th-12th Cent.A.D. |

##### **B. Lower Ahobilam Temple**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Garbhagriha, ardhmandapa,<br>Mahamandapa, Ramalayam,<br>Jiyar's Shrine and main unit<br>of the Kalyana mandapam | Saluva Narasimha's time<br>(1485 - 1506 A.D.) |
| 2. Rangamandapa and the mandapa<br>in front of the Tayar Shrine  | C. 16th Cent.A.D.                             |





front doorway. In the interior, both the *garbhagriha* and the *ardhamandapa* are 10' in height and have flat ceilings. The ceiling of the *garbhagriha* has a central square panel with a concentric circular *padma* motif. The *ardhamandapa* ceiling does not have any decoration. The door frame of the *garbhagriha* has *Kumba* type pilaster on the jambs and some figures at the base and a *Lalatabimba* on the lintel. The figures at the base of the jambs are the Vaishnava *dvarapalakas* and *Lalatabimba* is that of Gajalakshmi. On either side of this doorframe is a life-size *dvarapalaka* figure now kept leaning against the front wall of the *ardhamandapa*, but these, however, were not part of the original planning.

In external elevation the *garbhagriha* and *ardhamandapa* have an *adhistana* supporting a *bhitti*. The *prastara* and *hara* portions are now embedded in a concrete roof recently constructed. The *garbhagriha* is crowned by a tower.

The *Adhistana* consists of a series of functional mouldings. *Upana*, the lowermost moulding, projects beyond the vertical norm and is surmounted by the *Jagati*. This is oblong in shape. Over this is the *kumba*, which is three faceted (*tripatta kumuda*). Next is the *kantha* a recessed moulding, oblong in elevation, and connecting the other mouldings above. The *patika* which is above the *kantha* is thick. The topmost member of the plinth is the *vedi* (also called *prati*).

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#### II. Small rooms

The *ardhamandapa* (28'x10'.2" with six pillars) is continued by an oblong construction. On the northern side of this *mandapa* are placed bronze images of the temple, on the southern side, there are store rooms.

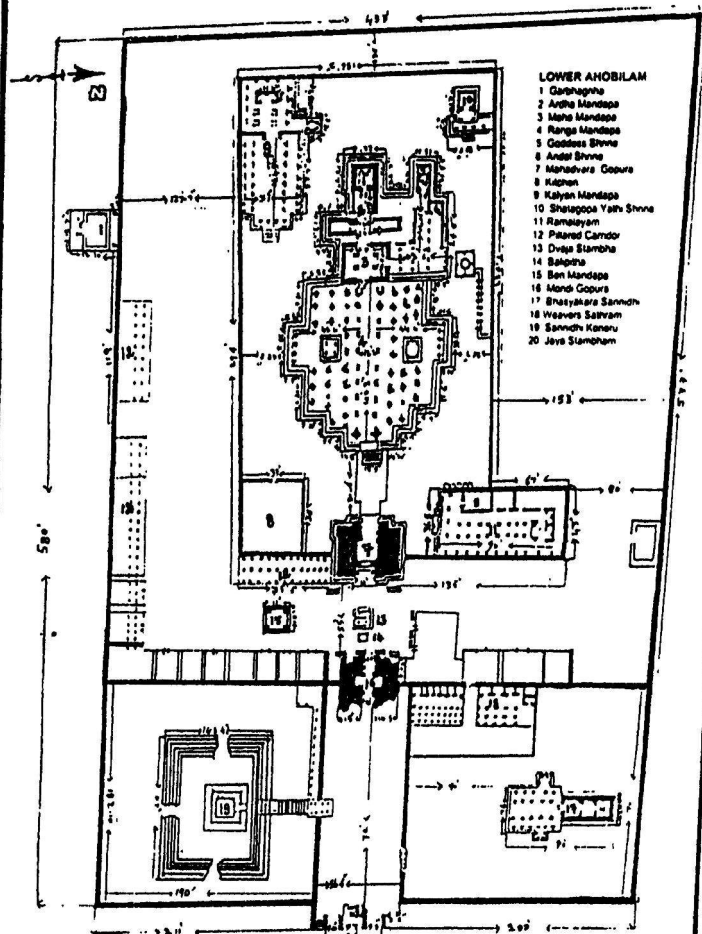
#### III. Mahamandapa

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#### IV. Amamavara shrine

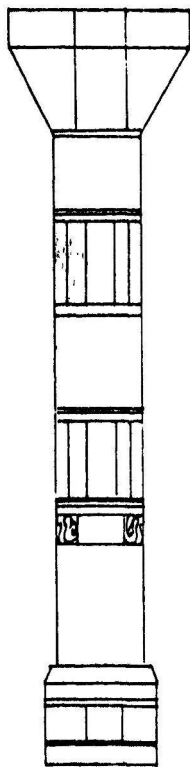
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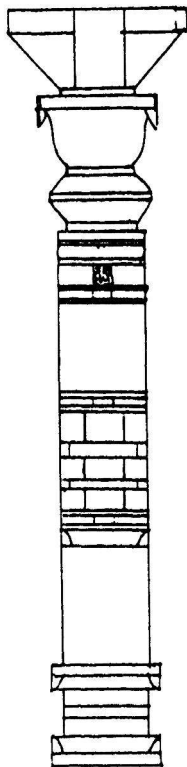


**PLAN OF  
LAKSHMI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE  
AT LOWER AHOILAM**

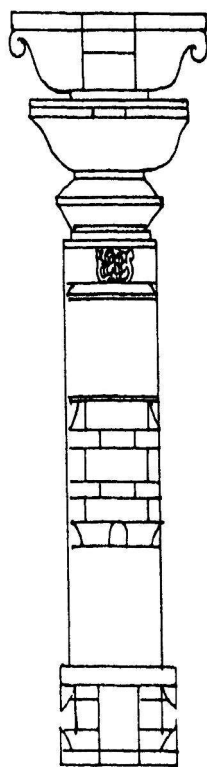
# TYPES OF PILLARS USED IN THE NARASIMHA SVAMI TEMPLES UPPER AHOBILAM



1

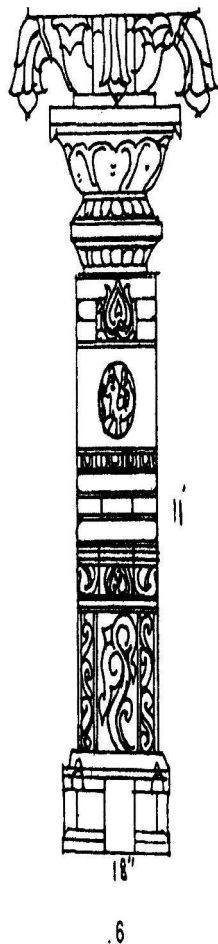
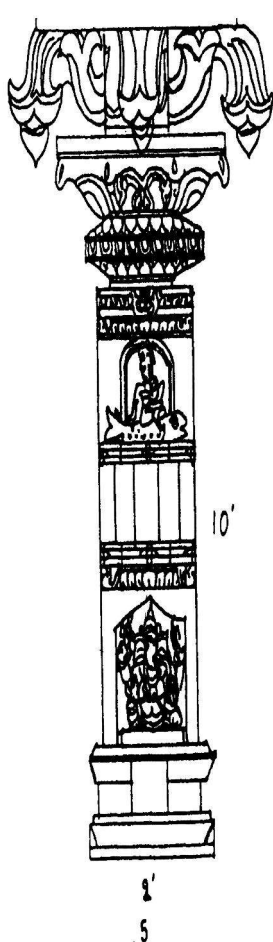
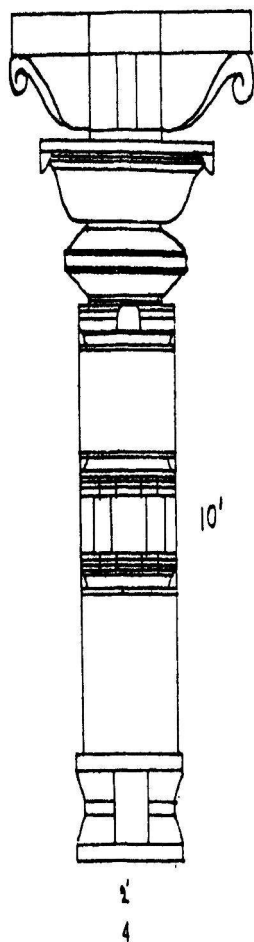


2



3

- 1 A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA
2. A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA
3. A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA

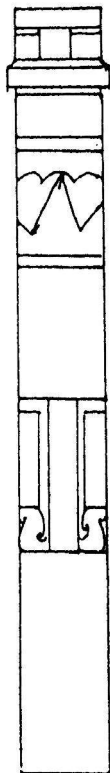
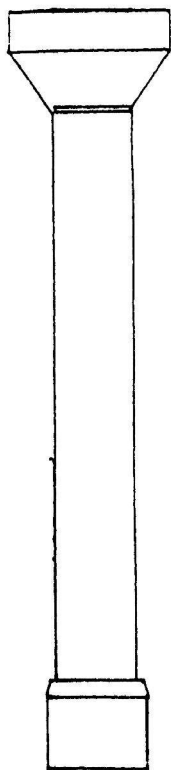


4. A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA

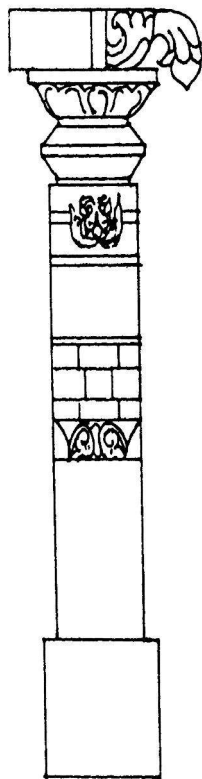
5. A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA, PILLARED CORRIDOR (EASTERN SIDE)

6. A PILLAR IN THE MAHA MANDAPA, PILLARED CORRIDOR (EASTERN SIDE)

TYPES OF PILLARS USED IN THE NARASIMHA SVAMI TEMPLE  
LOWER AHOBILAM



2

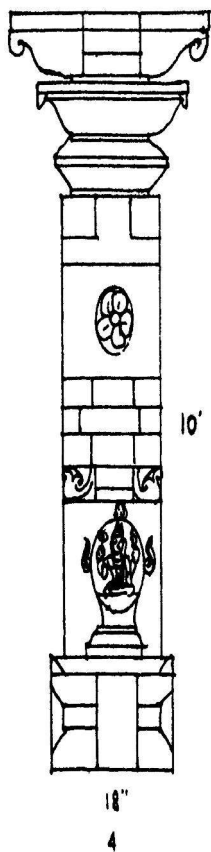


3

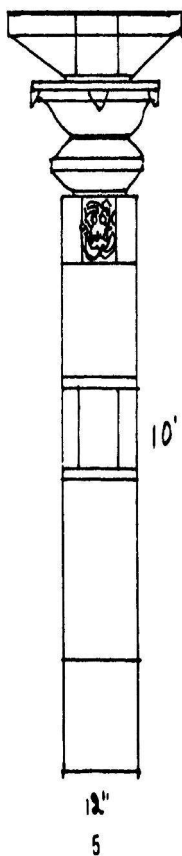
1 A PILLAR IN THE RAMALAYAM

2 A PILLAR IN THE ARDHAMANDAPA (INCOMPLETE)

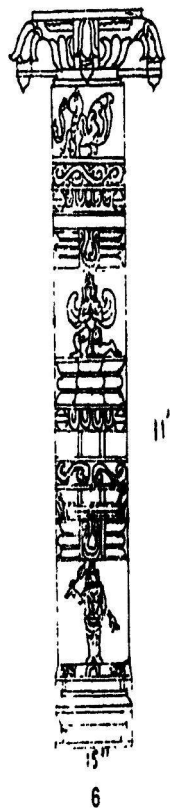
3 A PILLAR IN THE ARDHAMANDAPA (INCOMPLETE)



4 A PILLAR IN THE ARDHAMANDAPA (TAYAR SHRINE)

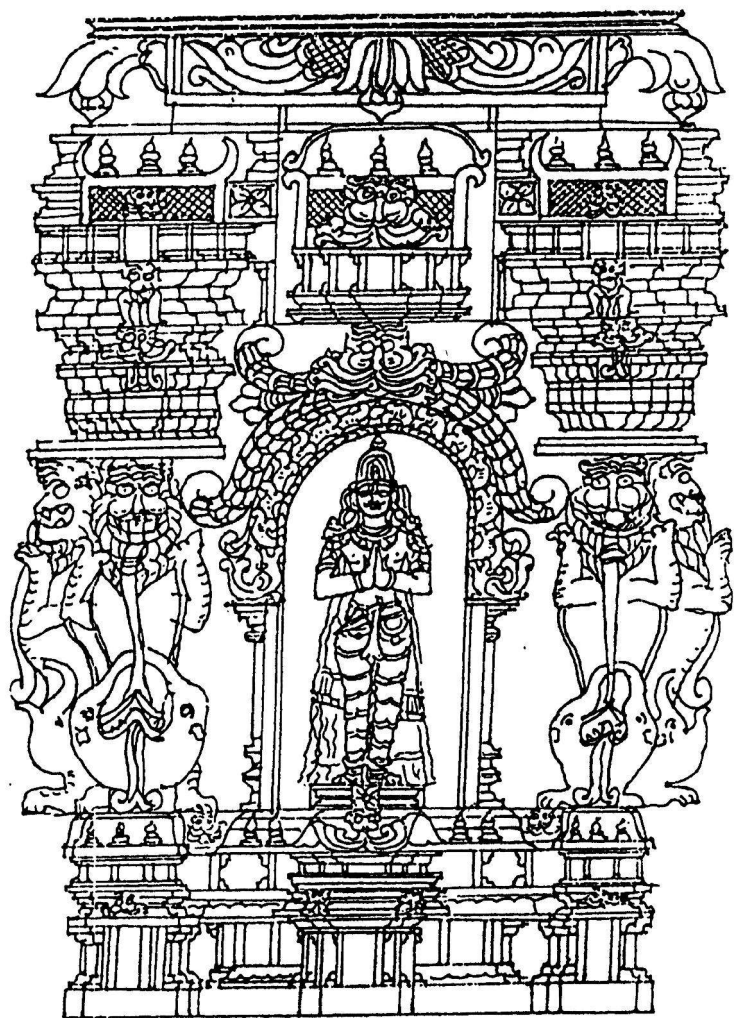


5 A PILLAR IN THE MAHAMANDAPA (NARASIMHA SHRINE)



6 A PILLAR IN THE MAHAMANDAPA (TAYAR SHRINE)



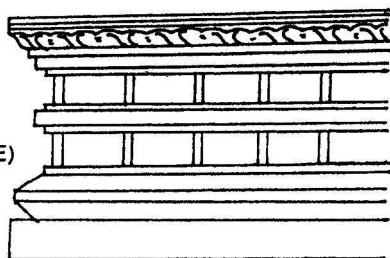


7 A PILLAR IN THE RANGAMANDAPA

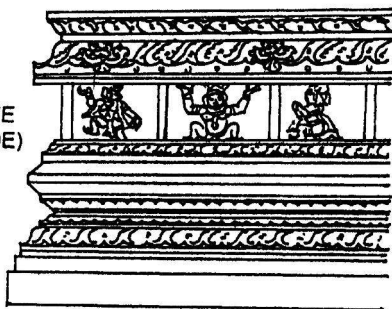
LOWER AHOBILAM

## TYPES OF ADHISTANAS USED IN THE UPPER AHOBILAM

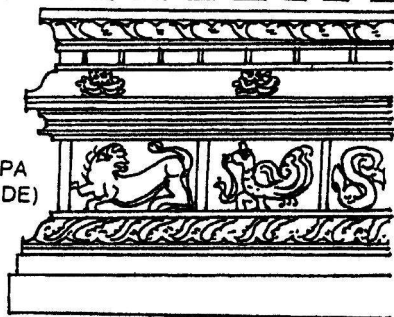
GARBHAGRIHA  
(NORTHERN SIDE)



ALWAR SHRINE  
(WESTERN SIDE)

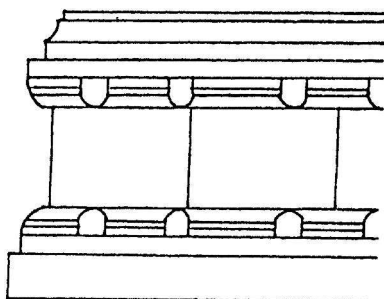


MAHAMANDAPA  
(NORTHERN SIDE)

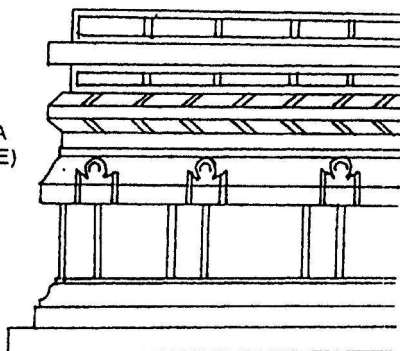


# TYPES OF ADHISTANAS USED IN THE LOWER AHOBILAM

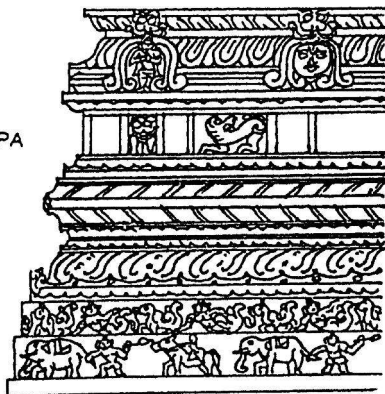
GARBHAGRIHA  
(WESTERN SIDE)



MAHAMANDAPA  
(SOUTHERN SIDE)



RANGAMANDAPA



## SCULPTURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

The temple possesses a number of stone and metal images representative of various stylistic traditions and *pancharatra* iconographic forms. This being a Srivaishnava temple, there is preponderance of the Vaishnava images. Among them the images of Vishnu and his various *avatars* form a major percentage. Strictly speaking, according to the Srivaishnava theology, the Lord is the only one. Yet, because of his inner dynamic vitality and creative activity of cosmic proportions, He can be comprehended by men in his different modes, diverse appearances, various forms and unlimited energies. Out of His infinite mercy, He chooses to take forms and shapes, to assume appearances, and to undertake universal welfare activities etc. They include the *vyuha*, *avatara*, *murti* and *Sakti* modes of revelation as well as the other shapes and forms. Thus there are ten *avatars* attributed to Vishnu in the Hindu pantheon of deities.

Vishnu is unique as the only one among the Hindu deities to be credited with *avatars*. He is said to have assumed several forms in his role as protector. This is said to have been explained by the recurrent *puranic* motif of the *daivarupam* in order to resolve the recurring conflict between the gods and the demons.<sup>1</sup> Huntington would consider the *avatara theory* to have conformed to an evolutionary pattern. He tries to show that as the first three *avatars* are concerned with rescuing something from the waters, the resultant forms have approximately been fish-man, tortoise-vedas or knowledge, and boar-earth. Thereafter, the emergence of Narasimha, the hybrid form, half-man and half-beast, is said to be symbolic of nascent humanity while *vamana* is physically undeveloped, a dwarf, yet he is said to possess within himself the consciousness of divine power as he takes possession of the world. Parasurama represents the full potential of human physical strength directed for a single purpose by the power of will. The *Ramavatara* symbolises moral strength and represents the human ideal. Judged by every human canon of ethical conduct, the superiority of moral strength over physical powers is exemplified by the episode of Rama meeting Parasurama resulting in the retirement of the latter. The advent of Krishna (along with Balarama) does not make Rama's position less important, for morality is always presupposed in the teachings of Krishna.<sup>2</sup> As Kalki is yet to appear, it is said to be difficult to fix him in this scheme, but as his colour is white, it may represent a symbol of purity and also the fullness or plenitude.<sup>3</sup>

The above pattern of evolution is purely interpretational and is neither historical nor chronological in its association with Vishnu. For, the originators of the *avatara* theory clearly did not resort to an evolutionary pattern for the incarnation. The series of *avataras* did not assume the same importance in all the regions and there is a clear preference for some over the others in specific geographical areas. The *avatara* concept provided an easy means of bringing into the ever-expanding pantheon all new entrants into *Vaishnava* worship, as for example, the *Alvars* and *Acharyas* and even the personified and deified weapons.

The *Srivaishnava agamas* consider that the temples of Lord Vishnu should have the images of His consort and attendant deities. Many a devotee often finds as much solace in worshipping these deities as he would find in worshipping the main god; the choice of a god for religious devotion is out of individual volition conditioned by the attitude and purpose of the devotee. All these points appear to have been taken into consideration by the *agamas* in formulating their prescriptions in which enough provision has been made to instal various types of deities, both major and minor. Equally so, the *Alvars* and *Acharyas* are respected and worshipped in iconic form. They, in a way, are the "embodiments of humility, devotion and absolute surrender in body and soul" the three important features emphasized in *Srivaishnava* devotionism. They are at once the guides and models to the aspirants of *moksha*. All these naturally find representation in the *Srivaishnava* temples.

## 1. Consecrated Images

### A. Stone Images (*Upper Ahobilam*)

#### i. The main deity

The chief deity installed in the main cave of this temple is *Ugra-Narasimha*. The inscriptions refer to this as *Ahobala Narasimha*.

This is a beautiful image made of *Salagrama* stone. It is 2' high and is depicted in sitting posture in the *sambhanga* pose. The right leg is folded and the left leg is dangling down. It is two-handed and is depicted tearing out *Hiranyakasipu's* entrails. The demon is lying on the lap of the god, the demon's head is to the right and his legs to the left. The figure of *Lakshmi* in the form of *Srivatsa* on the right chest is very interesting. Iconographically this image of *Narasimha* is very unique. This figure very much resembles the figure of *Narasimha* on a plaque from *Manimangalam* in the *Chengalput* district belonging to the *Pallava* period.

The image is somewhat peculiar stylistically, without conforming completely to any of the prevailing styles such as *Pallava* or early *Chalukyan*, in this region. However the form of the image is close to those seen in the *Ikshvakus* or *Vishnukundin* tradition. A stone image of *Prahlada* in *Anjalihasta* is installed in a niche opposite to the idol of the main deity. This image is 1' high.

## II. Chenchu-Lakshmi

This is the consort image of *Ahobala Narasimha* installed in the shrine at the north-western corner inside the temple. The image is about 3'1" high. The goddess is shown as seated in *padmasana* and as having four arms; the lower two being in the *abhaya* and *varada mudras* and the rear ones carrying the lotus-bud in each of them. She is richly decked with the *Karanda-makuta* and other jewels. The *prabhavali* is carved in the same stone and it has a creeper design.

The creeper design in the *prabhavali*, the *karanda makuta* and the style of the delineation show that this image is possibly of the 10th - 11th centuries A.D.

### III. Images in the second cave

There are four images now kept in the cave, adjacent to the main cave. The images are of Siva Lingam, Ganesha, Ugra Narasimha and two unidentified images. According to the local tradition and structure No.6 in the New Plan, there existed an Eswaralayam.

#### iv. Siva Linga

Sivalinga is about 1'1" high. The bottom portion is totally embedded in the floor. The *soma-sutra* and the portion above are visible.

#### v. Ganapathi

There is a figure of Ganapathi by the side of Sivalinga. It is nearly 1' 5" high. The Deity is shown as seated on a pedestal, with a mouse depicted on the *piṭha* and a halo behind the head, hands depicted in the naturalistic posture, holding *paraśu* and *padma* in the upper hands and *ekadanta* and sweet preparation in the lower hands. He wears *ardhoruka* with a *naga udarabandha*. The ears are characteristically big. The delineation of a broad chest and broad shoulders and lack of ornamentation displayed in this image are some of the characteristic features of the early sculptures (i.e. Pallava or Chalukya). The disposition of the trunk i.e. the entire trunk turned to the left with a curve at the tip which rests on the bowl of sweets in the left hand suggests that the image is that of the Karnakata tradition<sup>4</sup> and the presence of *karanda makuta* reminds us of similar decoration in the early Chalukyan sculptures. Thus the image represents the early-later Chalukya transitional period i.e. to about 8th - 9th century A.D.

#### vi. Ugra-Narasimha

There is another image, Ugra Narasimha with four hands. The upper hands carry *Sankha* and *Chakra* and the lower hands tearing open the abdomen of the demon. It is in a sitting posture in the *samabhangā* pose. The right leg is folded and the left leg is dangling down. The demon is lying on the lap of the god, the demon's head is to the right and his legs to the left and is shown as holding a sword and a shield in his hands.

The lion face, the form of the *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the size of the *śrīvatsa*<sup>5</sup>, the natural hand postures, and the style of delineation show that the image is possibly of the early Chalukyan style.

#### vii. Two unidentified images

1. Goddess Lakshmi in *padmasana* is seated on a *padma* motif. It is two handed holding *nilotpala* flower in the right hand in the *katakahasta* posture whereas the left hand is in the *varada hasta* pose. She is also shown with well-moulded breasts, and several necklaces. The *kiritamakuta* is on her head and the eyes are in *saṃadrishti* pose. *Makarakundalas* are found in her ears. The usual ornaments such as *manjiras*, *keyuras*, bangles, necklaces, the *mangala sutra* are found on the image of the Goddess. The style of delineation shows that this image is possibly of the Pallava-early Chalukyan style.

The other is a form of Vishnu in *Bhogasana* posture. Vishnu is represented seated on a pedestal. The left leg is folded and the right leg is hanging down. On the left thigh of the image rests the left hand and the right hand is held in *abhaya mudra*. In the rear right and left hands the *Chakra* and *sankha* are respectively held. Garuda is depicted on the pedestal. The style of the image takes it to the Pallava-early Chalukyan period.

## **viii. Dvarapalakas**

There are three sets of Dvarakapalaka figures flanking the main cave and Mahamandapa (north-east and eastern) doorways. They are of varying heights ranging from 4'9" to 8'6". They are shown as standing at ease with one leg firmly held on the ground and the other foot across, as though they are resting the weight of their body partly on the mace which rests on the floor. They have four hands. Both of them hold *chakra* and *saṅkha* in the upper right and left hands respectively. But the right one has the gada in the left hand and its right hand is in *abhaya* pose. These are reversed in the left figure. Both the images are shown with a number of ornaments. Their headgear is like *karandamakuta*.

The figures are thin and elegant. The workmanship is very fine and looks more like Kakatiya or early Vijayanagara period.

## **ix. Garuda**

Garuda who is affectionately called by the Srivaishnavas as *Garudalvar* or *periya-Tiruvadi* has his place directly opposite the presiding deity inside the temples. But here the Garuda shrine is outside the main unit of the temple near *Dhvajastambha*. The figure is about 3'6" high. Garuda here is depicted as standing with two hands in the *anjali* pose. Being the lord's mount, he is standing with outspread wings, always ready to carry him. He is shown with a roughly trefoiled halo behind and a low crown and is heavily decorated with ornaments. Stylistically this image appears to be of the 11-12 centuries A.D.

## **x. Ramanuja**

This stone image is identified as Ramanuja. The image is shown as seated in *padmasana* and is about 3' high. Ramanuja is shown here as *Sanyasin* with shaven head and holding his hands in the *anjali* pose. The earlobes are long and show a large split. He wears a *tulasi* garland, *yajnopavita* and a single large bangle, a little below the elbow on each of the forehands. Stylistically this belongs to the Vijayanagara period.

## **B. Images in Lower Ahobilam**

### **i. Prahlada Varada-Narasimha**

The image is in *sukhasana* pose with left leg folded while the right leg is dangling free. Lakshmi is seated on his left thigh. It has four hands, the lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada mudras* and the upper hands are holding *chakra* and *sankha*. The image is about 4' high.

### **ii. Amrutavalli - Tayar**

This image depicts the consort of Prahlada Varada. The image is about 3'1" high. The goddess is shown as seated in *padmasana* and as having four arms. The lower two being in the *abhaya* and *varada mudras* and the rear ones carrying the lotusbud in each of them. There is a halo behind the head. She is richly decked with the *karanda-makuta* and other jewels. This is a beautiful image.

## **iii. Andal**

The image of Andal is 3'5" high and is standing in *samabhanga* on a high pedestal. The right hand is holding a *kalhara* flower and the left hand is in *tola* mudra. The hair is tied to a side.



#### **iv. Images in the Kalyana mandapa**

##### **a. Balakrishna**

Balakrishna<sup>4</sup> is depicted as crawling with a ball of butter in his hand. The image is decked with varieties of ornaments. Stylistically this image appears to be of the late Vijayanagara period.

##### **b. Venkataramana**

The image is about 4' high. It is a standing image of Srinivasa on a pedestal and holds *Sankha* and *Chakra* in the upper hands, the lower right hand is in *Varada* mudra and the left in *katimudra*. The image appears to be of the late Vijayanagara period.

##### **c. Panduranga**

The image is about 3'8" high. It is in *samabhanga* and standing posture. It is two handed and both the hands are placed on *kati*. Stylistically the image belongs to the late Vijayanagara period.

##### **d. Madhava**

The image is about 3' high. The image stands in *samabhanga* on a pedestal. The god holds *Chakra* and *Sankha* in the upper right and left hands and the lower right holds *gada* and the left *padma*. This conforms to the *agamic* description of Madhava of the twenty four forms of Vishnu. Stylistically the image is of the early Vijayanagara period.

#### **v. Rama and Sita**

These stone images are in the Ramalayam in the north-eastern corner of the temple. Inside the temple are the seated images of Rama and Sita, Lakshmana alone is standing. All the three figures are carved out of one stone. Hanuman is in *anjalihasta* pose near the feet of Rama. Lakshmana is to the right of Rama and Sita is to Rama's left. Lakshmana is standing in *samabhanga* holding a bow and a quiver. Rama is keeping his right hand in *abhaya* posture and the left hand rests on his thigh. Sita holds a *nilotpala* flower in the left hand and the right hand kept in the *abhaya* posture. The images are fine and elegant. The presence of parabolic *prabhavali* without *kirtimukha* is interesting reminding us of the 10th-11th century images as seen in some Nolamba sculpture.

#### **vi. Vishvakasena**

The image is placed in a small room. It is about 2'5" in height and is depicted as seated. It has four hands with *Chakra* and *Sankha* in the upper right and left hands respectively and the lower right and left hands shown in *abhaya* and *jnana* mudra. The parabolic *prabhavali* reminds us of the 10th-11th century workmanship.

According to Srivaishnava tradition, Vishvakasena is the commander of the armies of Vishnu and, as such, occupies a place very near the main deity in the temple. Also in the *acharya* hierarchy of the Srivaishnavas, he is next only to Sri or Lakshmi. He is invoked by them at the beginning of all the auspicious ceremonies. He is also the custodian of the personal effects of the Lord, and so, in all important festivals, special worship is offered first to Him.

#### **C. Metal Images**

All the metal images in the temple are of bronze except the *snapanabera* which is made of silver.

#### **I. Karma-beras**

In *agamic* ritualism associated with temples, a number of services and rituals are to be performed. All these are expected to be offered to the presiding deity of the temple. But the elaboration

of rituals probably made it necessary to provide some substitutes for the main deity. While in some temples all the rituals are performed to the main deity installed in the *garbhagriha*, some of the temples have smaller images in bronze for use in connection with specific rituals. These bronze images are called *karma-beras*. They may be one, three, five or six in a temple. There is only one *karma bera* in the Narasimha Svami temple, and it is the *snapana-bera*.

The *karma-beras* used for various purposes should correspond to a certain degree in posture and attitude to the main icon- if the main icon stands, the *karmabimba* stands; if the main icon sits, the *karmabimba* should also sit. However, if the main icon reclines, the *karmabimba* cannot be shown likewise but may be shown only standing or sitting. Further correspondences are to be noted in regard to the number of arms, and the specific weapons borne etc.

## II. Snapana-bera

This is a small silver icon, about 9" high. This is always kept just at the foot of the *dhruva-bera* in the sanctum-sanctorum. This is used for purposes of offering daily bath to the god.

The image, as a *karma-bera* is to be, is iconographically a replica of the *mula-bera*, but this is totally different. Stylistically, the icon is in *samabhanga*, and in standing posture holding *Chakra* and *Sankha* in upper hands, the lower right hand is in *abhaya mudra* and the left is holding *gada*. This may be of about the early-Vijayanagara period.

## III. Ahobila-Narasimha

The processional deity of the Upper Ahobilam temple is placed in the Lower temple. Iconographically, this is not a replica of the *mula-bera*. This image is about 1'3" high including the pedestal which is about 8" in height. Iconographically this is an image of Narasimha with Lakshmi.

Narasimha is sitting with Lakshmi on his lap. It is four-handed having *Chakra* and *Sankha* in upper two hands and the lower right is in *abhaya* and the left is holding Lakshmi. Stylistically, this image appears to be of the early Vijayanagara type.

## IV. Lakshmi-Narasimha

Iconographically this is almost similar to the above icon. This icon is used as a processional image of Pavana-Narasimha. Stylistically the forms of *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the *kirita*, the mode of depiction of the hands and the face, the bulging chest, roundish face possibly indicate that this image may be slightly later than the above image.

## V. Jwala-narasimha

This icon is also placed along with the above bronzes. This is the processional image of Jwala-Narasimha. The processional image is a replica of the *mula-bera*, Jwala Narasimha, iconographically. The image is seated on a Garuda pedestal measuring 1'6" high. This image forms the central figure of a set, the other two being the images of Sri and Bhu which flank this, but are separate pieces. Sridevi is on his right and Bhudevi, on his left. They are in rhythmic *tribhanga* pose. The depiction of these is tender and charming. These are about 1'3" in height. The forms of hand postures and *ayudhas*, the tall *kiritamakuta* of the god, the conical *karandamakuta* of the goddesses, fine workmanship etc. possibly suggest that this is similar stylistically to that of the Ahobila Narasimha (explained already). Hence, this may also belong to the 11th - 12th centuries A.D. bronze tradition.

## VI. Prahlada Varada Narasimha

This is not identical with the *dhruvabera* of Prahlada-varada- Narasimha. Iconographically, this is totally different. This image is about 2'5" high and the pedestal is about 9" high. This processional

image is in *samabhanga*, standing posture and forms the central figure of a set, the other two being the images of Sri and Bhu which flank this but are separate pieces. Sridevi is to his right and Bhudevi, to his left. The flanking images of Sri and Bhu are in rhythmic *tribhanga* pose. The icons are very charming and elegant. These are about 2'5" in height. As the images are now in worship access to them is not permitted and hence it is difficult to carry on a detailed study. However, the visible portion and its style possibly suggest that the set of images belong to the Vijayanagara tradition, of about 14th to 15th centuries A.D.

#### vii. Vishvakṣena

This is a beautiful bronze image of seated Vishvakṣena, about 1'9" high. The iconographical features are identical with those seen in the stone image of Vishvakṣena already described. Stylistically the forms of *Sankha* and *Chakra*, the *Kirtita*, the mode of depiction of the hands and the face, the bulging chest, roundish face, and somewhat pointed nose possibly indicate that this image may be of the Vijayanagara period.

#### viii. Navaneetha Krishna

This image is also placed along with the other bronze icons. This is an image of Balakrishna standing and holding butter in the right hand. It is in dancing posture and the right leg is lifted. Stylistically this may be of the Vijayanagara period. This image is about 1'10" high.

#### ix. Chakrattalavar

This image is about 1'8" in height. This deity, also called Sudarsana, is the personification of the discus, one of the weapons of Vishnu. This is the replica of the stone image installed in Upper Ahobilam. The representation of this in this temple is awe-inspiring and also bewitching. In outline, it is a *chakra* or circular frame with *jvala* or flames depicted. Within the large circle, there is the *shatkona* design made up of two interlacing equilateral triangles. In the centre of this is another smaller circle in which stands *Sudarsana* in his terrible aspect, his hair standing out in *jatas* or plaits which are like the flames emanating from the god of fire. He has prominent tusks. He is depicted here with six hands, holding *chakra*, *ankusa* and *gada* in the right hands and *sankha*, *pasa* and *padma* in the left hands<sup>7</sup>. On the reverse side there is no figure.

This is a beautiful image and in various respects its delineation looks almost like the processional image of Ahobala Narasimha image placed along with the bronze icons.

#### x. Alvars

The images of the Alvars are placed in a cell located, in between the *ardhamandapa* and *Mahamandapa* of the Lower Ahobilam temple. The bronze images of Ramanuja and Adivanasatagopa *yati* (the first *Jiyar* of Ahobila *math*) are placed along with the Alvars.

The image of Ramanuja is 1'4" in height, and iconographically this is a replica of the stone image.

The image of Adivanasatagopa *yati* is in standing posture, measuring 1'6" and holds the bronze icon of Lakshmi Narasimha in his hands (for details see chapter 3, P. 72).

Nammalavar (1'3" high) is shown as seated, displaying *Chinmudra* whereas Tirumangai (2'2" high), is standing holding a sword and a shield. All the other Alvars are about 1'8" high. All are shown as standing except the above two Poygai, Pey, Bhudattalavar and Tirumalisai are with *anjali hasta*. Kulasekharavar a crowned monarch, has a *makuta* on his head and is with *anjali hasta* and is standing. Certain Brahmin saints have a small tuft of hair on the crown as in the case of Tondaradipodi,

Periyalvar and Madurkavi. Others are shown with a bun of hair. Tiruppanalvar could easily be recognized by the cymbals he has in his hands.

The Alvar images here successfully display the spirit of complete surrender (*prapatti*) to God in their countenance and stance. These images may be of the Vijayanagara bronze tradition.

## 2. Non-Consecrated Sculptures

The temples often served as places of offering religious instruction as much as they served as places of worship. Many of the temples ran educational institutions themselves offering higher instruction in various aspects of religious love and devotion to the students. These students belonged mostly to the higher castes. But there was still a large section of the society like women folk and people belonging to various professional and other castes whose curiosity for knowing about their religion was also to be satisfied. This purpose was amply served by a number of depictions of gods and goddesses and themes from the puranas in various places in the temple. They served as illustrated religious books in stone. In order to serve this purpose well, there have been a number of sculptured pieces, some purely comic, some evoking curiosity, and some simply decorative adding attraction and beauty<sup>8</sup>.

In the Narasimha svami temple such a rich wealth of religious sculpture is to be seen carved in relief on a number of pillars set up in the *mahamandapa* and the different pillared corridors running round inside the *prakara* wall.

### 3. Sculpture on pillars and walls

#### A. Upper Ahobilam

##### 1. The Mahamandapa and pillared corridor

A rich fare of sculptured representations of divine figures individuated and functioning in the different contexts of the epic literature is intermixed with or highlighted by secular motifs of dancing girls, flute-playing shepherds, squatting monkeys in Ajalihasta pose, fabulous figures of swan and a woman seated on fish. It is interesting enough to notice parallelisms in respects of attitude, aim and posture between the divine figures and secular persons. Scenes from the *Ramayana* representing and dramatising major events in the story of the hero are engraved with meticulous details. They include Lord Rama offering a ring as insignia to Hanuman commissioned with the task of searching out Lord Rama's abducted wife; Lord Hanuman meeting Sita under Asoka tree in the Asoka garden of Ravana, Lord Hanuman in the ambassadorial role seated on a higher level than that of the enemy, Ravana and such like incidents; Lord Krishna's figure taking handful of butter from a pot and Lord Krishna playing in flute, the individual figures drawn from the story of *Bhagavatha*; Lord Narasimha represented as pursuing his enemy Hiranyakasipu and tearing the abdomen of the enemy. They bring to the minds of the onlookers certain major hallowed and picturesque events in the lives of the protagonists of the two *epics* concerned.

Lord Hayagriva, Lord Dakshina Murthy, Lord Venkatesvara, Brahma the creator, Lord Bhairava and Lord Buddha have been individuated and represented to inspire a sense of piety in the minds of the worshippers belonging to different shades of Hindu religious philosophy. They bring together figures of Vaishnava mysticism and forms of manifestations of Shiva. As usual, floral designs, animal figures and fabled creatures are rendered with artistic grace in their miniature forms. Another striking feature of the artistic figures on the pillars is the sculptured representation of lions squatting and standing in different sizes. These figures recur in more or less similar forms in the other mandapas of the Upper Ahobilam. Yali type of pillars preponderate.

## ii. North-West outer walls of the Mahamandapa

The outer wall of the northern side presents a series of sculptured engravings which are of considerable interest. As one walks along gazing at the figures, one is struck with the grace and tale-telling picturisations of scenes from *Narsimhavatara*, *Krishnavatara* and tribal life. If we concentrate on the first row of sculptured representations, we find Lord Narasimha being enthroned and fanned by women with fly-whisks, Narasimha tearing Hiranyakasipu's abdomen, *Kirtimukha* engraving, Lord Narasimha holding the terrified Chenchu Lakshmi and scene of particular interest is a pair of tribals in the pose of wooing. The picture lends itself to tribal motif on the surface level and the wooing of Chenchu Lakshmi by Narahari, at the cult level.

Of greater detail and number are a series of sculptured pieces representing Lord Krishna's childhood as described in *Bhagavatham*. Like a mortal child, Lord Krishna takes out a lump of butter from the churning pot as his mother churns milk.

The next scene is that of crawling Krishna, followed by Krishna in the act of stealing butter in a house of Gopika. On a complaint by the neighbours, the mother is shown to be punishing her son. Another scene represents Krishna in his naughty act of stealing the sarees of bathing gopikas. The bare gopikas are shown to be raising their hands praying to Krishna for their clothes. On the philosophical level, the Hindus view it as an act of absolute surrender to Krishna without any sense of ego.

The last row shows first the figure of Lord Krishna playing a flute, the second figure is that of a tribal hunter carrying a hunted deer. The third figure is obviously that of Lord Vishnu in the *sthanaka* posture holding *sankha* and *chakra* in his two upper hands, while holding a mace in the lower left hand and the lower right hand held in *abhayamudra*. However, this is followed by the figure of a bow-woman with her face turned back plucking out a thorn from her right foot. Soon we have the figure of Lord Vishnu reclining on Adishesha with his son sprung out of his navel and seated on the lotus and two consorts at his feet. It is followed by another representation of the figure of Lord Vishnu. A pair of women obviously *Yakshinis* are carved out in their fabled version. The other scenes that follow in succession are those of women in an attitude of conversation and a nude woman. It climaxes with the figure of Lord Krishna taming the ferocious Kalinga serpent. The last carving is that of a human figure encircled by a floral design.

On the surface of the outer wall of the western side, figures delineating the tribal folk in various attitudes and contexts monopolise the sculptured scenes, with the singular exception of the figure of Lord Suryanarayana, the manifestation of Vishnu. The upper row of figures shows a tribal woman holding her child with her left hand and sweeping the floor with a broom. Another figure is that of a woman seated in a *semi-yogic* posture on the fish. It is succeeded by an obviously shy woman with her body bare. The lower row starts with the figure of a tribal woman shooting her arrow backwards. This is followed by a chenchu huntress with her bow in the left hand and her right hand holding an arrow pointing at the spot where she suffers from the thorn in the flesh. It seems a chenchu surgeon is removing the thorn with the pointed end of his arrow. The figure of Lord Suryanarayana crowns the succession of figures depicting the tribal folk. One notices the punctuation of these figures with the columns depicting various artistic designs. Some more details about the sculpture cannot be furnished as they have been so thickly white washed as not to be caught by the photo camera clearly enough.

### B. Lower Ahobilam

#### i. The Rangamandapa and other mandapas

The Ranga Mandapam consists of 82 pillars rich with artistic sculptures with the thematic motifs of the epics *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. They illustrate very popular and key events in the two

*epics* which have formed part and parcel of the complex *Hindu religious, mythic, legendary* and *folk psyche*. They, at once, are a feast to the eye and inspired devotion required of a pilgrim to the holy shrine. They display the fabled figures, legendary motifs, tribal culture transfigured into divine mythology. The puranic motifs engraved on the stone pillars include the *Dasavatara*, a cycle of ten *avataras*, engraved on the pillars in the northern *mandapa*.

The whole range of principal events connected with the *avatara* of Narasimha has found a series of finely chiselled and exquisitely carved figures graphically representing Lord Narasimha wooing Chenchu Lakshmi, Lord Narasimha with his consort on his lap, Lord Narasimha engaged in a duel with Hiranyakasipu, Lord Jwala Narsimha emerging out of the split pillar where upon he tears the abdomen of Hiranayakasipu. Other prominent forms of Lakshmi Narasimha are those of Varaha Narasimha, Yoga Narasimha with and without His consort Lakshmi. *Yoga* is usually thought of as a union of the individual soul with the Cosmic Spirit. Such a union is envisioned as the culmination of worldly renunciation and spiritual enlightenment. But here *Lord Yoga Narasimha* is seated with his consort Lakshmi and this puzzles and engages our minds in the direction of spiritual quest. Lord Narasimha is also represented as a guru to a disciple. These figures highlight and intensify the Narasimha cult which is practised by the Srivaishnavas. They are inspired with the proper frame of mind to be able to achieve the *darshan* of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha's consecrated idol in the *garbhagriha*.

In the southern part of the Ranga Mandapa, pillars bear representations of gods, peculiar to *Srivaishnavism*. *Lord Rama* and *Anjaneya* are shown in *anjalihasta* pose and kneeling posture respectively. *Lord Rama* is said to have worshipped *Lord Narasimha* in the Lower Ahobilam. Another main deity of Srivaishnavas is *Lord Venkateswara* whose figure is carved in standing posture in the *abhaya* and *varadha* poses. *Annamacharya*, a prodigious composer of several kirthans describing the glory of *Vishnu* as *Venkateswara*, *Narasimha* and *Rama* is shown right under the right hand of *Lord Venkateswara*.

However, in both the mandapas quite a good number of pillars bear figures representing *Yakshas*, *Gandharvas* and also fabled figures in the forms of erect and *squatting lions* and celestial swans. Another category of figures of utmost artistic interest includes men and women figures variously as dancers, musicians and servants carved with telling detail and graphic attitude expressive of their artistic activities. Perhaps the artist's yearning for the graceful and attractive designs have been realised in the depiction of floral designs with geometrical precision and aesthetic charm. Another representation of unique charm and bewitching beauty is of a lady obviously *Minakshi* in the *Sukasana* pose. In her right hand, she has a flower and near her left hand holding a fruit we can see a parrot pecking at the fruit. The pillars by themselves have a unique structural design. They are neither square nor rectangular but are many-sided structures. Pillars with corbels bearing full-fledged *puspabodhigas* show the impress of the Vijayanagara style of sculpture. The *adhistanas* have bas-reliefs of elephants carved with a life-like grace. Almost similar figures are found in general over the surfaces of the pillars of *Kalyanamandapa* and other *mandapas* with some minor variations in detail and shape.

On the outer surface of the walls of the *Garbhagriha* and *Ardhamandapa* a panel of *Kshirasagaramardhana* by gods and demons and other panel depicting Lord Krishna on the hoods of *Kaliya* are carved in such nice detail as to arrest our eyes and captivate our minds.

# RANGA MANDAPA : LOWER AHOBILAM

South-North	Rows and Pillar No.	Location	Description of relief Sculptures			
			Eastern Side	Western Side	Northern Side	Southern Side
South-North	Row I Pillar No.1	Bottom	Yaksha figure in sitting posture holding a snake in left hand with two lions squatting on either side of yaksha	Seated lions in a row at the Base in a pose of supporting the pillars.	Squatting lion	Seated lions in a row at the Base.
		Middle	One sub-pillar with ornamental design	one sub-pillar	one round sub-pillar	Two sub-pillars decorated with artistic design.
		Top	Gandharva in the standing posture of a weight-lifter having a snake in the left hand	One Yaksha figure seated and the other in the erect posture	Yakshna having a sankha in his left hand	Two yakshas, one sitting and the other erect.
	Pillar No. 2	B	Damaged and unfinished	Seated lion	Damaged and unfinished	Yaksha with a lion on his either side.
		M	Damaged and unfinished	sub-pillar	Damaged and unfinished	Sub-pillar
		T	Damaged and unfinished	Damaged	Damaged and unfinished	Two sub-pillars.
	Pillar No. 3	B	Seated lion	pillar with a single pattern decoration	Floral design and partially damaged	Damaged
		M	One round supporting pillar	pillar with a single pattern decoration	Floral design and partially damaged	Damaged
		T	One round supporting pillar	pillar with a single pattern decoration	Floral design and partially damaged	Damaged

	Pillar No 4	B	Squatting lion	Plain pillar	Plain	Plain
		M	One sub-pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar
		T	Two Small sub-pillars	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	plain pillar
	Pillar No 5	B	squatting lions with Yakshas on their either sides	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	plain pillar
		M	sub-pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar
		T	Two Small sub-pillars	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar
	Pillar No 6	B	Squatting lion	Designed artistically	Floral design	Floral ornate design
		M	One sub-pillar	Creepers-like patterns	Floral design	Floral ornate design
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Creepers-like patterns	Floral design	Floral ornate design
	Pillar No 7	B	Squatting lion	Base	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns
		M	Single sub-pillar	Standing Hanuman in Anjali Posture in niche	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns	Floral engraving with creepers-like patterns
	Pillar No 8	B	Two Yaksha figures	Three squatting lions	Seated Yakshas having squatting lions on their either side	Two Gandharva figures
		M	Single sub-pillar	Three sub-pillars	Three sub-pillars	Single sub-pillar
		T	Two sub-pillars	Three Yakshas	Seated Yakshas with musical instruments	Two sub-pillars
	II ROW pillar No 1	B	A lion figure in sitting posture	lion figure in the sitting pose	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side	Yaksha with lions on either side



		M	Single round sub-pillar	Single sub-pillar	Single sub-pillar	Single sub-pillar
		T	Yaksha in a dancing Posture	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	A figure of Yaksha in standing pose
	Pillar No.2	B	A figure of Yaksha	Damaged	Damaged	Squatting lion
		M	Single sub-pillar with decorated design	Damaged pillar	Damaged pillar	Squatting lion
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Damaged pillar	Damaged pillar	Single sub-pillar Two small sub pillars
	Pillar No. 3	B	A lion in the upright posture supporting the pillar	Two Gandharvas and two lions in a sitting position	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Three sub-pillars
		M	A lion in the upright posture supporting the pillar	sub-pillars	Three sub-pillars	Three sub-pillars
		T	Yakshas in standing posture	sub-pillars	Gandharvas and 2 small sub-pillars	Four small sub-pillars
	Pillar No 4	B	Yali Lion	Seated Yaksha with lion on either side	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side	Seated Yakshas
		M	Yali Lion	Single sub-pillar	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
		T	A creeper like design	Single sub-pillar	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars
	Pillar No.5	B	Yali Lion	Base	Portrait of a lady	Three figures of squatting lions
		M	Yali Lion	Garuda sculpture	Noble with his wife, two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
		T	Yakshas in an erect posture	Yaksha in an erect posture	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars
	Pillar No.6	B	Yali Lion	Three squatting lions	Two seated yakshas	Three squatting lions
		M	Yali lion	Three sub-pillars	three sub-pillars	Narasimha Svami as a teacher

		T	Danseur	Two small sub-pillars and seated Yakshas	Three small sub-pillars	Yali Lion
	Pillar No. 7	B	A squatting lion	A squatting lion	A squatting lion	A squatting lion
		M	Round sub-pillars	Sub-pillar	Sub-pillar	Sub-pillar
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Sub-pillar	Sub-pillar
	Pillar No. 8	B	A seated Yaksha with a lion on either side	A seated Yaksha with a lion on either side	A seated Yaksha with a lion on either side	A seated Yaksha with a lion on either side
		M	Sub-pillars	Sub-pillars	Sub-pillars	Sub-pillars
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars
	III ROW Pillar No.1	B	Squatting lions	Squatting lions	Three squatting lions	Three squatting lions
		M	Yali lion	4 sub-pillars	Yali lions	A sub-pillar
		T	Plain	plain	plain	plain
	pillar No. 2	B	Base	Three squatting lions	Three lions squatting	A Yaksha having a snake in his left hand and lions on both sides
		M	Noble carrying whisk	4 sub pillars	Two sub-pillars	Three sub-pillars
		T	Hanuman in Katihasta pose	Vargas	Two small sub-pillars	Three small sub-pillars
	Pillar No. 3	B	Flower design	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Seated lion with Yakshas on either side	Seated lion with Yakshas on either side
		M	Rama in Anjali hasta mudra and carrying a bow	Single round sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
		T	Yaksha in a mirthful mood	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
	Pillar No. 4	B	Yakshas with lions on either side	Squatting lions in a row	Yali lion	Seated Yakshas

		M	Two sub-pillars and Yali Lion	Two sub-pillars	Yali Lion	Yali Lion and sub-pillars
		T	Yakshas with a happy face and two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Standing Yakshas	Seated yakshas
	Pillar No. 5	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	monkey in a jumping posture	Two lions and two sub-pillars	Two lions above two sub-pillars	A man having a snake in the right hand
		T	Hanuman in three different postures	Floral design	Floral design	Hanuman holding a gada.
	Pillar No. 6	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	A Man holding a snake in the right hand	Two lions	Dvarapalaka	Two lions
		T	Danseur	Some designs	Plain	Two small sub-pillars
	Pillar No. 7	B	Seated yaksha with lions on either side	Yakshas dancing having lions on both side	Two sub-pillars	Creaper design pattern
		M	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars and Yali Lion	Yali Lion
		T	Two small sub-pillars and three Yakshas in mirthful mood	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Standing Yakshas
	Pillar No. 8	B	Base	Squatting lion	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	3 squatting lions
		M	Yoga Narasimha Svami with the Yoga patta wound around his knees with Lakshmi seated on his thigh This is a unique figure of Yoga Lakshmi Narasimha Svami, as Yoga figures are normally sculptured without consort	Single round sub-pillar	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars

		T	Seated Yakshas	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
Pillar No.9	B	Base		4 squatting lions	A row of lions	3 squatting lions
	M	Lord Narasimha wooing Chenchu Lakshmi	4 sub-pillars	4 sub-pillars		4 sub-pillars
	T	Squatting Yakshas	Yakshas in a mirthful mood	Yakshas in a mirthful mood		Two small sub-pillars
Pillar No. 10	B	Squatting Yakshas with a lion on either side	4 squatting lions	Squatting lions in a row		Two seated Yakshas
	M	Two sub-pillars	4 sub-pillars	4 sub-pillars		Two sub-pillars and yali lion
	T	Two small sub-pillars and two Yakshas	Yakshas in a happy mood	Yakshas in a mirthful mood		Two small sub-pillars and above a pregnant lady giving birth to a child.
IV ROW Pillar No.1	B	3 Squatting lions		Base		Base
	M	Two sub-pillars		A sculptured piece of Ajaneeya in kneeling posture with an expression of calm devotion on the face. The figure is slightly mutilated		A lion in the upright posture supporting the pillar
	T			Yaksha's figure		One Yaksha in standing pose
IV ROW Pillar No.2	B	Yali Lion	Base	Base		Base
	M	Yali Lion	Dvarapalaka	Yali lion		Dvarapalaka
	T	Plain	Floral design	Small pilars		Seated Narasimha figure
Pillar No.3	B	Plain Base	Thriptam	Thriptam		Plain Base
	M	Yali lion	A figure of Dvarapalaka	A figure of Vishnu partially damaged		Yali lion

		T	Floral design	Some designs	A figure of seated Narasimha Svami	Some design
Pillar No. 4	B		Garuda figure in upright posture with Anjali hasta	Plain pillar	Plain pillar	Plain pillar
	M		Lord Venkateswara with Annamacharya on his right side	Vargas	Plain pillar	Plain pillar
Pillar No. 5	B		Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M		Common figures	Single sub-pillar	Dancing figure	Dancer
	T		A figure of Mastya Kanya	Plain	Vargas	Seated Lakshmi Devi
Pillar No. 6	B		Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M		Figure of Lord Satyanarayana	Two sub-pillars	Dvarapalaka	Two sub-pillars
	T		A figure of swan	Vargas	A figure of Balakrishna	Vargas
Pillar No. 7	B		Seated Yaksha with lions on either side	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side	Base	Yali lion
	M		Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Figure of Lakshmi Varaha Narasimha Svami with the Chakra in his right hand and Conch in the upper left hand with Lakshmi seated on his thigh. She is holding a flower in her right hand	Top, squatting Yaksha
	T				Two sub-pillars	
Pillar No. 8	B		Plain Base	Three lined Nama	Plain Base	Three lined Nama
	M		A hunter and a swan	Dvarapalaka	Soldier	A figure of Lord Venkateswara

		T	Lotus	Man holding two Kamalams in two hands	Man seated on a fish	A figure of Tandava Krishna
	Pillar No.9	B	Plain base	Three lined Nama	Three lined Nama	Plain base
		M	Man blowing bugle	A figure of Prahlada in Anjali hasta pose	A figure of Garuda in Anjali hasta pose	Seated man and Bala Krishna
		T	Hanuman in standing posture	A dancing lady	A figure of Yoga Narasimha and Rajahamsa	Hanuman in running posture
	Pillar No. 10	B	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side		Yali lion	Base
		M	Two sub-pillars	A dancing lady	Yali lion	A common figure
		T	Two small sub-pillars	A dancing lady	Vargas	Vargas
S-N	V ROW Pillar No.1	B	Squatting Yakshas with lions on either side	Squatting lions in a row	Base	Base
		M	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Hanuman image mutilated	Yali Lion
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Standing Yaksha	Damaged figure
	Pillar No. 2	B	Three ornamental blocks of stones as base	Plain base	Plain base	Three ornamental blocks of stone as base
		M	A figure of Lord Venkatesvara	Yali Lion	Yali Lion	Dvarapalaka
		T	A figure of Lord Yoga Narasimha	Floral design	Floral design	Seated Vishnu
	Pillar No.3	B	Three ornamental blocks of stone as base	Plain base	Three ornamental blocks of stone as base	Plain base
		M	A figure of Dvarapalaka	Yali lion	A figure of Dvarapalaka	Yali Lion
		T	Defaced figure	Floral design	Seated Vishnu	Floral design

	Pillar No.4	B	Squatting Yakshas with lions on either side	Figure of Yaksha with lions on either side	Base	Base
		M	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Yali Lion	Seated Minakshi. It is a unique sculpture of a Devi perhaps the most beautiful sculpture in this temple in the Sukasana pose.
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Floral design	Two sub-pillars
	Pillar No. 5	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	Yali Lion	Danseur	Yali Lion	A figure holding a snake in the left hand
		T	Design of a creeper pattern	Squatting monkey	Plain	Dhyana Buddha
	Pillar No. 6	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	A figure of Anjaneya	Yali lion	A figure of Hanuman	Yali lion
		T	Floral design	Floral design	Flower bud design	Ornamental design
	Pillar No. 7	B	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Base	Base
		M	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Figure of Yoga Narasimha Svami with the Yoga patta wound round his knees.	Yali lion
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	The figure has four arms, Top, floral design	Squatting Yakshas in a row
	Pillar No. 8	B	Three ornamental blocks of stone as Base	Plain base	Plain base	Three-lined Nama
		M	A figure of a Chenchu woman	women holding a parrot	A Chenchu woman holding a bow and arrows	A dancing artist with percussion instrument in his hands.

		T	Danseur	Dancing women	Hansa Vani (Half-women, half-swan)	A figure of Bhu-Vanaha.
	Pillar No. 9	B	Three-Lined Nama	Plain base	Three-lined Nama and a figure of Krishnavataram	Plain base
		M	A figure of Dvarapalakas and Lakshmi Narayana	The figure of Vamana Avatara with the grace of celibacy aglow on his face.	A figure of Ganesa	God holding two padmas and another figure holding Santha, Chakra (Like Vishnu).
		T	A figure of Kurmavataram	A women holding a whisk	A figure of Varaha- vatara	T. The figure of Matsya Avatara
	Pillar No. 10	B	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Yali Lion	Base
		M	Two sub-pillars	A women holding a whisk	Yali Lion	A figure of Lord Narasimha pursuing Hiranyakasipu after emerging out of pillar.
		T	Two small sub-pillars	A women holding a whisk	Yakshas in standing pose	Yakshas in standing position.
	ROW VI Pillar No.1	B	Squatting lions	A group of dancing Rishis	A figure in Arjali hasta posture	Plain base
		M	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	Seated figure	Yali lion
		T	Two small sub-pillars	Pilasters	Yakshas	Seated Yakshas
	Pillar No. 2	B	Seated Yakshas	Base	Seated Yakshas holding a snake in left hand and lions on either side	Yakshas in a row with lions on either side.
		M	4 sub-pillars	A mutilated image of a devotee	Seated Yakshas holding a snake in left hand with lions on either side, pilasters	pilasters
		T	Two Yakshas in a happy mood	Unfinished figure	Pilasters	Pilasters



Pillar No. 3	B	Squatting lions	Base	Yakshas with lion on either side	
	M	One sub-pillar	A bracket figure of nobles carrying the whisk and the chamara for the Lord	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
	T	Two small sub-pillars	Yakshas	Pilasters	
Pillar No. 4	B	Yakshas with lions on either side	Yakshas with lions on either side	Base	Base
	M	Two sub-pillars		Yali lion	Yali lion
	T	Pilasters		Two Yakshas	Seated Yakshas
Pillar No. 5	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M	Yali Lion	A dancing woman	Yali Lion	Man holding a snake
	T	Ornamental design	Lion in standing pose	Ornamental design	Squatting lions
ROW VI Pillar No. 6	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M	Yali Lion	A man holding bugle	Squatting lions and a swan	Yali Lion
	T	Base	Danseur	Ornamental design	Base
Pillar No. 7	B	Seated Yakshas holding a snake in the left hand and with lions on either side	Yali Lion	Yali Lion	Yali Lion
	M	Two round sub-pillars	Yali Lion	Yali Lion	Yali Lion
	T	Pilasters	Yakshas in a happy mood	Two sub-pillars and one Yaksha holding a drum	Yaksha in standing pose
Pillar No. 8	B	Squatting lions	Base	lion with Yakshas on either side	Yakshas
	M	One round sub-pillar	A figure of Lakshmi Narasimha Murthi	Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars

		T	Pilasters	Yakshas in a mirthful mood	Two small sub-pilars	Pilasters
S-N	ROW VI Pillar No. 9	B	Squatting lions with Yakshas	Base	A lion with Yakshas on either side	Squatting lions
		M	A sub-pilars	Jwala Narasimha	Four-pilars	Two sub-pilars
		T	Pilasters	Ornamental design	Pilasters	Pilasters
	Pillar No. 10	B	Four seated Yakshas with one lion	4 Seated Yakshas	4 seated Yakshas with one lion	Four seated Yakshas with one lion
		M	7 small sub-pilars	4 sub-pilars	6 sub-pilars	6 sub-pilars
		T	4 small sub-pillar	Two sub-pilars and Yakshas	Two small sub-pilars and two seated Yakshas	Two small sub-pilars and two seated Yakshas
	ROW VII Pillar No.1	B	A figure of Anjenaya with Anjalihasta pose	A man in sitting position holding a snake in right hand with lions on either side.	A man in meditation	Unfinished
		M	Unfinished	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar	sub-pillar
		T	Unfinished	Design	A man in standing pose	Unfinished
	Pillar No. 2	B	Squatting lion	Squatting lion	A squatting lion	Squatting lion
		M	Single round sub-pillar	Single round pillar	Single round pillar	Single round pillar
		T	Pilasters	Two sub-pilars	Two sub-pilars	Pilasters
	Pillar No. 3	B	Base	Base	Base	Purnakalasa
		M	Yali lion and Three sub- pillars	Yali Lion and Three sub- pillars	Figure of Sri Ranga Raya I of Penukonda	4 sub-pilars
		T	Yakshas in a Joyous mood	Yakshas in a Joyous mood	Narasimha figure	Figure of Gaja Lakshmi
	Pillar No. 4	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base

		M	Yali Lion	Hanuman in erect pose	Yali Lion	A boy playing
		T	Ornamental design	Danseur	Plain	Seated woman
	Pillar No. 5	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	Yali Lion	Hanuman in running posture	lions in standing position	Yali Lion
		T	Ornamental design	A seated man holding flowers in two hands	A man holding an arrow	Floral design
	Pillar No. 6	B	Two seated Yakshas with three lions	Two seated Yakshas with three lions	three seated Yakshas with a lion	Base
		M	Yali Lion and	Two sub-pillars	Six small sub-pillars	Noble man
		T	Vargas	Vargas	Divisions	Divisions
	Pillar No. 7	B	Seated Yakshas	Seated Yakshas	Seated Yakshas	Seated Yakshas
		M	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar
		T	Pilasters	Pilasters	Pilasters	Pilasters
	Pillar No. 8	B	Squatting lions	Squatting lions	Squatting lions	Squatting lions
		M	One sub pillar	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar
	ROWS VIII Pillar No.1	B	3 seated Yakshas with lions	Seated Yaksha holding a snake	Plain base	3 seated Yakshas with lions
		M	Three sub-pillars	A figure of Anjaneya in Anjali hasta pose	One sub-pillar	3 sub-pillars
		T	Two Yakshas	Two small sub-pillars	3 seated Yakshas	
	Pillar No. 2	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	Two sub-pillars	Dvarapalaka and seated Lakshmi Devi	Two sub-pillars	Dvarapalaka and Rama blessing Anjaneya

		T	Yali Lion	A figure of Narasimha Svami	Yali Lion	Narasimha Svami
Pillar No. 3	B		Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Plain Base	Seated Yakshas with lions either side
	M		Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	A figure of Danseur with Pavada (Skirt). This figure has several gajjala (anklets) on her ankles which are worth noticing	One small pillar
Pillar No. 4	B		Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M		Yali Lion	A seated man holding a flower in right hand and Rajahansa	Yali Lion	A figure of Arjaneya carrying the Sarjeevini Parvatam in the left hand
	T		Ornamental design	Floral design	Vargas	A seated woman
Pillar No. 5	B		Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M		Yali Lion	Rajahansa	Squatting lions and Tandava Krishna (Dancing Lord Krishna on the hoods of Kalinga)	Floral design
	T		Ornamental design	A man in a standing pose	A seated man	
Pillar No. 6	B		Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Seated Yakshas with lions on either side	Base	Seated Yakshas
	M		Two sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	A Danseur of 3 feet high. She must have been a court dancer.	One sub-pillar
	T		Pilasters	Pilasters	Seated Yakshas	Pilasters
Pillar No. 7	B		Base	Floral design	Base	Squatting lions
	M		Three sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar

		T	3 small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Floral design	Two sub-pillars
Pillar No. 8	B		Squatting lions	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side	3 squatting lions	Seated Yaksha with lions on either side
	M		Three sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	One sub-pillar
	T		3 small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars	Floral design	Two sub-pillars
ROW IX Pillar No. 1	B		lion with Yakshas on either side	3 squatting lions	A Yaksha	
	M		3 sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	Onesub-pillar	3 sub-pillars
	T		3 Yakshas in a Joyous mood	Two small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars (Rama giving ring to Hanuman as his insignia to Sita)	Yakshas in a Joyous mood.
Pillar No. 2	B		Three squatting lions with Yakshas on either side	Base	Base	Two seated Yakshas
	M		4 sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	Man with cymbals in his hand in the pose of participating in a Bhajan	Two sub-pillars
	T		Two sub-pillars and a Yali lion	Floral design	Seated Yaksha	One seated Yaksha
Pillar No. 3	B		Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
	M		Women holding a creeper (Latha) and a figure of Rajahamsa	Two sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	Yali Lion
	T		Squatting lions	Floral design	Floral design	Squatting lions
Pillar No. 4	B		Plain Base	Plain Base	Plain Base	Plain Base
	M		Squatting lions	sub-pillar	Yali lion	Two small pillars

		T	Padmam (Lotus)	Floral design	A figure of Seshasayana Murthy	Squatting lions
	Pillar No. 5	B	Three lions with three Yakshas	Seated Yaksha	Yakshas in a joyous mood	Base
		M	Three sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars	3 sub-pillars	A man playing on the Mridanga.
		T	Seated Yaksha	Two small sub-pillars	One Yaksha	Seated Yaksha
	Pillar No. 6	B	Seated Yakshas	Three Yakshas in a joyous mood	Yakshas in a Joyous mood	Seated Yaksha
		M	Four sub-pillars	One sub-pillar	Three sub-pillars	One sub-pillar
		T	Yakshas in a joyous mood	2 small sub-pillars	Two Yakshas and lions in a happy mood.	Two small sub-pillars.
	ROW X Pillar No.1	B	Seated Yakshas	A figure of a woman in Arjallihasta pose	Yakshas in a joyous mood	Yakshas in a joyous mood
		M	Four sub-pillars	Three sub-pillars	sub-pillars and Yali Lion	Four sub-pillars
		T	Two Yakshas	Two sub-pillars	Yakshas	Seated Yakshas
	Pillar No. 2	B	Yali Lion	Plain base	Plain base	Seated Yakshas
		M	Yali Lion	A common minstrel	2 sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
		T	Plain	Yakshas	Pilasters	Two small sub-pillars
	Pillar No.3	B	Yali Lion	Base	Seated Yakshas	One seated Yaksha
		M	Yali Lion	A common Minstrel	2 sub-pillars	Two sub-pillars
		T	Plain	Yaksha in a standing pose	2 small sub-pillars	Two small sub-pillars
	Pillar No. 4	B	A squatting lion	Base	Base	Base
		M	4 sub-pillars	Yali lion	4 sub-pillars	Yali lion

		T	Four seated Yakshas	Plain	Yakshas in a Joyous mood	Plain
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Note . B - denotes Bottom, M - denotes Middle, T- denotes Top

## SCULPTURES ON MAHAMANDAPAM AND PILLARED CORRIDOR : UPPER AHOBILAM

East-West	Rows and Pillar No.	Location	Description of Relief Sculptures			
			E	W	N	S
E-W	I ROW Pillar No.1	B	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base	Plain base
		M	Pillar vargam	A flower within a circular design	Some letters undeciphered	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 2	B	Plain base	Plain base	Lion	Plain
		M	A flower design	A flower design	Sub-pillar	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 3	B	Plain	A figure of Krishna playing flute against the background of sylvan pomp	Lion base	A floral design
		M	Floral design	A floral design	Sub-pillar	Buddha in an attitude of meditation
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 4	B	Crepper design	Shepherd on a platform	Lion base	Plain
		M	A flower in a circle	Swan in a circle design	Sub-pillar	A floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga



	Pillar No. 5	B	A comely figure of a beautiful woman releasing arrow with her face turned back	Lord Chenna Kesava on a raised platform	Lion base	Plain base
		M	Lotus in a circle	Two lotuses	sub-pillar	Two lotuses
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 6	B	Lord Venkatesvara on a raised plat form	Base	Lion base	Base
		M	Creeper design	A dancing boy	Sub-pillar	Two lotuses
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 7	B	A graceful figure of Dancing Krishna	A Dancer on a platform	Lion base	Base
		M	A figure of swan in a circle	Lotus in a circle	Sub-pillar	Lotus in a circle
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 8	B	Base	A shepherd holding a flute	A shepherd holding a flute	Base
		M	A design in a circle	A flower in a circle	A flower in a circle	A flower design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	lion	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 9	B	Base	A Shepherd holding a flute	Lion base	Base
		M	Round Circle	Flower design	Sub-pillar	A flower design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 10	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Lotus in a circle	pillar division	Floral design	A floral design
		T	Plain bodhiga	Plain bodhiga	Plain bodhiga	Plain bodhiga

	ROW II Pillar No. 1	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	A flower design	A decorative floral design	A floral design	Pillar designed
		T	Plain Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 2	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 3	B	Base	A Man holding a circular musical instrument	Lord Anjaneya holding creepers and standing on a platform	Lord Anjaneya standing on a platform
		M	Plain	A floral design	A floral design	A floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 4	B	Base	Base	Lord Hanuma and Lord Garuda face to face	Base
		M	A seated monkey	A flower design	Plain	A floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 5	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Dancing Anjaneya	Two flowers	Round Lotus	Round flower
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Plain	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 6	B	Base	Base	Base	Base

		M	Swan in the circular design	Flower design	Half-man-half swan	Flower design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 7	B	Lord Anjaneya with one raised Arm	Base	Base	Base
		M	Lotus	A flower	A floral design	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 8	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 9	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Flowers	Flowers	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 10	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	A flower	A flower	A flower
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	ROW III Pillar No. 1	B	Base	A troop of Dancers on a platform	Base	Base
		M	A flower	A flower	A flower	Floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 2	B	Base	Base	Base	Base

		M	Flower	Flower	A flower	A floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 2	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	A flower	Flower	A flower	A floral design
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 9	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 10	B	Lord Garuda on a Platform	Base	Base	Base
		M	A flower design	Plain	swan	design
		T	Bodhiga	Plain Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	ROW IV Pillar No. 1	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	A flower	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 2	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No.3	B	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall
		M	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall

		T	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall	Inside the wall
	Pillar No. 4	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Lotus	Lotus	Lotus	Lotus
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 5	B	Rama taking aim with his bow and arrow and Lakshmana by his side	Vall in his last moments, while Rama and Lakshmana and Vall's wife look on.	Group of dancing monkeys	A scene of Rama giving his ring as insignia to Anjaneya
		M	Rama and Lakshmana	A group of monkeys in Arjall hasta pose	Monkeys in Arjall hasta pose	Anjaneya in Arjall hasta pose as Rama and Lakshmana are seated
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 6	B	Hanuman touching the feet of Rama on a platform	A Man in a meditation posture	Base	Two dancing Women
		M	Seated Sita and Hanuman standing before her under Ashoka tree.	Hanuman in Arjall hasta pose	Lord Hanuman seated at a higher level than Ravana on his throne in the latter's Darbar.	Seated Sita
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 7	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga

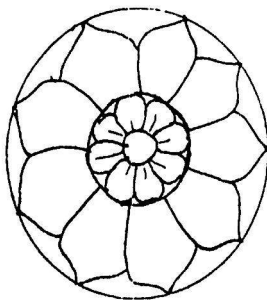
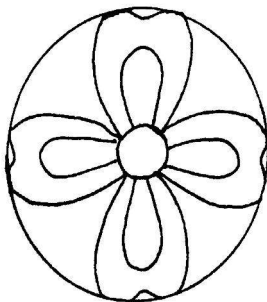
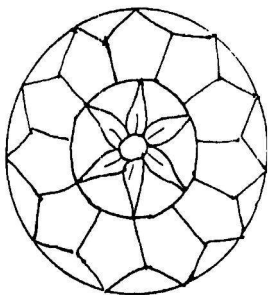
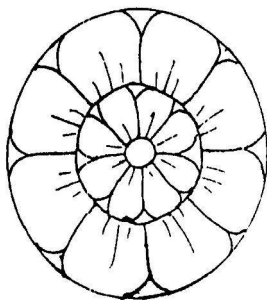
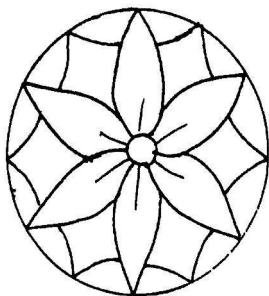
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		M	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		T	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
	Pillar No.9	B	Dancing women on a platform	Base	Base	Base
		M	A group of dancing monkeys	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bothiga	Bothiga	Bothiga	Bothiga
	Pillar No. 10	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bothiga	Bothiga	Bothiga	Bothiga
	ROW V Pillar No.1	B	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		M	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		T	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
	Pillar No. 2	B	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		M	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		T	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
	Pillar No. 3	B	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		M	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
		T	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall	Inside the Wall
	Pillar No. 4	B	Base	Base	Base	Base

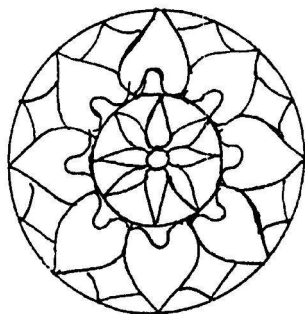
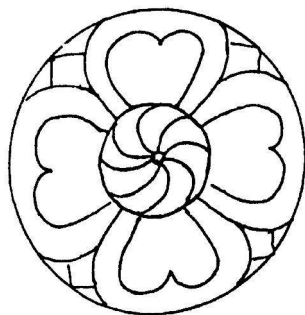
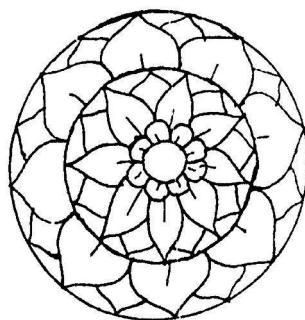
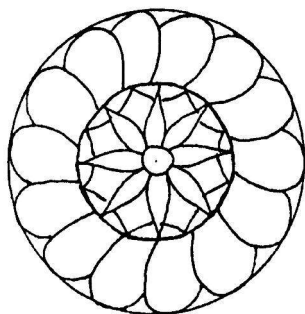
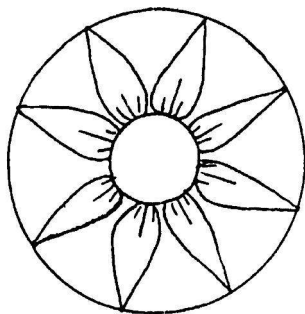
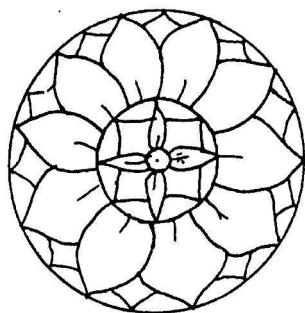
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 5	B	Lord Narasimha tearing the abdomen of Hiranyakasipu	Brahma seated on a platform	Lord Narasimha and Hiranyakasipu engaged in duel	Lord Krishna standing on a raised platform.
		M	Seated Lord Venkatesvaru	A figure of Dhakshina Murthy	Lord Krishna eating butter off a pot	Lord Hanuman and Lord Garuda engaged in a fight
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 6	B	A figure of seated vigneswara on a platform	Seated Lord Venkateswara	Lord Hayagreeva with his consort Lakshmi on his lap.	A figure of Lord Bairava Holding a trident and a damara.
		M	A figure of women seated on a fish supposed to hold the clue to a hidden treasure	A dancing lady	A Chenchu couple	Buddha in Yogic posture
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 7	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 8	B	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall
		M	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall
		T	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall	Pillar inside the Wall
	Pillar No. 9	B	Base	Base	Base	Base

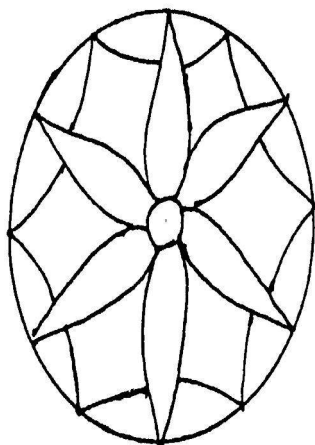
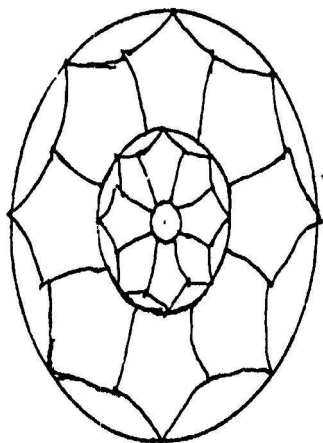
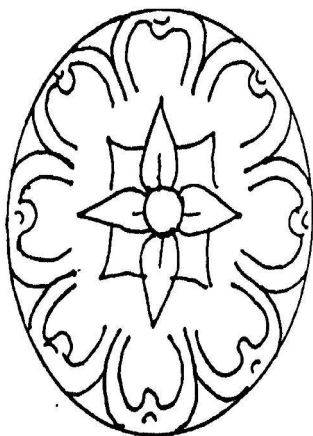
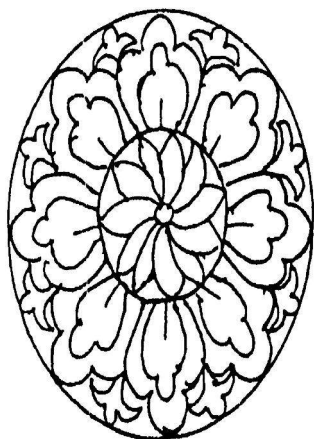
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga
	Pillar No. 10	B	Base	Base	Base	Base
		M	Plain	Plain	Plain	Plain
		T	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga	Bodhiga



GEOMETRICAL DESIGNS USED IN THE MAHAMANDAPA (PILLARED CORRIDOR)  
UPPER AHOBILAM







## DAILY WORSHIP AND SPECIAL FESTIVALS (NITYA - NAIMITHIKA PUJAS)

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The Pujas conducted in the Ahobilam temple do not differ much from those in the other Srivaishnava temples in South India.<sup>1</sup>

The temples were the centres of sanctity and devotion. They provide spiritual solace to the pilgrims who visit them. Normally the people will develop love, and veneration towards a particular temple depending upon the rituals, festivals and the mode of worship offered in it. It is observed that the more complex and sacred the ritual Worship, the greater the attraction towards a particular temple complex. It is on account of this reason that every temple has developed a certain established system of ritual worship and even special festivals. The devotees and the pious people naturally take into consideration the special religious and ritualistic activities referred to while visiting a particular temple and offering their donations and gifts in various forms.

In the Ahobilam temple were instituted certain special festivals, rituals and other religious ceremonies in order to propitiate the deity. A critical study of the epigraphs found in the Ahobilam temple gives us a detailed information about the daily proceedings of worship (*puja*) and ceremonial occasions (festivals) since centuries.

The rituals of the Ahobilam temple do not differ essentially from those of the other Vishnu temples of South India like those at Tirupati, Kanchi and Srirangam. Credit for the systematisation of the temple rituals in shrines dedicated to Vishnu is traditionally given to Ramanuja<sup>2</sup>.

K. V. Raman states, "in a Hindu temple, the daily offerings to the various deities at different times in the day is of fundamental importance. The day-to-day ceremonies connected with worship are called the *nityapuja*, while occasional ceremonies in connection with some special festivals, are called the *naimittika*. The daily offerings are obligatory and are essential to preserve the sanctity of the shrine. They represent the basic ceremonial rituals to be performed in the temple which are governed by the *Agamas*". The worship conducted in a temple from dawn to dusk and the various special festivals are elaborately described in the *Agamas*.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the rituals in the Vishnu shrines of South India are based on one of the two main systems of worship - either the *Vaikhanasa* system or the *Pancharatra* system. The *Vaikhanasa Agama* recommends *puja* six times a day. The timings and the details of the *Puja* are as follows<sup>4</sup>.

1. *Pratyusha* (arunodaya)
2. *Prabhata* (pratahkala)
3. *Madhyahna* (noon)
4. *Aparahna* (afternoon)
5. *Sayankala* (evening)
6. *Nisi* (ardhajama)

The *Pancharatra Agama* liberalises this and allows discretion to the temple authorities to perform two, three, four, five, six or even twelve *pujas* in a day according to the financial position and organising ability of the temple authorities<sup>1</sup>.

We can infer from the epigraphical evidences, that the *pancharatra* form of worship has been in vogue from ancient times in the Ahobilam temple.

In every temple there are three to six different times of worship beginning from the early morning and ending at midnight during which *pujas* are performed and offerings, made. It is interesting that the inscriptions of Ahobilam refer to special *pujas* instituted by kings, queens and nobles which are called '*avasaramu*'. The elaboration of the worship and the variety of food offerings made on such occasions (*avasaramu*) varied depending upon the status of the donor. The worship ordinarily consists of sixteen services (*shodasopachara*). They are *dhyana* (contemplation), *avahana* (localisation), *asana* (offering of a seat), *padya* (washing the feet), *arghya* (washing the hands), *acamaniya* (sipping a quantity of water), *snana* (bath), *vastra* (clothing), *yagnopavita* (the sacred thread), *gandha* (smearing sandalwood paste), *malya* (decoration with garlands and flowers), *dhupa* (waving incense), *dipa* (showing a lamp), *naivedya* (offering food), *nirajana* (circumambulation of a lamp) and *mantrapushpa* (offering a tribute). As evidenced by the inscriptions the worship offered in the Ahobilam temple is of two kinds. Of the two the more important and elaborately done is the early morning service. It consists of *shodasa-upacharas*. The other items of worship are more or less repetitions on a minor scale with some constituent items omitted. An inscription<sup>2</sup> of 1550 A.D. mentions the offer of *Tulasi*, flowers and fruits; which forms part of the important rituals of the *shodasa-upacharas* to the lord. These have been supplied to the temple from the sacred groves and flower gardens from the temple lands. According to inscriptions the daily rituals performed in the temple are as follows.

### 1. Daily Worship

Daily *pujas* are conducted only in the Upper and the Lower Ahobilam temples. In all the other shrines, *pujas* are conducted only on festival days.

The earliest inscription<sup>3</sup> which mentions the ritual of daily offerings to God Ahobaleswara is of the year 1410 A.D. The daily worship of the deity starts early in the morning with the chanting of Lakshminarasimha *Suprabhatam*.

*Tirumanjanam* or *Abhishekam* is another important ritual in the *nityapuja*, which is performed elaborately in the morning. The ritual starts with the bathing of the lord in the sacred water and milk. During the *abhisheka*, the *Purushasukta* and the other sacred names of the deity are chanted. After the completion of the *abhisheka*, the applications of sandal and *sugandha dravyas* are offered to the god. The *abhisheka* ceremony comes to a close by offering food and *tambula* to the god. The bath and decoration are followed by *archana dhupa dipa naivedya*.

It is very interesting to note here that the Lord was worshipped with the chanting of his thousand names known as '*sahasranamapuja*' which was attested to by an epigraph of 1545 A.D.<sup>4</sup> at the

Upper Ahobilam. There are inscriptions<sup>9</sup> which refer to the preparation of *Tulsimala*, *Pushpamala* and sandal paste.

Offering the *naivedya* to the deity during the specified hours of the day and on different occasions is an important item in the daily puja. The offerings are made usually at the end of each of the series of functions in the course of the worship of the deity. The food, after it is offered to the god is distributed among the temple employees and also to the devotees who gather at the time of performing various services.

There is a very interesting inscription dated 1564 A.D.<sup>10</sup>, which describes how the *prasadam*s like *Vada* or *Dosa* or *Appam* are distributed in different proportions to the donor, for sale and for the public distribution. There are a number of inscriptions<sup>11</sup> which detail the extensive provision made for the *naivedya*. We find that there are a number of grants made to the temples for the offering of the Lord when He is seated in certain *mandapas*, which were constructed at Lower Ahobilam. Besides the routine offerings, special offerings like *Sringara taligai* (six plates of sumptuous food of different varieties) were provided to the Lord of Upper Ahobilam in 1548 A.D.<sup>12</sup>

This inscription also records an endowment of the village for providing *sringara taligai* daily to God Prahlada of Lower Ahobilam a taligai (a plate of food) each for Sri Bhasyakara and Alwars and oil for burning the lamps in the temple.

Most of the inscriptions give a long list of details about the different preparations of the various provisions and groceries required for varied food offerings.

The most important and interesting feature of the celebration of different rituals is that of the offering of various types of food. Their culinary expertise and gastronomic excellence in preparing certain delicacies for the Lord's *naivedya* are of sociological interest.

After the *naivedyam* to the god, *Vidyam* (Tambulam - betel leaf and arecanuts) - is offered. There are four inscriptions<sup>13</sup> which mention the quantity of betel leaves and nuts to be offered to the Lord.

After the *pujas*, the devotees who used to visit the temple, took *satagopam*<sup>14</sup>, *tirtham* and *prasadam* (sacred water and consecrated food) from the priest, which were known as temple honours to the devotees. An inscription of 1584<sup>15</sup> A.D. records the prevalence of this type of service in the temple. Further, the Ahobilam kaifiyat,<sup>16</sup> also says that the temple honours, such as *Parivattam*,<sup>17</sup> *tirtham*, *prasadam*, *satagopam*, *Talihe prasada*, *panniru*, and *gandham* were in practice at the temple of Ahobilam. It is clear from these evidences that the devotees visiting the temples were given the *tirtham* and *prasadam* in addition to the *satagopam*. This practice of offering honours to the devotees is continued even to this day in the Ahobilam temple.

The ritual performance of the Lord reveals that the Lord's daily activities are similar to those performed by a grown-up dignified personage whose needs are to be attended to in the most befitting manner. As a result, the various ritual services rendered are symbolic of those received by an adult from his near and dear. Accordingly the Lord is awakened from sleep by singing certain hymns addressed to Him, then bathed, adorned and served with food and again put to repose at certain hours. These are parallel to the routine activities of a human (or) royal personage. They are personal and intimate in terms of human life. They reflect virtually the social impact of the age on the domain of the ritual world.

The long process of rendering services to the Lord is symbolic of its counterpart, adopted in *Vaikantha*, the abode of Lord Vishnu. In *Vaikantha* it starts with the awakening of the Lord with the help of the recitation of specific hymns to produce harmonious and sonorous music. The next process

of rendering the services to the Lord is symbolic of how water is offered to the Lord to complete his ablutions and how light refreshments in the form of milk and its preparations are offered to the Lord in the mornings. The noon and the afternoon offerings consist of a large variety of sumptuous dishes made out of rich and delicious food.

It is evident that all the daily rituals performed in service of the Lord in *Vaikuntha* and the pomp and splendour attendant on it were observed by the kings and their admirers during the period under our study. The *samantas* (the feudatories) used to show their veneration and respect towards their overlord by offering the same ritual that was offered to Lord Vishnu in *Vaikuntha*. This has a political significance in that it is similar to the ritual worship offered to the mortal kings of the period under review. It is interesting to note in this connection that the deification of the king and the construction of shrines for the images of the deceased kings were started by the Cholas. The same custom was followed by the Chola emperors in the medieval period of South India.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Festivals

The conduct of the daily proceedings differs naturally from the special festivals of the Lord. The celebration of the festivals has been an important and attractive functioning of the temple. Most of the donations made to the Ahobilam temple relate to this aspect and indicate its importance. Consequently the temple attracted a large number of devotees even from far-off places and thus became an important centre of pilgrimage. Probably there had been no day without the celebration of some festival or the other and special offerings being made in the temple. In fact except one or two like *Kartikapurnami*, almost all the festivals are celebrated with pomp and grandeur even today.

The festivals conducted in the temple are generally known by the name *utsava* or *tirunal*. The *utsavas* conducted by the temple are many. They are divided into two categories viz., the basic festivals connected with the ritual of the temple-worship which are enjoined by the *sastras* and *agamas* and some auxiliary festivals according to the nature of the establishment or the endowment by devotees etc. The *Kalyanotsava*, *Chandanayatra* and certain others have the sanction of ancient texts, while the *dhanurmasotsavas* and *Kamadahana utsava* etc., are the auxiliary festivals. Apart from the annual festivals, there are a number of minor festivals conducted in the temple described as *varotsavas* (Weekly festivals), *pakshotsavas* (fortnightly festivals) and *masotsavas* (monthly festivals). These are generally performed in the afternoon.

In general, the god on festival days is adorned with precious and attractive jewellery and offered worship. The *utsavamurti* (the processional idol) bedecked with valuable jewels and mounted on various kinds of vehicles on different days, is taken out in procession around the temple. On such occasions one can see a blending of deep devotion and joy in the pilgrims.

A brief account of the festivals celebrated in the temple over the centuries is given below.

### A. Pulikapu sevai

This ritual of the temple is known from the inscription of 1544 A.D.,<sup>19</sup> which speaks about the ceremony of the main idol. On every Friday, special offerings were provided to the god on those days. This is said to be instituted during Sadasiva's reign.

### B. Kartika Pournima

This festival occurs on *Kartika pournima* (full moon) every year. On this day, the temple is illuminated with lamps and the *Akhanda dipa* is replaced by new ones<sup>20</sup>. There is a Sanskrit saying that "on this day all should give a gift of lamp to the donor."<sup>21</sup> This festival is also known as *Krithika Dipotsavam*<sup>22</sup>. An inscription of 1547 A.D.<sup>23</sup> records the gift of money for providing eight offerings

to the god Ahobaleswara of Lower Ahobilam during the festival that falls on the 15th day of the bright half of *Kartika*. Even to this day, this festival is celebrated by illuminating the temples.

### **C. Ekadasi Utsavas**

As is well known, the eleventh day of both the former and latter fortnights, is very auspicious especially for the Vaishnavas. These are called pakshotsavas. They take place when an auspicious asterism appears on that particular day.

Of the *Ekadasis*, the *Jalasayana Ekadasi* is considered to be very auspicious. It is considered that Lord Vishnu retires to sleep during the rainy season which lasts for four months. This sleep commences on the 11th day of the former fortnight of the lunar month *Ashadha* and ends on the 12th day of the former fortnight of the lunar month *Karthika*. Hence these two days, which are called the *Sayana Ekadasi* and the *Uttana dvadasi* respectively are considered to be very auspicious. Generally liberal endowments were made on these days to attain religious merit. Probably *Jala Sayana Ekadasi* is *Toli Ekadasi* or *Prathama Ekadasi*, which is observed even now in all the Vaishnava temples. We have instances of the charities, being made to the god on this day, which is considered holy. An inscription of 1515 A.D.<sup>24</sup> mentions that Krishnadevaraya and his queens donated many jewels and lands for providing *anga-ranga-bhogas* (daily rituals and utsavas) and *dhupa-dipanaivedyas* (burning the lamp and offering food) to god Ahobala Narasimha on this auspicious day.

### **D. Kshirabdi**

This festival occurs in the month of *karthika*, on the *Suddha Dvadasi*. An epigraph of 1547 A.D.<sup>25</sup> states that an endowment was made in cash offering to god Vira Narasimha during the *kshirabdi* and other festivals like *Vijayadasami*.

A particular reference is made to *Vijayadasami* festival in an inscription of 1561 A.D.<sup>26</sup> which states that an arrangement was made for the offering.

### **E. Garden festival**

The Garden festival, probably the *Vasantha Utsava* was celebrated in the month of Chaitra. (March-April) An inscription of 1564 A.D.<sup>27</sup> mentions the celebration of this utsava, near a tank, constructed by Van Satagopa Jiyar on the way to Bhargava shrine. The *Jiyar* gave a gift of land to the god of Lower Ahobilam in 1564 A.D. for special offerings and their distribution during this festival. It was also called as *Tirunal*, which was attended by huge congregations.

### **F. Tirunakshatras**

It is a tradition that the *tirunakshatras* (natal constellations obtaining at the time of birth) of twelve *Alvars* are being celebrated in the temple, dedicated to god Vishnu. An inscription of 1561 A.D.<sup>28</sup> clearly mentions that thirteen '*tirunakshatras*' were celebrated every month and the total number of days of *tirunakshatras* in a year had come up to 150 days. Further the inscription states that Timmarajugaru, during the reign of Sadasiva of Vijayanagara, made a provision for the celebration of all these *tirunakshatras* throughout the year. It is probable that the twelve *tirunakshatras* of *Alvars* and Ramanuja had been celebrated in the temple of Ahobilam making a total of thirteen every month.<sup>29</sup> The list of the *tirunakshatras* is given at the end of this chapter.

### **G. Kartika Somavaram**

The festival of *Kartika Somavaram* conducted in Ahobilam is referred to in the inscriptions of 1547 A.D.<sup>30</sup> and 1548 A.D.<sup>31</sup>



The general notion is that, the *Kartika somavaram* is connected with Siva and, however, it is also connected with the festivals in the Vishnu temples. But we would like to emphasize here that, the *Kartika masam* fully recognized as an auspicious month for god Vishnu, is otherwise called *Kartika Damodara*. So the Mondays are particularly observed as fasting days and in the evenings, brahmins are fed in the name of *Karthika Damodara* as well as god Siva. It additionally coincides with *Kshirabdi Dvadasi* and the merit is multiplied, if the gifts are made in a Vishnu temple.

Besides the festivals, *Utsavas* were celebrated in the temple or outside, for the enjoyment of the Lord. From the inscriptions of 1548 A.D.<sup>32</sup>, 1553 A.D.<sup>33</sup>, 1558 A.D.<sup>34</sup> and 1560 A.D.<sup>35</sup>, it is known that the processions were conducted to the god of Ahobilam and the Lord was made to sit in various *mandapas*, such as *Vasantha mandapa*, 16 pillared *mandapa* and four pillared *mandapa* and special food was offered to god, when he was placed in different *mandapas*. An inscription of 1560 A.D. records the gift of land for providing an offering of cakes during the festivals, when Ahobaleswara was brought in procession and seated in the four pillared *mandapa* in the south-east corner of the street (*tiruvudhi*). Similarly Vansatagopalijayar gave a gift of land in 1563 A.D.<sup>37</sup>, for providing offerings of rice-cakes on specified festivals, when the lord seated in the *mandapa*, in front of the *matha*, which he had constructed on the *nagari* i.e. upper Ahobilam. There is another interesting inscription of 1609 A.D.<sup>38</sup> which registers the gift of two *Vimjamaras* (fly-whisks) and a white-silk umbrella with a *kalasa* over it to Vira-Narasimha of lower Ahobilam. These umbrellas are used when god is taken out in procession.

#### H. 220-Festival days

It is interesting and significant to note that 220 festival days were celebrated to the god of Lower Ahobilam in a year. An undated inscription from the Lower Ahobilam states that the Mahamandeswara Surapa Obulayadeva-Maharaja set up the '*Garuda Stambha*' in the street, opposite to the temple and made an endowment in cash for providing offerings to the god on 220 festival days in the year, on which the god was brought in a procession and seated on the platform of this pillar<sup>39</sup>.

It is stated that the days selected for festivals in Tirumalai were 222 in number, made up of 96 days of eight *Brahmotsavas*, summer festivals, *kodia Tirunal* 20 days, *Adhyayanotsavam* 24 days, *unjal Tirunal* 5 days, *Tiruppavitra Tirunal* 5 days, *Ekadasi Tirunal* 25 days, *Sahasra Kalasabhishekam* 5 days, *Masa sankramanas* 12 days, *Amavasya* 13 days, *Yugadi* and *Deepavali* 2 Days, *Padiya Vettai* 1, *Tirukkartigai* 1, *Krishna's Rohini* 13; total offerings 222 *appapadi*.<sup>40</sup> It is not an exaggeration to say that 220 or 222 festivals are celebrated either at Ahobilam or at Tirumalai, where there is a shrine of Narasimha, within the temple of Venkateswara and offerings made to Sri Venkateswara are also made to Yoga Narasimha on par with the former.

#### I. Paruvettai Utsava

The very name of the procession denotes, symbolically, that the Lord goes out for *Vetai* (hunting). An inscription of 1542 A.D.<sup>42</sup> registers the grant of villages to conduct *paru vettai* Utsavam and offerings to the god, when he visit those mandapas by one Bhutanatha Brahma Jyoyise belonging to *Riksaka* and *Ashwalayan sutra*.

However, the significant feature is that, this festival is conducted only in Ahobilam, not in any of the Narasimha temples like Simhachalam, Mangalagiri, Kadiri etc.

Even today this procession is conducted on a grand scale, for nearly 38 to 40 days. This procession starts on the very next day of the *makarasankranti* festival (i.e. on Jan. 15 or 16). The god is taken out in procession to nearly 32 villages, which are situated at a radius of 10 kms from Ahobilam.

(The names of the villages and the route plan is provided at the end of the chapter). The processional deity is placed on a specified platform or *mandapa* in each village and is offered *naivedyam*. The people of the village make a big congregation during this festival.

### 3. Significance of the Rituals and Festivals

The daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly and annual performances and festivals are conducted in honour of Lord Narasimha. They may be understood in terms of their functional references to universal welfare, devotion to divine worship, religious symbolism, reverential spectacle, social integration, educational importance and regulation of correspondence between the major and the minor traditions of the Hindu culture.

Firstly, the performance of the rituals and festivals conducted in honour of the Lord are meant for the material and spiritual well-being of the devotees in particular and the welfare (*yogakshemam*) of all human beings in general. This reveals the functional significance of the performances.

Secondly, the festivals and rituals conducted in the temple under our study, have a special impact on the pilgrims who celebrate and participate in them actively. In the first instance, it enlightens them as to the metaphysical and the mystical significance of these rituals and ceremonies. In the second instance it will help to remodel the life of an individual according to the Hindu concept of *dharma-artha-kama-moksha*. It also enhances piety of the devotees. The devotee is the principal player in the drama of rituals and ceremonies. Total dedication, concentration and surrender to the god with the utmost devotion and reverence are required of the devotee without expecting any material reward. This ultimately paves the way for the development of worship on the lines of *bhakti-marga*.

Thirdly, the rituals and festivals conducted in the Ahobilam temple complex will give opportunity to the devout pilgrims to know about the meaning, the character and the significance of the rituals and festivals. Besides, the rituals and festivals normally influence the devotees spiritually and the resultant effect of which would be that they will develop spiritual attachment to the deity. They develop a sense of sacrifice and dedication not only towards the god but also towards the fellow-human beings. That these festivals and rituals have had humanitarian importance and value is without doubt. Besides, they also reveal the symbolic and spiritual significance of their performances.

Fourthly, most of the rituals and festivals were celebrated with pomp and splendour through various types of offerings, the use of ornaments and finally, the utilisation of the temple paraphernalia. Such grand celebrations is found to occupy a position of paramount importance. The nature or the way of celebrating rituals and festivals has become a centre of attraction to the people at large and the devotees in particular. Thus, people belonging to different castes, customs and traditions used to flock around the temple complex at Ahobilam. This fact has a sociological significance in that it paves the way and facilitates a special impetus for the development of social mobility. It is likely that these rituals and festivals might have promoted social equality, in the first instance, in the presence of the god and later in the society. This might be the most potential reason for the absence of socio-economic tensions during the period under our consideration. This is very well attested to by the epigraphs and literary works of that time.

In conclusion we may state that the temples in general and the rituals performed in the Ahobilam temple complex in particular, reflect or reveal a combination and an accommodation, at once, of some great and small traditional elements. This is very characteristic of the Hindu culture in India. The main temple and the main god housed in the sanctum sanctorum represent the great tradition. The main temple is surrounded by many subsidiary temples for the accommodation of the *parivara devatas* or subsidiary deities. This aspect clearly reveals a harmonious combination and a judicious compromise of the traditions, referred to above.

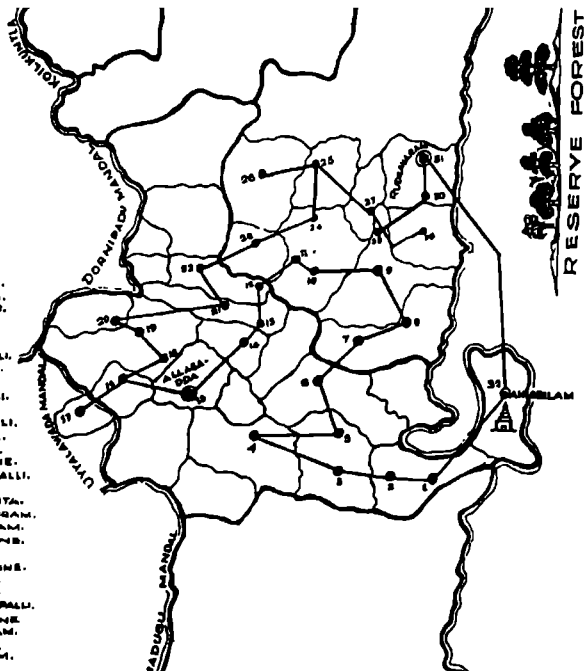
# LIST OF THE TIRUNAKṢATRĀS OF ĀLVĀRS AND RĀMĀNUJA CHĀRYA

No.	NAME OF THE ALVAR	TIRUNAKS ATRAM	TAMIL MONTH	TELUGU MONTH	ENGLISH MONTH
1	Poygal Ālvār	Śravanam	Tula Sankramana	Kārttikam	November
2	Pūdattai Ālvār	Dhanista	Tula Sankaramana	Kārttikam	November
3	Pey Ālvār	Satabhisam	Tula Sankramana	Kārttikam	November
4.	Tirumala Sai Ālvār	Mēgha	Makaramāsam	Pusyam	January
5.	Nammālvār	Visākha	Vrsabhamāsam	vaisākham	May
6.	Madhura Kavi Ālvār	Chitta	Mesamāsam	Vaisākham	May
7.	Kulasēkhara Ālvār	Punarvasu	Kumbha Sankramana	Phālgunam	March
8.	Periālvār	Swāti	Mituna Sankramana	Jyestham	June
9.	Āṇḍal (Gōḍā)	Pubba	Karkataka Sankramana	Śravanam	August
10.	Tondaradippē- uḍi Ālvār	Jyestha	Dhanus Sankramana	Mārgasīram	December
11.	Tiruppān Ālvār	Rohini	Vrschika Sankramana	Kārttikam	November
12.	Tirumangal Ālvār	Krttika	Vrschika Sankrama	Kārttikam	November
13.	Rāmānuja Chārya	Ardra	Mēsamāsam	Vaisākham	May

1. Bache Palli
2. Kondampalli
3. Krishnapuram
4. Kota kandukur
5. Marri palli
6. Yadawada
7. Alamur
8. Thimmana palli
9. Narasapuram
10. Muttaluru
11. Nallavagu Palli
12. Bachapuram
13. Nagi Reddy Palli
14. Padakandla
15. Allagadda
16. S. Lingam Dinne
17. Saravaraya Palli
18. M.V. Nagar (Allagadda)
19. Chinthakunta
20. Devarayapuram
21. Gubagundam
22. Jambula Dinne
23. Mandalur
24. Nakkala Dinne
25. Chandalur
26. Chilikalur
27. Thippa Reddypalli
28. T. Lingam Dinne
29. Nagulavaram
30. Tuvvapalli
31. Rudravaram
32. Lower Ahobilam

# REFERENCE

1. BACHIPALLI.
2. KONDAMPALLI.
3. KRISHNA PURAM.
4. KOTA KANDURU.
5. MARRIPALLI.
6. YADAWADA.
7. ALAKUR.
8. THINDAMAPALLI.
9. NARASIPURAM.
10. MUTTALUR.
11. NALLAVASURPALLI.
12. BACHAPURAM.
13. RAGI REDDIPALLI.
14. PADAKANDLA.
15. ALLAGADDA.
16. S. LINEADINNE.
17. SARASWATIPALLI.
18. M. V. NAGAR.
19. P. CHINTA KUNTA.
20. DEVARAYA PURAM.
21. GUBA GUNDAM.
22. JAMBULADINNE.
23. MANDALUR.
24. NAKHALADINNE.
25. CHANDALUR.
26. CHILAKALUR.
27. THIPPA REDDIPALLI.
28. T. LINEADINNE.
29. NAGULAVARAM.
30. TUVVA PALLI.
31. RUDESVARAM.
32. ANJULAM.



### 1. General Remarks

An institution like the Narasimhaswami temple at Ahobilam, which enjoyed a lot of resources due to donations of land, money etc., made from time to time and in which elaborate rituals and festivals are to be conducted, required a good system of management and a number of persons meant for conducting different services in the temple. This aspect of study would provide useful information about one of the important social institutions that played a significant role in ancient society.

It is not very easy to build up a consistent history of this aspect relating to the Narasimhaswami temple due to the non-availability of data pertaining to the situation as it obtained from time to time. We have, of course, a few inscriptions which throw some light on this aspect. But most of these belong to a short span of about two hundred years in the Vijayanagara period. There are very few inscriptions for the period preceding and the inscriptions of the later period are just short donatory records. However, there are a few temple records useful for the purpose of the study.

### 2. The Functionaries of the Temple

With regard to the temple functionaries the epigraphs do provide some information, though not comprehensive. But the temple record preserved with the Manager throws much light on this aspect in particular. This temple record prepared by the Government officials and the temple authorities, the most recent document of 1980, gives a comprehensive list of the functionaries engaged in the service of the temple. Before proceeding further, two points, as known from customs here, deserve to be noted:

1. The post of some of the functionaries are held on a hereditary basis. Eventhough, this is not a matter of right in recent years, preference is given, by convention, to the members of the family to which the functionary concerned belongs.

2. Another feature pertains to the conditions of the tenure and the remuneration paid to the functionaries. Till recently, the employees were paid in the form of *Prasada* (Portion of cooked food and other items offered to the God) and endowment of lands. But he was only a mortgagee and not the owner of the land. The functionary was allowed to cultivate the land and enjoy its proceeds as long as he was engaged as the employee of the temple. In modern times, the functionaries are paid in the form of cash'.

The personnel associated with the temple may be classified as Religious and Miscellaneous functionaries.

### **A. Religious functionaries**

#### **i. Archakas**

The priests (*archakas*) of this temple belong to a minor sect of the Srivaishnavas called *Bhattars*, a community that is to be seen performing similar functions in all the Srivaishnava temples that follow the *Pancharatra-agama system* of worship<sup>2</sup>. At present, there are two *archakas*, one looking after the Upper Ahobilam and the other placed in charge of the Lower Ahobilam.

D.Ramaswami Iyyengar's manuscript of 1916<sup>3</sup> mentions the poor state of the *archakas* who were paid only Rs.2/- per month. Further it states, that "during the month of March, 1914, these priests complained that they were not paid for many months". This book also writes that, this place was totally inaccessible and hence, practically difficult to reach.

The records of 1982 preserved with the Manager mentions the names of four *archakas*, K.P. Venugopalan, R. Raghavachari, N. Kesava Iyyengar and A. Seshachari and they were paid Rs.150/- as salary per month.

The inscriptions of Ahobilam do not mention anything about the *archakas*. The history of the Ahobila *matha* informs however that the *Jiyars* of the *matha* were the trustees of the temple and they had full powers to appoint priests and other functionaries.

#### **II. Paricharakas and Sthanikas**

Usually in all the Srivaishnava temples, these *paricharakas* are assistants to the priests and are also Srivaishnava brahmins. At present, each shrine has one assistant. The main duty of the *Paricharakas* is to assist the priest in the *pujas*. They have to bring the water needed for the rituals in the temple and clean the vessels, collect all the objects needed for the daily rituals in the temple, distribute the *prasada* among the devotees after the *naivedyam* etc. But, much to our surprise, the *paricharakas* are mentioned as sudras both in the temple records and the Ramaswamy Iyenger's manuscript.

The temple record mentions the names of three *paricharakas*, Sanjanna, Subbanna and Veeranna and they were paid Rs.90/- each towards their monthly salary. But, at present, the temple has two Srivaishnava *paricharakas*, who assist the priests, appointed by the Ahobila *matha*.

#### **III. Miscellaneous Functionaries**

In order to carry on the various other functions, there is a band of people appointed for the purpose. They include the cooks who prepare rice and other dishes for the daily and special offerings to the God, people who supply flowers from the temple gardens, people who play the wind and percussion instruments etc., the palanquin bearers, people who carry oil torches during the procession of the gods, servants maintained for decorating and cleaning the temple, the watch guards including those who announce time by blowing trumpets and by beating drums.

The inscriptions of the Vijayanagara period mention a variety of functionaries who assist in the proper conduct of daily *pujas* and festivals. These functionaries are listed down below and also the amount of money that was paid to them.

Sl.	Dates of the Inscription	Functionaries	Amount paid
1.	1560 <sup>4</sup> A.D.	Cook	1/2 Varaha
2.	"	Person who prepares flour	3 Rukhas
3.	"	Person who prepares blackgram flour	3 Rukhas
4.	"	Person who brings groceries and other things	1/2 Varah
5.	1563 <sup>5</sup> A.D.	Person who prepares sandal paste	1/2 Rukha
6.	1564 <sup>6</sup> A.D	Who fetches water	1 Rukha
7.	"	Carpenter (Kammara)	3 Rukha
8.	"	Who blows pipe	3 Rukha
9.	"	Kshetravasi	1 Rukha
10.	"	Cobbler	1 1/4 Varaha
11.	"	Wicker-basket maker (Medaravadiki)	1 1/2 Rukha
12.	1586 <sup>7</sup> A.D.	Vaishnavas (Probably who participate in the temple rituals)	6 Varahas
13.	"	Person who gives sacramental bath to the God (Probably the priest)	6 Varahas
14.	"	Gardener	7 Varahas
15.	"	Garland maker	5 varahas

### 3. Administration and Management & Administrative Personnel

#### A. The present situation

There are also a few officials who are associated with the administration of the daily activities of the temple.

The temple's administrative record<sup>8</sup>, states a provision for the appointment of non-hereditary trustees and appointment of an executive officer. Also, it records that, compromise proposals were made on behalf of the hereditary trustees on 31-3-1947 stating that

1. The manager or agent to be appointed by the board should be paid a sum of Rs. 100/- per month towards his salary. Out of Rs. 50/- is to be met from the temple funds and Rs. 50/- is to be met from the Ahobila matha funds. The Manager so appointed should be a disciple of the matha, and

2. That all orders to the manager or agent will have to be issued through the hereditary trustee and the manager discharge his duties without affecting the rights and privileges of the hereditary trustee. The board has decided to accept the terms proposed by the hereditary trustee with modifications providing, *inter alia* that the salary of Rs. 120/- per month may be paid to the manager by equal shares by the *Jiyar* or the matha and the temple,



3. That the proposal to appoint a disciple of the matha selected and accepted as a manager capable of supervising the religious tradition of the temple and obeying all lawful orders of the hereditary trustee, and

4. The board shall frame rules for the proper administration of the temple.

#### **B. Administration**

The trustee board<sup>9</sup> had framed rules for the proper administration of the temple.

According to the rules, the manager will draw half of his salary and D.A. from the funds of the temple and that the other half be remitted to the manager from the funds of Sri Ahobila matha within the first seven days of a month.

According to the records, Sri Adivan Satagopa Yatindra Mahadesika was the first hereditary trustee, 600 years ago and the 44th Jiyar of the math is the present hereditary trustee from 1957, who resides at Srirangam.

Sri Lakshminarayana is the manager appointed by the hereditary trustee with effect from 21-5-1961.

The record, further states that the Manager appointed should look after the properties of the temple, and also gives a list of lands and jewelleryes.

#### **C. Properties**

As per an old approved property register<sup>10</sup> the following lands are possessed by the temple.

Sl.No	Lands	Wet Acs.Cts.	Dry Acs. Cts.
a)	Lands taken over by Government Under Estate Abolition Act 1948 situated at Gundala and Obulapuram Villages	3.71	5593.46
b)	Forest land given to temple	—	101.00
c)	Lands in possession and enjoyment of the Servicedars of the temple.	5.81	80.17
d)	Lands kept vacant	6.56	132.14
e)	Lands covered by lease approved order	9.26	72.04

#### **I. Donation of Wooden Chariot by the Hereditary Trustee**

The Hereditary Trustee of the Temple has donated a Wooden Chariort worth about Rs.70,000/- from Sri Ahobila Math, Triplicane, to the temple. The said Chariot has been kept in the premises of Ahobila Matha in the Sannidhi Street at Ahobilam. The Manager is requested to enter this chariot in the property register of the temple.

## II. Gold, Silver articles and Metallic Idols

S.No.	Description of Property	Weight		Insured value of the articles
		Grams	M.Grams	
1.	Gold articles	1,430	550	Rs. 53,828-00
2.	Silver articles	76,513	621	Rs. 83,000-00
3.	Metallic idols (Measurement in C.M&M.M)			Rs. 74,850-00
	Total			Rs.2,21,678-00

At present, the group of managerial functionaries consist of a Manager, a clerk-typist, four attenders placed at different choultrys and a sweeper.

### 4. The Epigraphical Data

A few inscriptions<sup>11</sup> mention the treasury of the Lord (*Sri Bhandara*) in which all revenues in kind and cash accruing to the temple were deposited.

One *senabova*<sup>12</sup> has been mentioned as the man in charge of the accounts of the *Sribhandara* of the temple.

There are many Vijayanagara inscriptions,<sup>13</sup> which mention about *Mudrakarta*, a representative of Van Satagopa Jiyar, *Karyakarta*, a representative of the ruling king and *Sihanamvaru* (local representative) form a corporate body to look after the temple administration.

#### A. Temple Management at different periods

The over-all management of the temple was possibly looked after by several persons as a committee or sometimes by some individuals. The inscriptions of different periods give us an impression that the structure of the temple management was changing from time to time. For some periods, however, we have no definite information. Still with the extant data, an account may be attempted. To be exact, reliable epigraphical evidence is restricted to the Vijayanagara period. So it would not be out of place to make a general survey of the temple management making use of the inscriptions outside Ahobilam also.

#### B. From 11th to 13th century

During the rule of the Telugu Cholas and the Kakatiyas in the South Andhra, each temple had a separate administrative committee formulated and controlled by the village assembly concerned. These committees looked after almost all aspects of the temple administration including the conduct of the religious services and the management of revenue and expenditure of the temples. This feature is noticeable mostly in the *agrahara* villages. Some of the temples, however, appear to have been managed by some individuals called *Sihanamvaru* who were in charge of one or more temples. In this context, we may also note that *Sihanapati* was the highest officer of many temples in Andhra country as evidenced by a number of inscriptions.<sup>14</sup> Many inscriptions invoke the protection of the Srivaishnavas for the donations made to the temples. Probably there were small religious groups which were in charge of the temples. *Sihanapathis*, who exercised more influence and power can be gleaned from the later inscriptions also. In the absence of proper records throwing light on the administration of the temple at Ahobilam we would not be far wrong in considering a similar method of management described as the above was there for the Narasimha Svami temple also.

### C. From the 14th to 16th century - Van Satagopa Jiyars of the Ahobila Matha

In the inscription of the time of 1535 A.D.<sup>15</sup> there is reference to van Satagopa Jiyar. This inscription is of great historical interest as this introduces us for the first time possibly the Ahobila matha Jiyars, who figure later as the important trustees of the Ahobilam temple.

An inscription of 1550 A.D.<sup>16</sup> registers a record set up by the trustees, consisting of Srivan Satagopa Jiyar, *Ahobila Sthanamavaru* (Local representatives) and *Karyakarta* (representative), *Uggarasangaru* on behalf of Kondaraju Chinna Timmayyadeva Maharaju and other dignitaries to record certain arrangement regarding the offerings to be made to the god.

An inscription of 1554 A.D.<sup>17</sup> registers the *dasavanda* grant of land in the village of Pedakallu for the maintenance of the temple situated in the village Alamuru which also belonged to the temple. This was set up by the authorities of the temple including Parankusa Van-Satagopa Jiyar, *Ahobila Sthanamvaru* (Local Chiefs) and certain Peddayya, the agent of Mahamandalaswara Aliya Ramappayya.

From 1558 A.D.<sup>18</sup> onwards, there appears to be little change in the management. Instead of Jiyar's direct involvement, a *mudrakarta*, Jiyar's representative appears to figure in the inscriptions. The powers, of the Jiyar enjoyed were equally entitled to the *mudrakarta* also. At the end of each inscription, they (committee consisting of three representatives) assure that they would maintain these perpetually and set their hand. In this section there are three signatures Sri, Sri, Sri. All the signatures are in Telugu characters, and it is made clear that these persons have set their hand as a corporate body.

### D. From 18th century onwards

The paper manuscript of D. Ramaswamy Iyengar preserved in the Madras Archives, states that, "When the Jiyangar left Ahobilam and settled at Tiruvallur, he left the management in the hands of an agent of his called *Mudrakarta*".

"The system of appointing *Mudrakartas* was brought into vogue by the head of the Pushpagiri Math. The Mathadhipati remained at Pushpagiri and as his jurisdiction extended over a considerable area, he appointed deputees to look after the disciples in various parts of India and report from time to time any irregularity on their part in the observance of caste rules or performance of religious rites. These agents, who were called *Mudrakartas* had no fixed salary but rented the privileges for a certain number of years. The offences, generally taken cognizance of by them were;

1. Disregard of the priest's orders
2. Disregard of the local Sabha
3. Sexual connection with Sudra Women
4. Drunkenness
5. Non-observance of ceremonies
6. Brahmin widows of more than 20 years not shaving their heads
7. Flesh eating
8. Illicit intercourse with a woman
9. Other minor offences

Of course, the above restrictions were enjoined on the brahmins also.

The Ahobilam and the *Vanamamalai Jiyangars* too later on followed this system of appointing *Mudrakartas* in different areas of their spiritual jurisdiction. It is clear that the Ahobilam *Mudrakartas* had no power over brahmin disciples. Their privileges were as follows.

1. To collect fees from *dasaris* and *basavis* or unmarried women who go about the country holding a *garudakambam* and begging their food. The latter have to pay a registration fee ranging from Rs.1 to Rs.5, in accordance with their individual means. After they were conferred the privilege of the *mudradanam* they were licenced to tonsure the heads, and smear the faces of the pilgrims with sandal paste at Ahobilam. Every year they have to pay a recurring fee of Rs.4/- as long as they continue the profession.

2. To collect certain fees during marriage and death ceremonies. To collect these fees, *mudrakarta* has appointed *sattani* deputies who go about and dun out the amount from the *dasaris*.

3. To conduct *samayachara* i.e., to arbitrate in complicated cases of religion and arbitrate disputes among *dasaris* and with due judicial temperament make decisions for those people.

4. So then, the *mudrakarta* has originally spiritual power alone. When the *Jiyangar* went south, he invested the Ahobilam *mudrakarta* with the duty of managing the Ahobilam temples and their properties. That custom has developed into a rule of investing the Ahobilam *mudrakarta* with the dual functions relating to their properties and the priest of the *dasaris*.

A *mudrakarta* purchases the privileges for a certain number of years. The annual contribution paid by him to the matha is Rs.250 and he gets in return a lucrative situation with none to question him in the midst of a forest. No *mudrakarta* earns a positive valedictory opinion. Justly or unjustly, he becomes the target of all kinds of accusations. Occasionally we hear men of probity and ability to have held that post. But popular opinion asserts that some who had been in that post were not worthy of the position. The people in the country round, exaggerate the irregularities of these *mudrakartas*. When one leaves one's native home, the cost of one's maintenance naturally increases. As such, a *mudrakarta* who has to live many miles away from Ahobilam and maintain a cart and some other luxuries too to keep up his status, is generally looked upon with an envious eye by the people. But it is inexcusable, if *puja* is not regularly conducted within the temples and lights are not kept in the shrines and servants are not paid regularly. It is equally inexcusable if large amounts made available by the matha for repairs were to be misappropriated in parts and the portions intended to be repaired left as they were. In fact, such a kind of cheating is also going on in the shrines occasionally. In general, the ability of the local people to manage the shrines in the interest of the large body of disciples and pilgrims is not of the right order. Further, it will be improper to allow the management of the temples originally managed by a proper *Jiyangar*, to drift into the hands of non-brahmins. It is equally uncharitable to make the *Mudrakarta* a subordinate of the local people.<sup>19</sup>

## 1. Economy

### A. Sources of income

An institution like the Narasimhasvami temple at Ahobila which was conducting elaborate rituals and celebrating a number of festivals spread throughout the year, and which was also employing a large number of people for the purpose, needed resources enough to maintain all these. Like any other temple, the Narasimhasvami temple also depends on two types of income : Voluntary contributions from devotees visiting the temple and the revenue derived from its landed assets.

### B. Casual donations

The casual and small contributions made by the devotees to the temple can hardly find a mention in the permanent records like the inscriptions. However, the practice of contributing such donations appears to have been old. There is a reference to this practice in an inscription<sup>1</sup> of 1560 A.D. It says that all contributions of money, grains, cloth and ornaments coming to the temple should be properly accounted for and deposited in the temple treasury.

### C. Landed property

Landed property and other permanent endowments being perpetual assets naturally find references in a number of stone inscriptions. The services performed and festivals celebrated are regular. They require a huge and recurring expenditure. The funds have to be met from permanent sources of revenue more than the casual and sporadic contributions from the people. Thus we see, in a number of inscriptions, donations of villages, lands and taxes to be collected from various sources etc. having been transferred to the custody of the temple concerned. As such, the income from them may be substantial and permanent for carrying on the activities of the temple without hindrance. The inscription of Krishnadevaraya of 1515 A.D.<sup>2</sup> reveals that the temple enjoyed several such assets.

Such assets may have been gained possibly from the time of the first construction of the temple itself. But no inscription of that time is available here. The earliest inscription recording such a grant to the temple belongs to the time of Sri Krishnadevaraya<sup>3</sup>. This inscription was set up by the king Krishnadevaraya himself in the year Saka 1438, *Vijaya* cyclic year *Pushya Suddha-15* corresponding to 1515 A.D. December 21. It records the gift of one necklace with emerald and diamonds, one locket with diamonds, a pair of armlets studded with rubies, one gold plate, besides 1000 *varahas*. It also registers the gift of one pendant by his queen.

Also it registers the grant of village Maradur or Muddur situated in *Chagalamarrisima* for conducting *angaranga vaibhoga* to God. Probably this must have been a substantial grant which added considerable resources to the temple.

It is during the Vijayanagara time that this temple began to grow wealthy enough to increase the number and variety of *pujas* and festivals, adding colour, dignity and splendour to this temple.

In 1532 A.D.<sup>4</sup> a few lands were added during the reign of Achyutaraya, and hence the temple gained more assets. A person from Porumamilla made some offerings to God in the form of lands. For this purpose, he purchased two pieces of land from the temple estate, after paying the required amount to the temple treasury. The land consists of one wet land, and the other, a piece of dry land. The location of these lands is given with particular marks i.e., one is under the *Pathruni Cheruvu* and the other by the side of *Lotus tank*. In the first piece of land the donor prescribed to grow a garden for the benefit of the temple i.e., the produce is to be used for growing flower plants and small fruit plants which are to be daily offered to the God. In the second phase also it is prescribed that the grain produced should be utilised for the offering of the God.

During the reign of Sadasivaraya more assets and cash were added to the temple. It is due to the philanthropy of the Vijayanagara officer that the temple gained another grant of 50 *varahas* as principal amount in the treasury of the temple. It is stated that the interest accruing from the said principal amount should be spent for conducting a special festival. The temple gained another village *Jambuladinne* in *Koilkuntlasima*. Interestingly enough, this gift was given all the rights like *Ashtabogatejasvamyas*, i.e., the right of sale, exchange and gift. In 1548 A.D.,<sup>5</sup> the temple received another 120 gold *varahas* as a principal amount and the recurring annual interest is to be utilised for offering 15 plates of *dosas*.

In the period between 1550 A.D. and 1610 A.D. this temple gained extensive donations from the Vijayanagara officers stationed in this region. This is also a period in which we find elaboration of daily rituals and addition of a number of new festivals.

An inscription dated 1550 A.D.<sup>6</sup> registers the gift of a piece of land in the village Alamuru purchased from the corporate body of the temple and this land was utilised for the purpose of growing a garden, and also a land yielding one *putti*, three *tumus* purchased from a person of Alamuru and also another piece of land purchased from the temple land to grow coconut trees, betel leaves, mango trees, plantains and other fruit yielding trees. It further records that out of the produce 1/3 should be given to the god and the remaining 2/3 to the four gardeners and in the wet land one half of the produce was to go to the god and the remaining half to the cultivator. It is clear from this record that this grant provided new employment to the people of the region.

In 1552,<sup>7</sup> Gurijepalli in *Dupatisima* was gifted to the temple and 500 *varahas* as income from the village was given to maintain a free-feeding home in Lower Ahobilam. In the same year, another 20 *varahas* was added to the temple treasury.

An inscription dated 1554 A.D.<sup>8</sup> mentions the construction of the tank *Konasamadram* alias *Srimanaranyana samudram* to the north-east of Alamuru. The person who irrigated the temple lands was given the yield measuring two *puttis* out of dry land and two *marthurs* out of wet land as remuneration. Besides he was also granted another remuneration in the shape of *dasavandha*<sup>9</sup>. In this grant, we find that he was given a separate grant of land as remuneration for excavating the tank and *dasavandha* (1/10 of the produce) grant for the maintenance of the tank. From 1560 A.D.<sup>10</sup> there are a number of inscriptions giving details about food offerings and the expenditure incurred in their preparation.

The inscription mentioned above records a grant of 200 *varahas* in the temple treasury towards the cost of some land in two pieces, yield measuring two separate *Maruthurs* of wet land. The yield from the two pieces of land is stated to be 10 *Puttis* of paddy and its cost is estimated to be 20 *varahas*. This amount is to be spent towards the preparation of the sweets called *manoharalu*, one plate on each day of the god's procession. It is quite interesting to note that, for the preparation of this variety of sweet, they have specified the weight and measures of the ingredients. For the preparation of the said sweet, ingredients are specified as follows. Rice 1/2 *Manika*, Black gram pulses 1/2 *Manika*, Ghee 3 *Chittus* and Jaggery 7 1/2 *palas*, pepper 1/4 *chitti*, *ilachi* (one *gajjanam* weight), betel nuts 3, betel leaves 6.

At this rate of the offering, that is one plate every day, there would be 250 prescribed times (*putalu*) expenditure of 20 *varahas*.

Items	Expenditure		
	Varahas	Rukhas	Visa
Rice	2	1 1/4	-
Green gram pulse	2 1/2	8 1/4	-
Ghee	6	4 3/4	2
Pepper	-	5 1/4	-
Ilachi	-	5	-
Jaggery	3 1/2	4 3/4	2
Nuts	-	2 1/2	-
Betels	-	2 1/2	-
Cook	1/2	-	-
Firewood	1/2	-	-
Flour maker	1	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	4 1/2	-

#### Conversion Table

1 <i>Rukha</i>	=	Four Quarters
4 <i>Visas</i>	=	One Quarter <i>Rukha</i>
16 <i>Visas</i>	=	One <i>Rukha</i>
10 <i>Rukhas</i>	=	One <i>Varaha</i> / <i>Gajjana</i>

Having specified the cost of each item required for the *manoharalu*, the total amount of the gift money of 20 *varahas* is approximately adjusted. If any marginal deviation or difference in the expenditure is to be incurred, it is to be adjusted out of the miscellaneous expenditure which is here specified to be one *gajjana* and 4 1/2 *rukhas*. This record gives us an idea of the cost of *Manohara* offerings for the specified 250 times.

For example, the cost of rice is stated to be one *gajjana* and 1 1/4 *rukhas* for 7 *tumus* and 3/4 *kunchas*.

Item	Rate		Quantity	
	Ga	Ru	Tumus	Kunchas
Rice	2	1 1/4	7	3/4
Blackgram	2 1/4	5 1/4	6	1/4 pulses

Another inscription of 1563 A.D.<sup>11</sup> which adds land and cash to the temple treasury is looked after by the *jiyar* of Ahobila *matha*. The specifications registered in the inscription are that 600 *varahas* are given by an officer to the temple treasury to purchase some wet land measuring 6 *marthurs* and the location of the land also is specified. In turn, the said chief Vobularaju is stated to have made a gift of the said 6 *marthurs* of land to the temple and agreed to submit the produce at the rate of 5 *puttis* for each *marthur* totalling to 30 *marthurs* of paddy to the temple as gift and this produce will be utilised for the daily offerings to Nammalvar at the rate of 1/4 *tumu* rice and *kotha rukha* per day. It is quite possible that the area of land was reckoned in terms of the quantity of potential produce raised in that extent of land. The total amounts to 4 1/2 *tumus* for *Amruthapadi* for the year and other expenditure 360 *rukha's* per year. The cook charges 120 *kotha rukhas* and the amount totals upto 480 *kotha rukhas* per year. Another condition is that the offerings are to be made in the name of the said chiefs and *prasadam* is to be utilised for feeding 12 Vaishnavas daily.

Another inscription dated 26th August, 1563 A.D.<sup>12</sup> describes some more assets of the temple. This registers the gift of income from the village Kalutapalli situated in *Korakolasima* amounting to 230 *varahas*. Out of this amount, the *polivutu* offerings would cost 162 *Gajjanas* (*varahas*) and other offerings amount to 68 *varahas*, the total would be 230 *varahas*. Again Vobula Raju made a gift of 1 *putti* of land in Padakandla village which was equivalent to 40 *varahas* and another 2 *puttis* of land in Dornipadu village the income of which would be 40 *varahas* and another 2 *puttis* of land in the village Injedu, the income of which would be 40 *varahas*, and another wet land 4 *marthurs* in the village Bayyapagudur the income of which was 20 *varahas*. The total yield of these four items of land amount to 370 *varahas*. And this amount is to be spent for the offerings to the god during the period of stay of god in the mandapa constructed by the donor in Kamasamudram Narasayya's house. So far, the income and expenditure of the gift and lands and the offerings to the god are broadly stated. There follows a detailed description of certain items which are missing.

Some items extant may be given as follows :

S. No.	Item	Rate		
		Varaha	Rukha	Kanis
1	2 plate rice	1 <i>varaha</i>	1 <i>rukha</i>	-
2	Pepper (1/16 of one measure cost being)	-	-	2 <i>kanis</i>
3	Curd (3 measures cost)	1/4 <i>rukha</i>	-	2 <i>visas</i>
4	400 Betels	1 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
5	400 leaves	1 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
6	Sandal paste	1/2 <i>rukha</i>	-	-
7	Fire wood	-	2 <i>visas</i> of <i>Rukha</i>	-
8	Cook	1/4 <i>rukha</i>	-	-



## Conversion Table

4 Kanis	1 Ana/Visa
8 Kanis	2 Anas
64 Kanis	1 Rukha
16 Ana	1 Rukha
10 Rukhas	1 Varaha

In this way some of the items are specified while other items are indistinctive. At the end of the distribution of the offerings, the procedure for the distribution of the *prasadam* is also furnished. (One measure is to be given to the *matha*, and another measure for two Vaishnavas. 62 *vadas* and 15 betel leaves were also to be given to Math.)

In 1563 A.D.<sup>13</sup> an inscription was set up by the presiding *Acharyas* of the Ahobila *matha*, Sri Parankusa Vansatakopa *Jiyar*. This inscription clearly throws light on the rates and costs of the different groceries at that time.

The register indicates a gift of offering 40 *dosas* to the god. For this purpose, the table of items cost-wise is furnished below according to the statement given in the inscription.

Items	<i>Rukhas</i>	<i>Anas</i>	<i>Kanis</i>
Rice	-	8	-
Greengram pulse	-	2	-
Ghee	-	3	-
Salt	-	-	2
Sugar	-	1	-
Firewood	-	-	2
Cook	-	-	2
Flour maker	-	-	2

In this way there would be 114 prescribed times and for each prescribed time the offering cost 1 *rukha*. so, 114 *rukhas* were expended which amounted to 11 *varahas* and 4 *rukhas*. The additional amount 3 *varahas* and 7 *rukhas* might have been intended for the miscellaneous expenditure in the year. So too, there are a quite good number of such inscriptions. We come across a marginal amount perhaps to meet the additional expenditure.

Similarly another inscription of 1564 A.D.<sup>14</sup> registers a grant by the *Jiyyamgaru* of the land (dry land) measuring 12 *tumus* in the village Lingamadinne in *Gandikotasima* which was donated to him by a certain Narasayya who got it from Nandyal Thimma Raju. The income of the 12 *tumus* of the gift land is calculated at 8 *varahas* per year. Another piece of land measuring 5 *tumus*, the income of which is specified as 5 *varahas*. These amounts for *Tirunal* offerings are allotted for the expenditure on items specified as detailed in the following table.

Item	Gajjanam (or) Varaha	Rukha
Rice $\frac{1}{2}$ kha	3½	
Curd rice ( $\frac{1}{2}$ tumu)		2
Tiruvisas ( $\frac{1}{2}$ tumu)		1
Greengram		¼
Curd (1 tumu, 1 kuncha)		1
Ghee		2½
Milk ( $\frac{1}{2}$ tumu)		2
Sugar		½
Plantains (50)		½
Plantains (20)		½
Salt		1/8
Pepper		¼
Dried ginger		1/8
Pickles		¼
Caster oil ( $\frac{1}{2}$ measure)		1
Appa palli ( $\frac{1}{2}$ tumu)		2
Ghee		3
Jaggery		1
1000 Nuts		2½
300 Betel leaves		1
Sandal paste		1
Green gram pulses		1
Jaggery for syrup	½	
Cook		1½
Fire wood		1½
Waterman		1
Carpenter		1
Basket maker		1
Piper		3
Kshetravasuniki		1
Kanika		¼
Cobbler	1¼	
Miscellaneous		½,
Anaga		½

One-fourth of the *prasadams* is distributed to the donors,  $\frac{1}{4}$  is allocated for sale, 2 parts for free distribution. Accordingly out of the 71 *appas*, 18 *appas* go to the donor, 18 are offered for sale and 35 are distributed freely. Similarly out of the 71 *vadas*, 18 are distributed to the donor, 19 are sold, 34 *vadas* are allotted for free distribution. This is how the distribution of the *prasadam* registered.

1586 A.D.<sup>15</sup> inscription of Venkatapatiraya II gives a list of various taxes collected from different villages and how this amount was spent on different items. It was set up on the 9th of February in the year 1586 A.D. The purpose of the record is to register the monetary gift of 80 *varahas* which a certain chief called Venkatarajadeva Choda Maharaja was entitled to receive from different villages.

His income of varied amounts from various sources had been donated to god Ahobilesvara as shown below. (Source of income called *Kavali sunkam* from different villages.)

Village	Varahas
Bommi Reddy Tank (5+5)	10
Alamuru (12+5)	17
Chinna Bodhanam	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Narasapuram	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Mutthalur	10
Jammula dinne	7
Vengalam palli	7
Padakandla	1
Nagulavaram	7
Lingamdinne	7
Total	80 <i>varahas</i>

#### Expenditure of the 80 *varahas*

Item	Varahas (per annum)
Rice for Amrutha padi (2 <i>puttis</i> , 5 <i>tumus</i> )	15
Ghee	30
Expenditure on Vaishnavas	6
<i>Tirumanjanam</i> (Sacramental bathing)	6
Cook	6
Worship of the Lord	3
Sandal paste - maker	2
Gardener	7
Garland maker	5
Total	80 <i>varahas</i>

This chief was the same as the donor referred to in the inscription dated 1584 A.D.<sup>16</sup> In the present inscription, he is the donor of some offerings etc. specified already and the ruling king was Venkatapati Raya.

The last grant recorded is by a merchant guild. This inscription dated 1609 A.D.<sup>17</sup> was set up by the members of a merchant guild of *Penukondapura*. It registers the gift by the members of seven gold gilded *kalasas* for the temple *gopura* (Pinnacle) and one such gold *kalasa* along with umbrella used in the procession of the god. The names of the donors of these *kalasas* are given below.

1. Krishnma Setty son of Araveeti	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
Chennama Setty and Rangayya	2 Fly whisks
son of Seshadri both donated one	1 Umbrella
Kalasa and 2 fly whisks and	
white silk umbrella with kalasa	
2. Thimmappa son of Viluri Venkata Setty	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
3. Lakshmaiah, son of Pola Mallaiah	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
4. Potam Setty, son of Devi setty Mallisetty	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
5. Saravaiah, Son of Rachamadugu Lingaiah	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
6. Papaiah, Son of Madisetty Tippaiah	1 <i>Kalasa</i>
7. Lingi setty, son of Madisetty Jenniah	1 <i>Kalasa</i>

It is quite likely that this is the only merchant guild inscription.

#### ***D. General information regarding the above inscriptions***

Most of the inscriptions refer to the offerings mentioned in detail. However, the inscription set up by the merchants of Penuonda, gives a list of the gifts of guild *Kalasas*, fly whisks and one umbrella.

Some of the inscriptions specify particulars regarding the items to be prepared and the expenditure to be incurred for the preparation of these items. In some records, the distribution of the *prasadam*s are also specified. Over-all management of the temple seems to rest in the hands of the presiding *acharya* of the *matha*. Although we find the mention of the trustees of the temple, their interference in the affairs of the management seems to be very little. Officially the documents are executed firstly by the *Jiyar* through the secretary, secondly, by the trustees of the temple, thirdly, by king's representatives, fourthly, in some cases local chiefs, fifthly, in some cases local officials (*adhikamvaru*). These are stated to be the authentic executors.

Out of the temple proceeds, money is lent at interest though the exact rate of interest is not known from the inscriptions. However, certain more offerings are to be made out of the amount realised as interest.

Consequently the reference to any social aspects such as the employment and payment to the service personnel including women is not found in these inscriptions. In this respect, the inscription of Ahobilam differs very much from those found at many other temples like Sri Sailam, Bapatla in Andhra Pradesh or those of Karnataka which offer the details of a social nature. Even from the inscriptions belonging to a Vaishnava temple, very little is known about the theology of Vaishnavism. The geographical information is also very scanty.

By about the end of the 16th Century A.D., this temple had 18 Sarvamanya villages; 80 Acres wet lands in other places and the right of collecting some taxes in villages.

Though the exact income accruing annually to the temple treasury cannot be made out as all the inscriptions are not well preserved, we may say from the extant ones that it exceeded 3165 gold *varahas* by about the end of the 16th century A.D.

## **2. Items of Expenditure**

All the income derived from the assets were to be utilised variously by the temple, as enjoined by the various donors. As already indicated, the major items of expenditure in the temple prior to the Vijayanagara period are not known through the records.

During the Vijayanagara period several new services were included. Thus there were offering of perpetual lamps and several varieties of lamp circumambulations (*diparadhana*), provision for the supply of flowers, costly scents and perfumes like *Punugu*, *pachchakarpura* and *panniru*. There were food offerings totally four times a day in which varieties of dishes were to be offered to the god. The varieties of dishes included rice preparation, puddings, sweets etc. all of the best types in the culinary art of Andhra. Similarly elaborate details for the distribution of *prasadam*s from the various dishes offered to the god give us an impression that the various food offerings were not only of excellent quality but also of substantial quantity.

Likewise, such arrangements for offering somewhat elaborate services, though not as of the same scale of the Lower and Upper Ahobilam temples, were organised in the various other adjoining shrines, inside and outside the temple. It is during this period that many other shrines and temples grew in number at Ahobilam.

Again during this period an impressive list of new festivals and elaboration of old festivals begin to figure in the inscriptions for which provision has been made to meet the expenditure from the temple treasury out of the revenue accruing from various donations mentioned above. We hear from these inscriptions a ten - day festival (*Brahmotsava*), a month-long festival commencing from *sankranti* festival (*Paruvettai-utsava*), a three-day festival (*Rathotsava*), occasionally -conducted long festival (*tirunal Mahotsava*), seven - day festival in the months of February-March (*Vasanthi-purnima*) etc. Many of these festivals included the procession of gods and offerings of worship to them in different pavillions outside the temple and offering special *naivedyam* and distribution of *prasadam* on these occasions.

Besides, various donors donated villages or set apart a portion of the income to be gained from their donations, either for the conduct of any festival in the Upper or Lower Ahobilam temple or for the free feeding in the *Ramanujakuta*.

## **3. Addition of Jewellery, Utensils etc.**

From about 19th century there was altogether a new trend. Probably by this time the temple had enough resources to run the varieties of *pujas* and festivals and thus we see not the addition of land grants but offering of costly gold and silver utensil for services, jewellery for decorating the gods and varieties of vehicles for use in processions.

## **4. The temple in the economic life of the region**

The economy of the Ahobilam temple provides a glimpse of the role of such institutions in the general economic life of the land. The temple acted not only as a religious institution but also as an important economic institution. It required a lot of assets, created employment for a large number of people and maintained facilities for the devotees coming from far and near. The assets of the temple

consisted of lands it owned. It had a great capacity to generate employment and promote commerce directly and indirectly. Directly, it maintained a huge staff for running the ritual and other activities connected with it. Apart from the persons directly employed to till the lands, a good number of others received lands in the region for the maintenance of specific endowments to the temple like rendering the special services. Its festival gatherings created opportunities for commerce and business on the precincts of the temple. One of the greatest services rendered by the temple was possibly in the field of extension of agriculture, by way of repairing or constructing the tanks and bringing new lands under cultivation. For private individuals, it would be a formidable task but a wealthy institution like this temple, with its good officers, men and money could easily afford to do this.

From an inscription at least, we have such an instance being recorded. An inscription of 1554 A.D.)<sup>18</sup> refers to the excavation and maintenance of the irrigation tank and the same inscription has a reference to the new lands that could be brought under cultivation.

The temple was the biggest consumer of the locality. It required a variety of commodities and services for its day-to-day conduct as well as for its special festive occasions. In the early stages, the requirements of the temple were probably few. But the steady increase in the offerings, festivals and rituals from about the 15th century A.D. resulted in the increase of the articles required by the temple. They include rice, gram, pulses, turmeric, pepper, mustard, jaggery, salt, arecanut, betel, camphor, kumkum, coconut, fruits, milk, ghee, butter, curd, oil, honey etc.

The temple was the biggest consumer in the locality not only of the food articles and the perfumery, but also of other articles like cloth, wooden objects, jewels, gold, silver and brass metal lamps, decorative articles and the like. In this way, the temple stimulated and encouraged crafts, industry and trade.

## 5. Social Interaction

### A. General Remarks

The temple, though founded by some zealous individuals, has exerted influence on the larger section of the society, promoting a religious attitude among the people and serving them by furthering the cause of communal peace and harmony and the general happiness of the community. The extent of beneficent influence exerted by a religious institution such as the Ahobilam temple can be gauged by its impact on the society in general by way of interaction.

The Indian social structure was predominantly based upon the system of stratification. The successful operation of any social institution in a given age depended upon the magnitude of its positive interaction with the numerous classes and caste groups, identifying its own function with the meeting of the peculiar needs, promotion of interests and fulfilment of the ambitions of the populace at large.

The inscriptions available in the Ahobilam temples have some information relating to the various individuals that participated directly or indirectly in the affairs of the temple. So it would be an interesting exercise to find out to which class and caste these individuals belonged, thus identifying the impact of this temple on various social groups. However, we must confess that the information available in these inscriptions is very much limited and hence for this study are forced to adopt a slightly different method. We have tried here to assess the role of the temple by pooling up whatever information is available from historical sources and interpreting them against the background of the present day situation, wherever it becomes necessary.

### B. Participation of different professional groups

Most of the inscriptions present in the Narasimhaswami temples are donative, which would normally contain details of donations of a substantial kind only. So naturally the various donors that figure

here come from such of the social classes which had adequate resources to direct a portion of their means towards socio-religious causes. Such classes, in the historical context, can be identified as the royalty, the class of state officials, the rich traders and trading organizations and sometimes rich agriculturists.

Peculiarly enough, the names of the major donors for this temple, as recorded in inscriptions come from the section that was clearly associated with royalty. Between the beginning of the 14th century and the end of the 16th century A.D. when major donations accrued to this temple we have an array of such persons belonging to various social strata.

There are thirty inscriptions recording the details of the donations. Out of these, there is only one inscription directly from the King Krishnadevaraya in 1515 A.D.<sup>19</sup> All the other inscriptions are of private individuals namely Brahma Jyoyusha, Abbiraju, Uggarasayyangu and the other name not clear. In the early 16th century<sup>20</sup>, the inscriptions were those of Chinna Aubulayyadeva Maharaju, the Nandyala chief in 1548 A.D.<sup>21</sup> and in 1508 A.D.<sup>22</sup> Mahamandaleswara Narasamgaru in 1552 A.D.<sup>23</sup> Mahamandaleswara Kondayyadeva Maharaju, in 1553 A.D.<sup>24</sup> Mahamandaleswara Venkatadriveda Maharaju, in 1555 A.D.<sup>25</sup> Mahamandaleswara Ganapathi Deva Maharaya, in 1558 A.D.<sup>26</sup> Mahamandaleswara Timmarajugaru, in 1560 A.D.<sup>27</sup> Mahamandaleswara Gopinatharajugaru, in 1563 A.D.<sup>28</sup>, Mahamandaleswara Aubalaraju, in 1586 A.D.<sup>29</sup> Mahamandaleswara Venkatarajudeva choda Maharaju. The four other inscriptions are from the corporate body (trustees) of the temple, two from Parankusa Jiyar, one from a *Nayankara* (name not known) and one from the merchant guild.

Thus these inscriptions provide a picture of the peculiar situation relating to this temple. Why alone this temple was mainly patronised by the rulers of the day and why there is practically nothing coming forth from the other wealthy classes like the merchants and the rich land owning class, cannot be easily understood. Possibly this may indicate a situation in which it was only the royalty and their close associates that have come under the influence of Sri Vaishnavism at the time. Or was it a case in which compared to the rich donations from the royalty, the donations made by the other sections of the society were of so meagre consequence and value as to go unrecorded in the epigraphical documents?

### C. Participation of different castes

At present, the Narasimha temple at Ahobilam employs people belonging to various castes for carrying out different functions and it also attracts people of various caste groups from this region. The inscriptions also throw some light on the involvement of and participation by people of different sections of society.

This, being a Srivaishnava Brahmanical institution, it goes without saying that the Srivaishnava Brahmins were intimately connected with the affairs of the temple. We have indicated elsewhere that the priests, - *paricharakas* and the *adhyapakas* - who formed a substantial section among the temple employees were all Srivaishnava Brahmins. The management was also directly under the control of a Srivaishnava *matha*. Besides these, there appears to have been a number of Srivaishnavas, who though not employed by the temple directly, were enjoying certain privileges like free - feeding and rendering service through the agency of the temple.

Brahmins were respected for their learning and pious life. Numerous were the endowments made in their honour and for their maintenance. For example, an inscription<sup>30</sup> of the time of the Vijayanagara king Venkatapathiraya II mentions the grant of money to Srivaishnavas. The total amount 80 *varahas* granted was divided into 9 parts, and 6 *varahas* were granted to Srivaishnavas, whose *gotras* and *names* are not mentioned. Another inscription of the time of Sadasivaraya of 1563 A.D.<sup>31</sup> mentions different grants, one of which grant is made to Srivaishnava *sangha*.

As Ahobilam is situated in the dense forest area, probably the functionaries connected with the temple might have stayed in Peddamudiyam or nearby places. We find many epigraphical references to Srivaishnava *agrarahas* at Peddamudiam.

In the life of the Srivaishnavas of this region the temple occupies an important place. Owing to the impact and influence of the teachings of Vansatagopa Jiyar and his disciples, the importance of the temple and service to the deity housed therein assumed a new dimension. Especially because of the emphasis Srivaishnavism laid on the *archa* form or idol manifestation and the value of service to God in the temple, every Srivaishnava deems it his duty and honour to do one kind of service or the other to the temple.

There were a few other Srivaishnavas who were not brahmins by caste but yet were associated with the Srivaishnava temples. Though they hailed from different caste groups, they had accepted the Srivaishnava tenets. Many of these were staunch devotees of Ramanuja and had taken to a way of life which did not differ much from that of the Srivaishnava Brahmins. For example, we have in many other Srivaishnava centres like Kanchi<sup>32</sup> references to a class called *Dasas* and *Nambis*. It is said that they formed a class called *Sathada Srivaishnavas*<sup>33</sup> and they looked after the temple gardens and served the god by supplying flowers for worship and they were known for their dedicated service.

There is only one reference in the Ahobilam inscription. A record of the time of Sadasivaraya mentions the grant of a few varahas to *Sathada Srivaishnava* who was in charge of gardening and supply of flowers to the god Narasimha.

The Ahobilam inscriptions refer to a few other individuals probably belonging to different castes. An inscription of 1609 A.D.<sup>34</sup> mentions a merchant guild which records that a grant of seven gold gilded *kalasas* for the temple *gopura* by Chennama *setty*, Viluvavirivkata *setty*, Potama *setty*, Saravaiah, Papaiah and Lingama *setty*. The surname *Setty* indicates that they were probably of some merchant community.

Another inscription of 1558 A.D.<sup>35</sup> mentions vocational groups of workers such as basket-makers, carpenters, cobblers, barbers, palanquin carriers etc. Probably, there are a group of employees other than Srivaishnava Brahmins for various manual services in the temple. It is not unlikely that the same situation is prevailing at present also.

Ramanuja's revolutionary reforms<sup>36</sup> in the contemporary social structure and a continuation of the same trend by the successive teachers of the faith appear to have made an impact on the people of this region in bringing them closer to the Narasimhasvami temple at this place.

In the Narasimhasvami temple there is an age-old custom in which people belonging to the so-called tribals - (*Chenchus*) being given the privilege of the first service during the *Brahmotsava* ceremony. The practice is that on the last day of the *Ratotsava* ceremony, the *Chenchus* belonging to the tribal community, should hit the mobile chariot with their bows. We have already mentioned earlier the relationship of the *Chenchus* with the temple. The prevailing customs, unimaginable in a tradition-bound society, must have enhanced the interaction of the people belonging to tribal groups with this temple. It is a common sight in the region to see people of various castes including the tribals decorating themselves with the *urdhvapundra* (*namam*), calling themselves as the followers of Srivaishnavism and considering the god Narasimha of Ahobilam as their family deity. The impact of this trend is well seen in the various customs they adopt in their religious life including the naming of their children. It is a very common thing to come across in this region people of various castes bearing names like Ahobala, Aubalayya, Obulanna, Aubaladeva, Obuleshu, Obulu and so on - all after the



name of this diety. A casual survey of the prevalence of these names reveals that the influence of Ahobilam is to be seen spread over not only in all the regions of Andhra but also in the neighbouring state of Karnataka.

When this sort of close affiliation of the people with the temple started is difficult to ascertain from the epigraphical data. The earliest inscription which refers to a brahmin named 'Vobula' belongs to the 8th century A.D. which is found in the village Peddapeta, which is a hamlet of Yadiki. *Vobula* is a simplified form of *Ahobala*. The appearance of such names as *Obalayya*, *Obulesu* etc. among the non-brahmin communities of the region is to be seen in a number of inscriptions dating from the 17th century A.D. and the inscription of this region is galore with such names.

#### **D. Promotion of Social Good**

This temple was also a centre of learning and education. With it were associated *Srivaishnava mathas* which served as seminaries and schools. The establishment of Ahobila *matha* by Vansatagopa Jiyar is indicated by a few inscriptions of Ahobilam. Even to this day this *matha* continues to be a centre of religious and philosophical studies. That this place promoted higher learning is indicated by a string of epithets associated with a number of persons mentioned in various inscriptions. The *Jiyars* are often called as establishers of the path of the *Vedas* (*Vedamarga Pratishthapanacharyas*) and as the promoters of the faith of Ramanuja.

The need for facilities for the travellers and visitors in a pilgrim centre like Ahobilam, situated in a hilly and far off place, is quite obvious. Even now free feeding for the pilgrims is arranged in private homes or elsewhere through the agency of public institutions such as *mathas* on festival days like *paruvettai*. But an important institution that admirably served this need in ancient times was the *Ramanujakuta*, in which free food is offered to the poor and the pilgrims. An inscription of 1552 A.D.<sup>37</sup> mentions the grant for the maintenance of the *Ramanujakuta* at lower Ahobilam. There is also mention of *Ramanujakuta* in the inscriptions of the surrounding areas of Ahobilam, where, the idol of god Narasimha visits the villages, during the *paruvettai utsava*. This institution must have served as a welcome facility encouraging pilgrims from various parts of the country to visit this place, and providing greater scope for social interaction among people of different communities and regions. It also served as an institution for the poor feeding.

Similarly the various festivals celebrated with pomp and colour attracted a large number of people of different social groups facilitating social interaction and the consequential integration. Such large gatherings helped the local craftsmen and traders to improve their business and a number of artists of various kinds display their talents. Thus the temples at Ahobilam were serving varied needs of the society effectively.

## INTRODUCTION

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21. Quoted, Sarvappa, Kase, *Siddesvara Charitra* (Ed.) by K.Lakshmiranjanam, PP. 154-55.
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23. Srinatha, *Sri Kasi Khandam* (Ed.), by Vavilla Rama Svami Sastrulu, *Pithika* by Nidadavolu Venkata Rao.
24. Lakshmiranjanam, K, *Andhra Sahitya Charitra Sangrahamu*, PP.118- 119; Viresalingam Pantulu says that the poet lived about 1560 A.D.
25. MSS Preserved in the Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, Sanskrit MSS, D.No. 10096
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31. MSS preserved in Madras Archives, 1916, *A descriptive History of the forgotten Shrines of Ahobilam*, unpublished Madras, 1916.
32. Mack. Vol. 100 (SA), *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*.
33. See chapter IV, pp. 124-126.

#### Chapter - 1

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2. S.I.I., IX. p.209
3. *Srinatha, Sri Kasikhandamu*, (ed.) V. Ramaswamy & Sons, Chennai, 1958
4. *Inscriptions of Andhradesa*, Vol.II, Part I. Guntur District, No. 196, p. 247
5. S.I.I., X, No. 577, p. 319
6. S.I.I., XVI, No. 96, p.111
7. *Bramhandapurana: kshetrakhanda, Ahobila Mahatmyam*, ch.I.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., ch.II
10. *Nalayira Divya prabandham*
11. S.I.I., XVI, No. 271, p.278
12. Ibid., No. 235, p. 241
13. S.I.I., IX, No. 207
14. *Bramhandapurana: Kshetrakhanda, Ahobila Mahatmyam*, ch.VII.
15. Mack. Vol. (S.A.), No. 100, Ahobilam Kaifiyat
16. E.I. XXXVIII, No. 56, p.340
17. *Inscription of Andhradesa*, Vol.II, part-I, Guntur District, S.No. 196, p.247
18. *Bramhandapurana: Kshetrakhanda, Ahobila Mahatmyam*, Ch.I
19. Ibid., ch.II
20. Ibid.
21. S.I.I., X, No. 577, p. 319
22. These poems form a part of 4000 Tamil songs known as *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, which are sung in all the Vishnu temples even today. One hundred and eight places are revered as *Divyadesas* or places of divine residence by Sri

Vaishnavas. Among them, Ahobilam, known as Singa-vel-kunram, occupies an important place. The *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* contains more than 75 verses on Lord Narasimha by various Alvars and out of them ten by Tirumangai Alvar are specifically on Sri Ahobila Narasimha. The poems of Tirumangai Alvar are given below.

அங்கன் ஞாலஞ் அங்கோ ளையாய், .  
பொங்க வாகம் வள்ளுசிராற் போற்றத் புனிதனிடம்  
பைங்கணானைக் கொம்பு கொண்டு பதிதமைவாய்: அடிக்கீழ்  
செங்கணானிடமுறைஞ் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே (1)

1. When Hiranyakasipu, feared by all in this beautiful wide world, challenged his son Prahlada to show Lord Vishnu in a particular pillar in his Audience hall, God, who is ever pure, appeared out of it and tore into two his chest with His sharp nails. That Narasimha now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunram where lions with angry eyes pay obeisance to Him by offering Him the ivory tusks of elephants killed by them.

அலைத்தபெழுவாய் வானெயிறுனோர் கோளரியாய், .  
கொலைக்கை யானை நெஞ்சிடத்த கருகிரானிடம்  
மலைத்தசேவராத் தெறித்த பூசல் வந்துடி வாய்கடுப்பச்  
சிவக்கை வேடத் தெழிப்பறாக் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே. (2)

2. Hiranyakasipu, who was known for his inhuman cruelty, was torn to pieces by Narasimha of incomparable mettle, exhibiting his wrath through His twisting tongue and shining fangs. The Narasimha now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunram which resounds to the noise of trumpets and the twang of bows of the local hunters way laying the pilgrims to the shrine (The dangers faced by pilgrims in the days of the Alvars are truly portrayed by him).

ஏய்ந்த பெழுவாய் வானெயிறுனோர் கோளரியாய், அலுனான்  
வாய்ந்த வாகம் வள்ளுசிரால் வகிர்ந்தவம் மானிடம்,  
ஒய்ந்த மரவு முடைத்தருளறு மன்றியும் தின்றழுவால்  
தேய்ந்தவேடி மல்கவிலவாச் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே; (3)

3. Narasimha of unparalleled heroism, with a fitting wide mouth and sword-like sharp teeth reduced to smithereens the body of Hiranya which had grown amply. That Lord now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunram which is characterised by nothing but animals getting tired by roaming on the hard surface, broken small hills and bamboo destroyed by forest fires. (The weird environment is as fascinating to the Alvar as the charming groves with buzzing bees and dancing peacocks elsewhere).

எவ்வம் வெவ்வேல் பொன்பெயரோன் ஏதவனின்னுயினர்  
வல்வி. ஆகம் வள்ளுசிரால் வகிர்ந்தவம் மானிடம்  
கல்வநாயும் கருகும் உச்சிப் போகோடு கால் கழன்று  
தெய்வ மல்கவால் செவ்வொண்ணாச் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே. (4)

4. Lord Narasimha made a prey to his adamantite nails the body of Hiranya who with his lethal lance was an enemy of His devotees. He now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunram, which, because of devouring dogs, preying eagles, the fierce heat of the mid-day sun and whirlwinds is accessible to none but gods. (The Alvar is happy that it is inaccessible to hostile elements with malevolent intents).

மென்ற பெழுவாய் வானெயிறுனோர் கோளரியாய், அலுனான்  
பொன்ற வாகம் வள்ளுசிரால் போற்றத் புனிதனிடம்  
தின்ற செந்நீ மொண்டுதிறை தீன் வீகம் பூடியச்  
சென்று காண்டத் கரியகோயில் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே! (5)

5. The peerless Lord Narasimha with his fearful jutting jaw and sword-sharp teeth had a relatively light task of disposing of Hiranya who was practically dead out of dread. He now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunram where the blazing reddish forest fire spreads to the skies assisted by the whirlwind.

எரித்த பைங்க் அரிவங்குபெழுவா யெயிற்றோடி, தெய்வருவென்ற  
இரித்து வானோர் கைக்கியோட கிருத்தலம் மானிடம்,  
தெரித்த வேயின் முறையடி அனிகுந் தினெறி வாபுருவை,  
திரித்த வானைக் கையொப்பாக்குத் சிங்கவேள்குன்றமே. (6)

6. "What kind of strange form is this Man-Lion with gleaming greenish eyes and glowing jaw containing flashing fangs!" thus exclaiming, the gods ran helter skelter unsteadily in fright. That Lord of all now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunrum where tigers look for the pug marks of their prey, the elephants, among the large tracts of dense bamboo bushes.

முனைத்த நீற்றம் வின்கடப்போய் முயல் கும்பிறவும்  
அனைத்து மஞ்ச வானசியா இருத்தலம் மானதிடம்  
கனைத்த நீடும் கல்லுமல்லா விவ்வுடை வேடருமாய்த்  
நீனைத் தனைபுகு செயல்பொன்னாச் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே.

(7)

7. The denizens of the three worlds were filled with dire apprehension that the universe would come to an end because the increasing ire of Lord Narasimha began burning the skies. He now resides in Singa-Vel-dKunrum which is full of the noise of bursting stones burnt by forest fires and the more fierce hunters roaming with their bows.

நாத்த மும்ப நாள்முடி மீனா மாய்முறையால்  
ஏத்த. அங்கோ ஈளசியா இருத்தலம் மானதிடம்  
காய்த்த வாகை நேற்றொயிப்பக் கல்வநர் வேய்க்கழைபோய்த்  
தேய்த்த நீயால் வின்கிலக்குச் சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே.

(8)

8. Brahma and Siva continuously and by turns extol the unrivalled Lord Narasimha in an appropriate manner till their tongues become thick with fatigue. That Lord now resides in Singa-Vel-Kunrum where the dried up fruits of Vahai trees make a rattling noise in the wind, while the tall pipe like bamboos, emerging amidst stones, rub against each other, brightening the sky with the resultant fire.

நல்லே நெஞ்சே நாந்தொழுது நம்முடை நம்பருமான்  
அல்லி மாதர் புலகறின்ற வரவிர்த தோளளிடைம்  
நெய்வி மலகிக் கல்லுடைப்பப் புய்விவ யார்ந்து. அநர்வாய்ச்  
சிவ்வி சிவவென் னொய்வனாத சிங்கவேள் குன்றமே.

(9)

9. O! my benign mind! let us worship Narasimha, who is our own Lord, who is enfolding Mahalakshmi, on His side, who is endowed with a thousand arms, and who is now residing in Singa-Vel-Kunrum where the growing trees break through rocks with their spreading roofs, where the palm leaves restle and crickets screech unceasingly.

செங்க னாளி யிட்டிறைஞ்சு சிங்கவேள் குன்றுடைய  
எங்க ளீச செம்பிராணை விருந்தமிழ் ழூற்புலவன்  
மங்கை யாளன் மன்னுதொய்சீர் வண்டறை தார்க்கலியன்  
செங்கை யாளன் செஞ்தொய்மால் வய்வவர் தீதிரே.

(10)

10. Those mastering these verses by the generous Alvar, a master of Tamil poetry and Ruler of Tirumangai, ever blessed by Vaishnava-Sri, wearing a garland attended by buzzing bees, will, by the grace of that Lord Narasimha, face no evil and derive auspicious benefits.

23. S.I.I., XVI, No. 235

24. Ibid., No. 263

25. Ibid., No. 169

26. Ibid., No. 235

27. This type of reservoirs is found in Hampi, which are of bigger size.

28. S.I.I., XVI, No. 263

## Chapter - 2

1. *Kurnool District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1974, Hyderabad.

2. *Cuddapah Inscriptions*, ed. Venkataramanaiiah, N., Madras, 1972, *Introduction*, P.6.

3. Sastri, K.A.N., *A History of south India*, London, 1958, PP.85-86.

4. Rama Rao, M., *Temples of Sri Sallam*, Hyderabad, 1967, P.10.

5. *Cuddapah Inscription*, ed. venkataramanaiiah, N. Madras, 1972, *Introduction*, P.7

6. E.I., Vol. VIII, P. 67.

7. Ibid., P.72
8. Ibid., P.67
9. E.I., Vol. vii, P. 61
10. Luders, *A list of Brahmi Inscriptions* (1909-1910).
11. Burgess, *Buddhist stupas of Amaravathi and Jaggayya Peta*, London, 1887, P. 100
12. Sircar, D.C. *Select Inscription* Vol. I, Calcutta, 1965, P.18
13. Gopalachari, K., *Early History of the Andhra country*, Madras, 1976, P. 49
14. Ajayamitra Sastri, A., *Coinage of the satavahanas and the coins from excavations*, Nagpur, 1972, P.33.
15. Gopalachari, K., *Early History of the Andhra country*, Madras, 1976, P.35
16. Chittoor District, *Gazetteer*, (rev) 1979, Hyderabad, 1979, P.24
17. *Kurnool District Gazetteer* (rev) 1974, Hyderabad, P.32
18. *Cuddapah Inscriptions*, ed. Venkataramanaiah, N. Madras, 1972 *Introduction*, PP. 89
19. *Kurnool District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1974, Hyderabad, P.32.
20. Krishnamurthy, M.S., *The Nolambas*, Mysore 1980, P.1.
21. Rama Rao, M., *Temples of Srisaillam*, Hyderabad, 1967, P.10
22. Sastri, K.A.N., *The cholas* Madras, 1955 pp. 100-101.
23. *Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh Cuddapah District*, Vol. I No. 10
24. i. *The Malepadas Plates of Panyakumara* (E.I. XI.P.344).
- ii. *Dommar Nandyala Plates of Panyakumara* E.I., XXVII. PP.268. ff
- iii. *Madras museum plates of Sri kankachola* C.P., No.5 of 1935-36, JIH, XV, PP. 30 ff
- iv. *Pedachapalli plates of Srikantha Srimanohara*, E.P. *Andhrta* VI. PP.13FF.

The King of this dynasty used Telugu language for the first time in the history of *Andhra* for issuing inscriptions. The first Telugu inscriptions found at *Kalamalla* in *Kamalapuram taluk*, assignable to the 6th century A.D., is in Telugu, which was issued by Dhananjayavarma, the first king of this line. All the stone inscriptions of this dynasty appear in Telugu and the copperplate one in *Sanskrit*. The following is the genealogy of the *Renati Cholas* as given by M. Venkataramanaiah on the basis of their inscriptions.

Dhananjaya 575 A.D.

Mahendra Vikrama 600 A.D.

Navaruna

Muditasilakshana

Lord of Chera, Chola and Pandya countries Gunamudita Panyakumara

M. vasantapuri cholamahater 625 A.D.

Vikramaditya I C. 650 A.D.

Saktikomara C. 700 A.D.

Vikramaditya II

Cholamaharaja C.700. A.D.

Uttamaditya C.725 A.D.

Satyaditya C. 725. A.D.

Prithivivallabha

Vijayaditya Chola C.750.A.D.

25. E.I. XXVII, P.248.

26. A.R.E., 314 of 1922.
27. *Cuddapah District Gazetteer*, (rev).1967, Hyderabad. P.76
28. Gurumurthy A., *Temples of Cuddapah District*, P.5
29. *Telangana Inscriptions*, Vol. 11. PP. 34-37
30. A.R.E. No. 319 of 1905
31. S.I.I., Vol. X., No. 463
32. *Ibid.*, No. 448
33. *Kurnool District Gazetteer* (rev). 1967, Hyderabad
34. *Ibid.*, P.53
35. *Ibid.*, P.55
36. *Chittoor District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1979, Hyderabad P.25.
37. *Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, Cuddapah District Vol.I* No. 88
38. Rama Rao, M., *Temples of Sri Sailam*, Hyderabad, 1967, P.14.
39. Srinivasulu .K., *Gandikotacharitra-sanskriti* (Telugu), Proddatur, 1988, P.51
40. *Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, Cuddapah District, Vol. I, No.73*
41. Srinivasulu. K., *Gandikotacharitra - Sanskriti* (Telugu), proddatur, 1988, P.52
42. S.I.I. Vol. X. No. 10
43. Lakshminjanam, K., ed. *Siddeswara charitra of kasesarvappa*, Hyderabad 1966, P.46
44. S.I.I. Vol. X, No. 550
45. Sampath., M.D., *Chitoor through the Ages*, Delhi, 1980, P.98
46. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XX, P.53
47. Srinivasulu, K. *Gandikotacharitra - Sanskriti*, Proddatur, 1980. P.53
48. *Kurnool District Gazetteer* rev. P. 36., Hyderabad, P.36
49. Sampath, M.D., *Chittoor through the Ages*, P. 104.
50. *Ibid.*, P.105.
51. *Anantapur District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1970, Hyderabad P.59.
52. *Ibid.* PP. 61-62
53. *Ibid.*, PP. 83-84
54. *Cuddapah Inscriptions* ed. Venkatarmanasiah. N. Madras, 1972. P.53
55. *Ibid*
56. Venkatarmanasayya, N., *Further sources of Vijayanagara History*, Vol.1.
57. A.R., No. 564 of 1916
58. I.A.P.C., I., No. 87
59. *Kurnool District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1974, Hyderabad, P.43
60. *Ibid.*, P.44
61. *Ibid.*, PP. 44-55
62. *Cuddapah District Gazetteer*, (rev) 1967, Hyderabad, P.7

#### Chapter - 3

1. Quoted by K.C. Varadachari, *Alvars of South India, Introduction*, Bombay 1970
2. It may be noted in this connection that, of the Twelve Alvars, one was a woman saint, Andal, who cannot be considered, strictly speaking, as an Alvar. But she has been given that status since she occupies such a pre-eminent position among the devotees of Vishnu.
3. Nilakanta matri, K.A.N., *Development of Religion in South India*, Madras, 1963, P.45.
4. This discredits incidentally the famous story of Tirumangai meeting the great Saiva saint Jnana sambandhar
5. However, there are many resemblances, in literary form and religious sentiments, between Jnana sambandhar and Tirumangai.

6. A famous Telugu Kavya, *Amuktamalyada* or *Vishnuchitaya* written by Krishnadevaraya, the Vijayanagara Emperor, is based on this theme.
7. Nilakantha Sastri, K.A., *Development of Religion of South India*, Madras, 1963, P. 47
8. In his work *sankalpa suryodaya*, Vendanta Desika makes a passing reference to Melkote by appreciating the place for its good climate and pleasant look
9. Anonymous, Daily worship at Ahobilam Matha, *Sri Nrisimha Priya : Azagia singers of Ahobilam*, special issue ed. V.P. Raghava chari and K.Devanatham, vol. 73, Nos 3-4
10. Raman, K.V., *Sri varadaraja swamy temple, kanchi*, New Delhi, 1975
11. *Inscriptions of Mysore*, P. 315
12. A.R., 256/50-51 and No. 370 and No. 393 of *Srirangam Temple Inscriptions*
13. *Samsihanam of Ahobilam Mutt, Sri Nrisimha Priya Azagia singers of Ahobilam*, special issue., Vol. 13. Nos. 3-4, June 1992, P.50.

#### Chapter - 4

1. Venkateshwar Sastri, . M. *Srimadhahobilla Mahatmyamu 1, Nrisimhapriya* (Telugu), March 1982, P. 10. and Parthasarathi Battacharu Pandita. *Akula Mannadu, Ahobilla Kshetramu - Puranakantha, Aradhana*, April - 1956, P. 62.
2. *Sri Simhachala Kshetra Mahatmyam* (Sanskrit), Published by the Devasthanam of Simhachalam, Slokas. 11-17.
3. Of these four places Kritasancham and Harapapam cannot be identified. Simhachalam is located in the north of Vishakapatnam.
4. *Sri Simhachala Ksetra Mahatmyam* (Sanskrit), Published by the Devasthanam of Simhachalam slokas 11-17.
5. The *Kaifiyats* are digests prepared from *Kaviles* or village registers containing information on the political, religious, social and other conditions of villages in the Deccan and were prepared by Pandits and musaddis working under Col. Maclezie. The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat* is in Telugu and was written by one Kasuba karnam Ramanna in the year (1810, 28th July 1810). The *Kaifiyat* is available in the state of Archives at Hyderabad.
6. *Guruparamparai* is available in many versions. The vedagalai version provides a detailed account and hence this has been made use of in this present work.
7. Ramesan, N., *Temples and legends in Andhra Pradesh*, Chapter III, pp. 27-28.
8. Mack. Vol. (S.A.) No. 100, *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*, pp. 4-5.
9. Ramesan, N; *Temples and legends of Andhra Pradesh*, Chapter III, pp. 27-28.
10. Srinivasacharya, Kilattur, *Sri Ahobilla Kshetam Maha Samproksanam Commemoration Souvenir*, 30th June, 1978
11. Subramanya Sarma, Tangirala, *Sri Ahobilla Kshetram, Andhradesa Charitra Bhugola Sarvasvamu*, Vol. II. p. 89.
12. Patanjali Sastri, N. *Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Andhradesa Paryatanamu, Aradhana*, March, 1955, p.6.
13. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. II. A.P. Part - VII, B(II)
14. Folk Songs in Telugu.
15. Srivan Satagopa Jiyar, *Vasanthika Parinayam* (Sanskrit).
16. D. Ramaswami Iyengar's paper manuscript, "A Descriptive History of the Forgotten Shrines of Ahobilam" (Madras, 1916) preserved in Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras.
17. E.I. Vol. XXXVIII, Part - II, PP. 338-340.
18. Abdul Waheed Khan *A unique Narasimha Icon*, Hyderabad, 1914.
19. "The plaque is important for many reasons. Next to the Ashtabujaswami Temple, the image of which is lost, this is the earliest form of Vishnu (Nrisimha) known to us from any part of Andhra. The tradition of dedication of such plaques became popular in the later ages and Sivaramamurthy has referred to one from Peddamudiya in his note on early sculptures and also illustrated by late Prof. Banerjee".



The plaque from Kondamotu is made of limestone and contains six figures, a central Nrisimha in theomorphic form seated on its fours with an uplifted penis. The additional human hands with *Kankanas* (bracelets) are added to this and carry a *gada* and *chakra*. Two standing figures of Kartikeya and Vishnu flank this image. The two-handed Kartikeya holds his weapons *Sakti* in his right hand the *Kubjita* in his left. A two-handed Vishnu stands in *Samabhanga* and holds a *Sanika* and the right hand is held in *abhaya-mudra*. He wears a crown similar to the one worn by the figures in the Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda sculptures. On the right of these figures, Rama holding a bow and arrow stands cross-legged in *tribhanga*. Balarama, wearing *kundalas* and a typical Amaravati, head gear holds his wine cup. Lastly, perhaps kalki is shown holding a sword and a shield in his hands.

The delineation of the figures in the drapery, ornamentation etc., is typical of Amaravathi school of art and therefore cannot be far removed in date from the third and fourth centuries A.D.

20. Sarkar, H., *History of South India*, P. 563.

21. Ibid.

22. S.I.I., Vol. XVI, No. 296

#### Chapter - 5

1. These two structures are popularly known as *Egura* (Upper) Ahobilam and *Digruva* (Lower) Ahobilam Temples.
2. In 1916, the approach road existed only upto the 5th mile.
3. Local people believe that there is a board of valuables underneath the stone. Many have tried to remove the stone, but in vain. Another belief is that the priests used to get water from the periodical springs underneath, to the temple.
4. S.I.I., XVI, No. 296
5. Ibid., No. 174
6. E.I. Vol. XXXVIII, Part. VII, pp. 339-340.
7. *Inscriptions of Andhradesa*, Vol. II. Part - I, Guntur, No. 472, P. 274.
8. M. Vol. 100 (S.A.), *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*
9. S.I.I., Vol. XVI, No. 53
10. Ibid., No. 155

#### Chapter - 6

1. Ronald M. Huntington, *Avatars and Yugas: An Essay in Puranic cosmology*, *Puranam*, vol.VI, No. 1, 1964, p.18.
2. Buddha's function according to the Puranas is purely negative.
3. Ronald M. Huntington, *Avatars and Yugas: An Essay in Puranic Cosmology*, *Puranam*, Vol. VI.No. 1, 1964, 1133-37.
4. C. Sivarama Murthi, *Geographical and Chronological Factors in the Indian Iconography*, *Ancient India*, No. 6(1950) P.30.
5. The presence of symbolic figure of Lakshmi is significant. Narasimha is visualised for the first time in the combined aspects of Lakshmi-Narasimha, representations of which occur in the later sculpture of the Cholas and subsequent periods in large numbers. The plaque, therefore, may be said to represent the earliest form of the concept.
6. Krishna, also among the avatars of Vishnu, is worshipped as a child, a young man etc. forms fit for exhibiting the various kinds of *bhakti*, or love, as for instance, that of a mother for her child, that of a wife for her husband and that of a friend for a friend. Due to this feature, Krishna, is specially likable to the Srivaishnava psyche and hence varieties of Krishna, including Balakrishna find depiction in the Srivaishnava temples.
7. Gopinatha Rao does not give details of the six-handed *sudarana-chakra*. However, there is a passage in the *Purushottama Samhita* (VII. 40b-42a) which mentions slightly different attributes for the six-handed Sudarmana (H.D. Smith 1969 P. 582).
8. Interestingly enough many of the sculptures of gods and goddesses depicted here are more general in type showing only their essential features. Very few of them are completely in accordance with the *agamic* prescriptions.

## Chapter -7

1. The credit for systematization of the pujas conducted in Sri-Vaishnava Temple is attributed to Ramanuja.
2. Sadhu Subramanya Sastri, in his *Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphy Report* summarises the formulation and systematization of the temple worship by Ramanuja and his followers, P.87. ff.
3. Raman, K.V., *Sri Varadaraja Svami Temple*, Kanchi, New Delhi, 1975, P.35.
4. Ramesan, *The Tirumala Temple*, Tirupati, New Delhi, 1975, P.35
5. F.O. Schrader introduction to *Pancharatra*, Madras, 1956.
6. S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No.174.
7. S.I.I. Vol. IX. No.577.
8. S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No.165.
9. S.I.I. Vol. X. No.814, Mack, Vol. (SA) 251, P.122.
10. S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No.263.
11. Ibid., Nos.159, 165, 169 and 188.
12. Ibid., No.174.
13. Ibid., No.165.
14. The *sathagopam* is a round vessel, made of silver or brass, with small figures of foot-prints of god Vishnu, drawn together on the outer apex of the vessel. It is always kept in a plate before the 'utsava idols' of the god, in such a way that the foot-prints are visible to the devotees, wherever the god goes out of the sanctum, the *Sathagopam* follows him. The devotees visiting the temple are blessed by the touch of *sathagopam* upon their heads, which is considered as keeping the feet of the god on their heads in humility to gain blessings from Him for spiritual merit and material prosperity and longevity. This service of the temple is done by the priests without any distinction of caste or creed.
15. S.I.I. Vol. XVI, No.296.
16. Mack. Vol. (S.A) No.100, *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*.
17. *Parivattam* means a cloth of the god is tied to the head of a devotee as a mark of honour for the recognition of his services to the Lord of the Temple.
18. K.A.N. Sastri, *The History of South India*, Madras, 1956.
19. S.I.I. Vol. XVI, No.155.
20. Interview with Chikkudugaya Ranga Charya, a scholar in sanskrit, Hyderabad.
21. Ibid., ("Kartika dipam danam tubhya samprapte namah").
22. *Purushottama samhita*, Adh.27.  
*"Kartikyam vahini naksatre, (Kartika naksatram)*  
*Rohinyam vapare nam*  
*Pournamasyam vrse lagne,*  
*Diparohana machareti".*
23. S.I.I. Vol. XVI, No. 159.
24. Ibid., No.53.
25. Ibid., No.159.
26. Mack. Vol. (S.A) 251, P.111
27. S.I.I. Vol. XVI, 263.
28. Mack. Vol. (S.A) 251, P.111
29. Ibid., PP.111-168.
30. S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No.159.
31. Ibid., No.169.
32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., No.188
34. Ibid., No.235
35. Ibid., No.248
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., No.261
38. Ibid., No.310
39. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1915-16, Sl. No. 76, P.65.
40. Vira Raghavacharya, T.K.T, *History of Tirupati*, Vol.II P.658.
41. S.I.I. Vol. XVI, No.155.

#### Chapter - 8

1. *Ahobilam Temple Records* checked by Government Auditors of the Endowments Department
2. Ranga Charya, K., *The Srivaishnava Brahmanas*, Madras, 1931.
3. D. Rama Swamy Iyyengar's, paper manuscript, *A Descriptive History of the Forgotten shrines of Ahobilam*. (Madras, 1916) preserved in the Tamilnadu Archives, Madras.
4. S.I.I., XVI, No. 248
5. Ibid., No. 260
6. Ibid., No. 263
7. Ibid., No. 299
8. *The Administrative Record* of the Lower Ahobilam Temple, B.O.No. 632, dated 21/6/1946.
9. Vide G.O.No. 6639 dated 20-12-1949 maintained in the trustee Board's records of the Lower Ahobilam Temple.
10. Ibid
11. S.I.I. XVI, Nos. 248, 257
12. Ibid
13. Ibid., Nos. 199, 200, 235 & 257
14. For details see.A. Surya Kumari, *The Temples in Andhra Desa* unpublished
15. S.S.I. XVI, No. 109
16. S.I.I. XIV, No. 174
17. Ibid., No. 199
18. Ibid., No. 235
19. D. Rama Swamy Iyyengar, paper manuscript *A Descriptive History of the Forgotten shrines of Ahobilam* (Madras, 1916) preserved in the Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras.

#### Chapter - 9

1. S.I.I. XVI, No. 248
2. Ibid., No. 53
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. No. 96
5. Ibid., No. 169
6. Ibid., No. 174
7. Ibid., No. 181
8. Ibid., No. 199
9. Inscription recording the repairing work of tanks and canals refer to *dasavanda* or *dasabandha* which means one tenth. Imposing 1/10 of tax on the land irrigated under a particular tank and giving that amount to the person or persons who repaired the tank is *dasavanda* according to Irwanadattu. D.C. Sircar explains *dasavanda* in two ways (a) *Dasavanda* is 1/10 of the total produce of the lands under tanks, wells and canals and should go to the people who attended to the

## APPENDIX - I

### LIST OF INSCRIPTIONS FROM UPPER AND LOWER AHOBILAM TEMPLES (TEXTS)

#### No. 1

- 1 Svami [4°] Śrīmat-
- 2 K[ṛ]ṣṇa[ṭṭiva(r°)]mna-Aṅṭ-
- 3 vārituḷḷ-ēḷu
- 4 Pri(ḷi)ṭṭivḷ-Vāpa-ā-
- 5 julum-Patamaśvayam
- 6 akkaga ungi parai-
- 7 vaggāu Napavija-
- 8 yunṭu Kuḍalūra iruvadi-
- 9 ēnu maruṇṭuḷḷu pannaṭṭāḷ(na)
- 10 Vēḷi-pāḷa Duggayaṭ-
- 11 kaḷahinayadi nāyagu-
- 12 ) kaṇṇal-ugānu [ḷi°] Uṇṇṭya-
- 13 pāḷu Duḷḷa-pāḷu Nigama [ṭṭi]
- 14 gi-ḷavuru Kōḷḷi-ḷavuru Vā-
- 15 buḷa-Pōḷa-Kōṇḷa-ḷavuru-Dāsa-
- 16 ḷi Kāṇṇuḷu K[ṇ]ṇu indoru
- 17 gōṇṇa[ṭṭi]bugānu ā boḷḷagiri [ḷi°] di(di)ni
- 18 kaḷahinavāṇṇu Vāṇṇai vāvura pā-
- 19 ḷu vā kavijalu vā guḷḷu vā ṇṇu-
- 20 vūḷu kaḷahinava(vā)ṇṇu [ḷi°] kaḷṭṭuṇ
- 21 k[ṇ]ṇa[ṭṭi]ḷu
- 22 P[ṇ]ṇa-ṇṇa-
- 23 ṭu Pōḷāḷ-
- 24 m[ṇ]ṇaḷi
- 25 ḷḷ-ḷ[ṇ]ṇaḷ(na) pāḷ(ṇa)-
- 26 ṇṇaṇṇa [ḷi°]



- 40 రావార్యాశరణం బతుయ్యుగావరిబసవిరాజు-
- 41 మానరప్ప నాణంబుర కాశం శాస్త్రియర్లుయ బతుస్సమయోళిగా ని-
- 42 ధనిధానప్రవిష్టాశునిని నిర్దేశించిగొట్టెనుగొట్టెయిం పరమే-
- 43 స్వరదత్తియోగి ధారాపూర్వకం మూట కట్టెను ధర్మమనా-
- 44 రానునపుదచు గణగయోళి పుయగయోళం వారణాసియోళం
- 45 మాసిర శనిరయింను నాసిబ్బగు నేదపారగరునెనపుద పూతల-
- 46 శ్మశలుచు || స్వరదత్తి పరదేశం వా యొగ గరపాని ముంధుర సప్త్యుచరణ-
- 47 గౌరవాశ్రి మిష్యానాం జాయతే శ్రీమి[?] || మద్దెలకనా పరమే-
- 48 పరివంకజు న పాపాదర్శనమనశ్శర భువి భావిభక్షిపా | యే
- 49 పాలయంతి సుమ ధర్మమిమం శ్రీమ[?]శం తేషాం మయా(౦) విగటితాంబు-

### No. 3

Part of the inscription

- 1 శ్మశ్రితీ [శకవతుషయ] ౧౨౯౩
- 2 గళ నంకర్తక మామ...
- 3 .... తథా [అద] తామహా శ్మశ్రి
- 4 శ్రీమతకమయ... దివరాశి శ్మశ్రి
- 5 కమస్త గుణాంకార రంతుమయతా
- 6 రకార విగ్రహవిగ్ర[?] రకారకరకరక
- 7 అరుణారం అగ్రాగ్రాంక అయ
- 8 మంకరగంక రాయతేకాయం అగ్రాగ్ర
- 9 కర్తక హేమశ్రీ రావపరం ప్రణావలిపాం
- 10 ....కరకరకర రుమానాయం
- 11 సానాయం రుణంరీమ అవగిరీత మా
- 12 రావకరతరామ అనేక వగరవకంక ప్రతిపా
- 13 పరివంకరా
- 14 రామ నంకరక
- 15 పాం అగరకపాం
- 16 అగరగపాం గు
- 17 అగరకపాం
- 18 రావారి దుగ్గళ పిత
- 19 శ కరకరకరకర
- 20 అంకరకరకర
- 21 దివికరకరకర
- 22 అగరకరకరకర
- 23 గ్రహం రుణంరీమ
- 24 రుమానాయం శ్రీ

- 25 వనరాశాశోకంబిమి [ఁ]  
 26 తపోపాన . వందా.  
 27 ముద్రవిష్టత . గంతుం  
 28 టానినార . వలరశింప  
 29 ఎనినార . కుండివరీ [కృ]

- 1 దివ్యరయ్యస్యచి ? రామనారయ్యత్ర  
 2 యోమల్లయరామదమ్మక న్యోశ్య  
 3 వికారయరాగం॥శ్రీవవ [ఁ] త న్న  
 4 రివేదమగు శ్రీ పుల్లకాశానస్యమి [గృ]  
 5 హంగలమున॥ మహానియగు చి  
 6 రమంబ్దవం [బు] అనేక వైదినితంబగు వ  
 7 గ్యస్థిత [ం] లవోవృ కర్ణంబి అగనాబ్ధిగంక  
 8 న్నవేమ తూచిరుది కాళ్య [త] రమ్మకాచితవ  
 9 కీర్తి . నకం విక్రం నిండ్రి సాంధ్రవమై అతం  
 10 ద్రవారకఃస్థితిపవిరాతవరం దే॥ కాంకరాగ  
 11 మ మంత్రిరీషాచితుం . దంధిరాచారం  
 12 దగ్గరమ్మ వంశరిషంలామనమ [తు]  
 13 ం వంశిమేక ఎటంద మల్లనా బుల్లంక  
 14 కివరక్తమాగ [ఁ] రతుంముఅవ్వయరెర్దిం  
 15 గారికి పుణ్యముగాను శ్రీ [ద్ర]ం.....యగా  
 16 చి రమ్మకాము శ్రీ.

## No. 4

65. శ్రీగిరి రహస్యహా -  
 బంధిని పుష్పపాన  
 మాగాం లకి ర్  
 విభావో రచి౦ వనాతన యక వ్ర -  
 లంధావం లూకలే ॥౧౦॥ ప్రాచార

- 1 కుళమత్తు పరమ్యురామరాధీకమూక్తిశేషిరాజరం । అహంబ-
- 2 లక్ష్మీపాన్యస్య దేవదేవస్య కావనం । వ్యక్తి శ్రీకేశవమంబులు ౧౩౩౨ అగు తే-
- 3 ంటి దిక్పరిపాతర్యుర మార్గశిర కు గు గు వారానకు శ్రీఅహంబులదేవర ది-
- 4 ర్య అవనరానకు కొమరగిరిరెడ్డింగారి, కుక్కరముగాను కాలమరె-
- 5 డ్డివేమారెడ్డింగారు కలవచేటు కొమరగిరిపుర కుని చారత్రాసి
- 6 నమస్తానా సిసిరి । కత్తు కాలయకొరే పోత్రో మారస్య కాల-
- 7 కృపమాను । వీరాన్న పోతస్యపరే కామారా జయిరి వేమరూపాల । కొ-
- 8 మరగిరియ్యంగారి, పరమహితుండైన కాలమరెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగ్రావ ర-
- 9 నకు పాన్య అభవ కొమరగిరియ్యంగారి, పాని దేవులైన అమ్మంగారు-
- 10 లకుమ్మ అమ్మయనుకృతముగాను దేవగ్రామమ్మ బ్రహ్మలకుమ్మ చారత్రా-
- 11 శి ఇచ్చిన కొమరగిరిమండలం । వెలకొమరగిరిపురం । అమ్మలపురం ।
- 12 శ్రీచారణానిది శ్రీకృష్ణరదేశ్వర కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీవర్ధరానది కుమర-
- 13 గిరిపురం । పంగులూరి పరువరయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురము । పంగులూరి ి-
- 14 మగయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీభట్టరయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । కంచారయ-
- 15 గారి కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీంగారరాయని కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీనవ్వకవరపు రావ-
- 16 య్య కొమరగిరిపురం । మురందేశ్వరదేవర కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీపుల కుమరగిరిపురం । పా-
- 17 ర్తికుల కొమరగిరిపురం । పాల్లవారి కొమరగిరిపురం । పానువేదాల కొమరగిరిపురం । పా-
- 18 మాకోడ్యుల కొమరగిరిపురం । పానావలివల్లభమ్మ కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీనానినాథునిఅబ్బర కొ-
- 19 మరగిరిపురం । [1] బ్రహ్మయ్యశ్రీపాదాల కొమరగిరిపురం । వేహ్మూరూపాల కొమరగిరిపురం । లా-
- 20 గ్గరపు మారరాజవారి కొమరగిరిపురం । మహాదేవయ్యంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । వేమ-
- 21 గారి సింగవసోమయాజుల కొమరగిరిపురం । జరవము పెద్దిరాజవారి కొమరగిరిపురం । మండ-
- 22 య రామనాథసోమయాజులవారి దుడ్రభట్లమూడుభట్ల కొమరగిరిపురం । గ్రామాశ్రీకుల కొమర-
- 23 గిరిపురం । అమ్మరావం అచ్చభోయంగారి రామనంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । వలనవల్లి అత్త భోభల
- 24 కొమరగిరిపురం । [శ్రీ]హరంపీరకుంట శ్రీగిరింగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । దివపాలపెద్ది! కొమరగిరిపురం ।
- 25 . . . కొమరగిరిపురం । . . పోరరాజవారి కొమరగిరిపురం । త్రిత్రాయపె-
- 26 [చివ] కొమరగిరిపురం । త్రిపురాజవారి తల్లగడ్డకొమరగిరిపురం । వేదాద్రిశ్రీవర సిద్ధాదేవర
- 27 కొమరగిరిపురం । మారరాజ తిప్పనంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । అరాధ్యుల కుక్కరంగారి కొమ-
- 28 రగిరిపురం । వేయే శ్రీకేశవనాథని కొమరగిరిపురం । కాండ శ్రీవరసిద్ధాదేవర కొ
- 29 మరగిరిపురం । యెలపోరసిద్ధుల కొమరగిరిపురం । తాయూరి సోమయాజులవారి
- 30 మల్లుభట్ల కొమరగిరిపురం । శింగాయవండితులవారి విశ్వనాథపెమ్మన. కొమరగిరిపురం । శి-



- 31 ద్వాపరపండితులవారి అన్నాపండితుల కొమరగిరిపురం । పంగులూరి శ్రీగిరియ్యంగారి  
32 దేవు లైన మల్లాయంమంగారి వనపు ట్టివర కొమరగిరిపురం । మైలాపరదేవ కొమరగిరిపురం ।  
33 మూలంగురంమ కొమరగిరిపురం । శింగాయపండితుల . . . [త్ర]మాప-  
34 పండితులవారి అపవేదవము । అకుల . . . పెద్దిభట్లవారిమామిడిమండపము . . . ]  
35 [కాట]మరెడ్డి వేంవరం । దేవన్నయంగారి ప్రభావలక్ష్మవరము । మాడ్లము రామనాథేశ్వర-  
36 మయాళలనాగి పెద్దవరం నందేయ్యలకేళవరవేంవరం । పెన్నవరం । వీరవరం । వనస్పతి-  
37 శ్రీనాథాలశ్రీలక్ష్మీవరసహ్యపురం । కాటమరెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగారి అర్జుంగలమ్మి[అ]  
38 ఇ అకొమరగిరియ్యంగారే ఇకొమరగిరియ్యంగారై అవరరించిన. ఇ[కొ]-  
39 మరగిరియ్యంగారి రద్దింగారైన రద్దిపాపంమంగారు ఇకొమరగిరియ్యంగారి[రద్ది]  
40 కాటమరెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగారిమ్మి ముక్కడముగాను శ్రీనాథదొరీరముండును వే-  
41 చా[ది]శ్రీవరసహ్యదేవరకును అచ్యుతాచార్యము ప్రసనంపర్వరతిమహాశివహా-  
42 ర్పవామరు చా[ర్]పానీ వసుమధునివేసిన తెలుచూరిరద్దివరము । కాటమ-  
43 రెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగారి అర్జుంగలమ్మి అఇన చుట్టపాపంమంగారు కాటమ-  
44 రెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగారిమ్మి స్వామి అఇన కొమరగిరియ్యంగారిమ్మి వాడిదేవు  
45 లైన అమంగారులకున్న అక్షయమృతమిల్లటగాను మరనం-  
46 క్రమాగ్రుణ్యకాలమందు రాజమహేంద్రవరానను శ్రీనాథదొరీ-  
47 రవందు మార్కండేయదేవరకు మోండి గుడి కట్టించి మార్కం-  
48 దేవరకు విర్య అవసరానకు నిచ్చిన మల్లవరము

- 1 అది కుకమయ్య పంపురామగారి పోమోడిపంపురం[కొ]  
2 అచార్యము పంపురే వేంవరం కొమరగిరియ్యంగారి ను.  
3 వేంవరగిరియ్యంగారి రామమహేశ్వర ప్రభావరాయలగారి అది.  
4 రాయలవారి అగ్గిగిరియ్యంగారిపంపురం పూర్వం.  
5 కడుగవల్లిమములరాజేశ్వర యవనవాక్యప్రసాదరా-  
6 ల్య గణపతిదేవరాజ శ్రీవరప్రభావ శ్రీవరవరదేవ.  
7 మహారాయలు పూర్వగిరియ్య[కొ] దూరకు విచ్చేసి పురయ.  
8 గిరి దుగిరియ్యము పొంది పంపురామగారియ మహా.  
9 పాపుని అట్లగిరి వివిగిరి పెల్లగిరి వాగారగిరి.  
10 కొండ అద్దం అంబవరదేవ గంగేద కేవలం మో.  
11 దిల్లసు గిరియ్యంగారియము పరకాలిం కై గిరి కొం.  
12 దిల్లసు విచ్చే దుగిరియ్య ములవాగిరి వరవరపూర్వము తెలి  
13 కొండ వరదేవయిది పంపుర గిరియ్యంగారి పంపుర విచ్చేసి దు-  
14 గిరియ్యంగారి దుగిరియ్యంగారియము ప్రభావరాయలగారియ-  
15 వేంవరం కొమరగిరియ్యంగారియ విర్యరాయల కొమర వారి.  
16 వేంవరం కొమర వరవారిదేవు శ్రీనాథరాజ రామరాజ కొడు-  
17 లు అట్లవారి రామర ములవామయ పురదేవ-  
18 మయ పురదేవ వేంవరపూర్వము వేంవరాయలగారియ-  
19 వేంవరయ్య విరు మోరయ్య రాజరాయలగారియ-  
20 మోరయ్య కడుగ్రామం అట్లగిరి వాటి అచార్యము-  
21 ము అచ్చి వరదేవయిది విచ్చేసి అచార్యముగిరియ్యంగారియ-  
22 అచార్యముగిరియ్యంగారియ గిరియ్యంగారియ కడుగ్రామ కేవలం

- 28 మ మూలారామ శిష్యుడవడవరించి తిరిగి వియవగ్రహవ-  
 29 కు విచ్చేసి తనకిదిహామమృతమై పొల్లమార్గమైవచ్చుము  
 30 మనసిని కలగలేకదీక్షింపయోగమై విచ్చేస్తుం-  
 31 మ్మ అహోహామమ విచ్చేసి తేవుని తోకనిది పుష్కరిత-  
 32 యాకృత్యల గాళిరావనక కేకమిదవలలు  
 33 లంబా అగునీట యువ వంశవృక్ష పుష్పి కుడ గమ కు  
 34 క్రూరాది శ్రీ అహోహత్యక తేవుని కంఠమం గ మ-  
 35 య్యేక్షువ పుష్కరానిగ్ధావకం గ మోనగ్ధా-  
 36 ల కదియాల తోడు గ నైందిత్యం గ వాది తే-  
 37 య వాగోయిమ కమిత్యువ వమిహానివ వడక  
 38 గ ఇంక మునుమ మమనంబి లేదకం అమృతమి నై తేర్క-  
 39 అంకలం నై తోగలకు రాంబలమరి మమో మదా-  
 40 కు అనే గ్రామమున్ను మమనంబి యి శేవ [అ]రల్లారా-  
 41 వ్రాయలయ వడవచుచు నిచ్చిని తమ్యుగావం  
 42 మంకవచుశ్రీశ్రీశ్రీ [అ]

## No. 8

**TEXT**

- [illegible]

TEXT

- 1 శ్రీ కుశమన్యుః . కేవలశివరూపం చైత్యవ్యక్త(వ)మూర్తుః [యమ] శ్రీరాజ  
విహవ్యై కేవలమృతానమః . పుష్టి శ్రీయోగ్యురయ కాచిరానాన శకవమవలయ గు  
[మ] అగునేటి [మన్]మరవేవపుర దిల్యుత కు గు . . [శ్రీమరాచారి]  
కా రాజవమేకత శ్రీమరాచారి శ్రీ[అయ్య]కవేమమరాచయలు వృద్ధిరాజ్యం  
శేయమందంగాను శ్రీమరాచమామూయవమ[మ] . శ్రీమద్యైక[రాంక]వృద్ధి  
కారాధ్య వమమారి వర్తిరాచా -
- 2 రాధ్యయమ శ్రీయోగ్యైకమయ్యలగామమ్మ శ్రీ అనోలంబునకాయమ కెప్ప తిరుమం  
రాజయ్యలారి అరికారి వికల తిమరమగారుమ [అరికం]రా[కుంమ] కావ్యవగోత్ర  
అవ్యలయవమగ్ర యోగ్యకాశ్యయమలైక . . . . . వికల అనంకమగారి  
. . . . .
- 3 [అనో]లంబుండు [తిమరాచయ] శేవశేవపురల్లయ [అర]గింకె కళ[గ] గి అమరవది  
. . . . . రోకలు . . . . . రోకలు [గి] అమరు గి . . . . .  
. . . . . అనంకరాకాశ్య[య]గాను వదపుక[మ] గింకారము అది ఇచ్చిన [విరా]  
ధంమ రావం . యీ ధంమరావకు .
- 4 Damaged.

No. 10

- 1 కుశమన్యు పుష్టిశ్రీ అయోగ్యురయ కాచిరానాన శకవమవలయ గులూ అగునేటి ప్రకా  
శక . . . . . శ్రీ విక నరానన కేవలమరా  
యలు వికాన-
- 2 గిరమండు కల్పిసివరూపాలయై యి పురసిహుప్రవాహం . . . . . శేయమందంగాను పుష్టిశ్రీ  
కమరాక కు . . . . .
- 3 అవ్యలయవమగ్రం కృష్ణకాశ్యయలయిన భూతవారు ప్రవృత్త్యయ్యులు కొమా  
యందు [రా] . . . . . చ్చిన పొలివూలు నమానావ  
క్రమ-
- 4 కేవలమమ్మకు [ప్రకాన] . . . . . [కట్ట] . . . . . కుమ ముఖయం పొలివూలు మూ  
అపగ్గగ కేవలమ . . . . . మహించి యందుకు  
కేవలయ [వ] . . . . .
- 5 [రా]య శేవశేవ రి:పాలుకు [కుంకరింక] అరగింక కేవల శేవ ముఖ[యం]అరగింక ముఖ  
య్యలు . . . . . ముఖయలది అరగింక [కట్ట] శేవ  
. . . . .
- 6 . . . . . కేవలకు మహించి యిచ్చిన [గ్రామం అ  
నంకరాకాశ్య[య]గాను వదవంక

# No. 11

- 1 తుభవన్తః : తుభవన్తః సమర్థాః హోత్రేణ విరాజితం [10] యుక్తుః శ్రీ సృష్టివాన్తః
- 2 వ్య దేవేవ్య కామం : దేవతేణ తోతవ్యం చై త్యవ్యం భూమిభ్యం : యుక్తుః శ్రీ సృష్టివాన్తః
- 3 వ్య దేవేవ్య కామం : పృథ్వీ యోగ్యతయ కారిత్రాన కవచభాగంబులు గ[10] అగుచేటి
- 4 క్షేమగ్న వంశవృక్ష అట్టిం ౧౬ బ శ్రీమద్భవానాధారం రామభక్త్యై శ్రీ దీప్తవ్రతా శ్రీ ౨-
- 5 క నరాపివదేవ మహారాయలు విర్యావగతమందు తత్పరివహనాదులందు
- 6 సృష్టివాన్త్రాన్తం సేయమందంగాను పృథ్వీ తమదానభవనాధారై శ్రీ అవో-
- 7 [10] దేవకామహ్యదేవుని దిగ్విజయమున సేయమగు కాత్రిక సోమ[రాం] బా[10] ర్యా మహోత్సవానకుంబు సేయ
- 8 మాత్ర సృష్టన దేవతాను వర్ణనామయ్యుడు అష్టదిగ్విజయము అగింపుడు దారిపూటు చేసిరి కద-
- 9 మ గట్టర తేవరి కావ్యమాత్రం అవ ప్రయమాత్రం యశాశ్వాతాచ్యాయులైన గుడియనెల్లారి పుత్రయ్యులుగా
- 10 క పామందు రామభక్తయ్యులారి పుత్రుండు ఉగ్రభక్తయ్యులగా శ్రీ అవోభక్త్యయం భందారామకు క్రయం మర ౫౦ [య్యున్ని] త-
- 11 యం వర్ణి తెంపుగాను అగింపుం తేవ కట్టరక్రమం ఉచ్యమహోత్సవానకు . . .
- 12 . . . . . పునానానకు . . . . . [దియ్య]-
- 13 ౦ మ [గ] రెంల సెం : రోంబు ౪ అట్టి ౪ తిరుక్కామందు దియ్యం కు గ [మిలాకు] ౨ [అద] గ.౩ . . . . .
- 14 వారుసేయ . గ రోంబు [౪] అటు ౪౦ గంధ . తిరుక్క[10]ంకు మారి . గం ౩ . . . కు దియ్యం . సేయ

Indrapala

# No. 12

- 1 [దేవ]దేవ తోతవ్యం : చై త్యవ్యవభూమిభ్యం[10]
- 2 [య్య]కు శ్రీసృష్టివాన్త్రాన్త దేవతేవ్య కామం[10]
- 3 పృథ్వీ యోగ్యతయ కారిత్రాన కవచ -
- 4 క్షేమంబు గుం ౧౬౦ అగుచేటి కంక వంశవృక్ష చైత్ర కు[10]
- 5 బ శ్రీమద్భవానాధారం మభక్త్యై శ్రీదీప్తవ్రతా శ్రీ
- 6 నరాపివదేవ మహారాయలుంగాను విర్యావగతమందు తత్పరివ -
- 7 సృష్టివాన్త్రాన్తం సేయమందు
- 8 క్షుంభంబాను : శ్రీమదభావంబోటి బ్రహ్మంబ-
- 9 వాయులైన వేదవేదాంతవేద్యులైన పురాణపురా క్రమ -
- 10 లైన శ్రీమహోభక్త్యయం దివ్యశ్రీరంజితకరణాదించుంబు
- 11 దేవ కామరామందు అశ్రేయోద్రవభక్త్యయలైన సోమ -
- 12 సోమభక్త్యయలైన శ్రీమ[10]వ్యవభూమిభ్యం దేవతాన్త్రాన్తం
- 13 దాశయ్యుడే మహారాజులంగాని పాపంబు నశనిగయ్యుడే -
- 14 మహారాజులగారి పుత్రులైన దివలపుత్రయ్యుడే మ -
- 15 తోరాజులగారు పరిసరయ్యయ్యుడే శ్రీ అవంశములైన సో -
- 16 పూగ్గ దంభములు పశుప్రసాదములైన తూరాన తమోరావభక్త-





4 ఏ గౌరవశ్రీ గ్రామం శ్రీ అవతారికమును దీక్షకరించుచు శ్రీ రామానుజులూపాసకు శ్రీ  
 శ్రీ శ్రీ యు అగింపు అంతును పరావీక్షింపజేయుచు పాఠించుచు రాక్షసులనాడు శ్రీ  
 అవతారికేతనం శ్రీ కంఠాపాదం ముద్రాంతుల గాన ఈ గ్రామం గరితే ముగ్ధ క  
 గ ౩౦౦ అక్షరాలను చదివెను.

5 [మ] యా మతవ్యక్త కాత్రికం అవత్యుగాను శ్రీమహావేద్యము శ్రీకంఠాపాదం యా  
 గ్రామం ముద్రాంతుల శ్రీమహావేద్యము దీక్షకరించుచు గౌరవ ముద్రా దివ్యదీపి శ్రీ  
 కావ్యుగాను ముద్రా శ్రీ రామానుజులూపాసకు శ్రీకృష్ణకృష్ణక వివరం దీక్ష దీక్ష దీక్షకరించుచు  
 పరావీక్షింపజేయు అవతరం అము -

6 [మ] ౩౦ : ము శ్రీమహావేద్యము శ్రీ కంఠాపాదం వచ్చేదయిన ప్రకారమును  
 అమరపరి ౧౨ పుతయు అమరపరి ౧౨ ముగ్ధ అగింతే కరిగెను అగ యా కరిగె  
 మింతి నుమమును నెచు ౧౦౧: వివరమును మ గాన కరిగెమును అవత  
 రామెలు ౩౦ మిరియాల మ ౦: కెల్లం పరాలు గా పుత అమరము : శ్రీ కు అము

7 . . ౦౦: ముగ్ధ గౌరవ గరిగె వివర కరిగెమును వివరగరిగెను : యా ముద్రా  
 దీక్ష గరిగె ముద్రా అగింపు యా కరిగె శ్రీ రామానుజులూపాసకు యచ్చి అంతును  
 క్రియాను ముద్రాంతుల ముద్రా పీఠాప : గౌరవశ్రీ గ్రామం గౌరవ ముగ్ధ క గ ౩౦౦  
 అక్షరాలను ముద్రాను ముద్రాంతుల శ్రీ అవతారికేతనం శ్రీక -

8 [౦] కంఠాపాదం యా గ్రామం ముద్రాంతుల యా రక్షుం అవతారికాక్షరాలను శ్రీ  
 కంఠాపాదం వివరగరిగె : శ్రీ ముద్రాక్షరాలను పుత్యం ముద్రాక్షరాలను [౦]  
 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను : రావతం ముద్రాక్షరాలను రావతాక్షరాలను  
 ముద్రాక్షరాలను రావతాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను : రావతాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను -

9 ౦ మరం : ముద్రాక్షరాల ముద్రాక్షరాల ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను [౦] ముద్రాక్షరాలను  
 వివరగరిగె అయితే ముద్రాక్షరాలను :

No. 16

- 1 ౦ మరము : శ్రీవరములము వము : ముద్రాక్షరాలను క-
- 2 యుద్యుతములములములము : ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 3 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను : రావతాక్షరాలను కరిగెములు గాన అగింతే
- 4 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను : గాన గాన శ్రీమరాజులూపాసకు రా-
- 5 ముద్రాక్షరాలను శ్రీమరాజులూపాసకు ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 6 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 7 [య] ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను శ్రీ ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 8 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 9 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 10 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 11 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 12 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 13 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 14 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 15 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 16 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను
- 17 ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను ముద్రాక్షరాలను

- 18: [ప్ర]మాణ్య దీపము గట్టించిన పరమగుణాల [మ]హిమముండ .  
 19: పం గట్టించి అ మండపమీదను ఉన్న: శేఖరేంద్రవరదరి-  
 20: ఎన్ని అగ్రాంశ కటకరేఖ దివతం కి గి పైకు శేఖర ము శ్లో[ని]  
 21: అం ఎమ అగ్రాంశమును పోలకు గు అమలు అం అం ర . మం .  
 22: గాంధి దివలు గు గాంధి ప్రభంధారావకు దొరికినా మమం .  
 23: వృ యుచి కి అం కి గాంధి అగ్రాంశము యుచి వరహం వకు .  
 24: పావ తిరుతిరుగాను వచ్చిన పోలగాను అం మం[ని]కపం మీదకు  
 25: శేఖరేంద్ర . . . శేఖరేంద్రవరదరి ప్రభంధం గాను కం .  
 26: కం మమ ఎం యి [అం]ద్రావ్యక్తి[ని]ముగాను అం  
 27: ప్రభంధ వరహం అమలుగా [ని]ముచ్చిన భక్తిభావం : ప్ర [ని]

No. 17

TEXT .

- 1: [ని] కులమపు . శేఖరేంద్రవరదరి ప్ర భక్తిభావం .  
 2: ముఖాంశ[ని] అమలు ప్రభంధం వ్యక్తి భక్తిభావం .  
 3: పు కులం : పుచ్చి ప్ర భక్తిభావం వ్యక్తిభావం .  
 4: పావ తిరుతిరుగాను గు అం అం అం అం .  
 5: వ వరహం మంగళం కం అం ప్రభంధం .  
 6: పావ కాంధి మేళం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం . 7: దావరేవమహావకు విద్యావగ్రము .  
 8: గు పుచ్చివ్యక్తిభావం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం . 9: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 10: ముఖాంశము : ప్రభంధం ముఖాంశం ప్రభంధం వరహం .  
 11: పావ పుచ్చివ్యక్తిభావం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 12: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 13: ప్ర భక్తిభావం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 14: పావ కాంధి మేళం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 15: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 16: కాంధి : ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 17: యుచి వ పావ మేళం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 18: కాంధి ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 19: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 20: యుచి వ పావ మేళం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 21: మ ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 22: ముఖాంశము ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 23: వ ముఖాంశము ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 24: ముఖాంశము ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 25: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 26: అం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 27: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 28: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 29: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 30: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 31: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 32: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 33: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .  
 34: ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం ప్రభంధం .



## No. 18

- [illegible]

## No. 19

- 1 కుళమపై, శ్రీ కారమనామ సమ: మేమమ్మకామర-తీర్థాంజ్ఞానా
- 2 విరామం: అనా-అవగతినాన్య దేవదేవ్య వనం. దేవదేవ్యదేవ్యం శైలివ్యవ
- 3 అంకురం: అయ్య శ్రీసంపన్నా దేవదేవ్య వనం. శ్రీశ్రీ అనామ్యవయ వం
- 4 అయ్య గుర అనా దేవ దేవ్య వనం శ్రీశ్రీ అనామ్యవయ వం
- 5 అయ్య గుర అనా దేవ దేవ్య వనం శ్రీశ్రీ అనామ్యవయ వం

6. పుటలవోచుకొడుగు వైదికవిశ్రావ్యం చేయుమనగాను [పుస్త] గ్రంథకుడుచా-  
7. ర్యకర్త ప్రాచీనము చివరనువచ్చుచు దిక్కుగ్రామవర్గాలగుండును కాన్యచోడ్రం అవిప్రలహ-  
8. డ్రం యోగ్యార్థార్థాయుండును మార్గదోర్భవమును గ్రహ్యమహామండలము . . .  
9. దిక్కుచాలాగలది బోధించు నవిశ్రావ్యమును చ మారుచే చేయుచేతలముగా-  
10. లు అవలంబములను చ రేదములును నమోదించి యున్నవ . . . పైకావలము చేయుచు అవ.

**TEXT**

- [illegible]

TEXT

- 1 శ్రీవారే రామామాయై నమః శ్రీరామ
- 2 కథమస్తు యేనమృతమరాధితౌహితేగినిరాది(త)తం అహో-
- 3 [త] శ వృక్షంప్రకృత్య కేవలకృత్య కావతం షష్ఠ్యశ్రీ అయాశ్చక్రవర్తియో రామ-
- 4 హం కవచమణ్యులు గం... అ... గం... నేల కొండ పుష్పకృష్ణం... పుష్పకం [...]
- 5 మవృతహారారాం రావతమేకత్ర శ్రీవారేరామ శ్రీ-
- 6 వీర విరావతేవమహారాయు విరావతగణముందు శత్రుహింసకృతా-
- 7 దూరులై వృద్ధిహిమ్రాజ్యము శేయమందంగాను షష్ఠ్యశ్రీ హమ-
- 8 దుఃప్రసాదాశ్రీ శ్రీరామోంబ వీరహరహింసకృతేన దివ్యశ్రీరావదృష్ట-
- 9 ంబులు జితేయగోత్రం అవ ప్రంబమోత్రం యశశ్చాశాశ్రాయ-
- 10 లై న హిమవంశోద్భవులై న శ్రీమవృతహింసకృత శ్రీరామ-
- 11 తి శ్రీరామగారి భార్యలు గోపరాజులగారి పుత్రులు గోపరాజ-
- 12 రాజుగాను అవం త్రమవై న దండములు నమహించి యిచ్చిన మం-
- 13 దము హింసోటు క్రమమెల్లన్నమ శ్రీ అహోంశేకృతం దిగువ
- 14 దివ్యుని ప్రంబావతరణం బోధకం వనితని తెలుచి అక్షయ-
- 15 మూల నమివమున గలించిన వాయు కంఠం మందహాస-
- 16 మ శ్రీ అహోంశేకృతం మహోత్సవకాలం మహోహారాలు అ-
- 17 తగించి కలదనే మేము శ్రీరామోత్సవము శ్రీశంభారా-
- 18 మ్మ యిచ్చిన రోజు మేల వ గ ౨౦౦ ఇమ్మారు వరహాలు అహరా-
- 19 రామ ఇమ్మారు వరహాలుమ్మ శ్రీరామోత్సవము శ్రీశంభారా-
- 20 మ్మ తెల్లించి మేము శ్రీశంభారానమ క్రయం పునుకొన్న వనిమది
- 21 తెందుమహిమల్య వివరము హావని నడకదండ నవ్వన్న గుర్తకు
- 22 తేనే నది మమకామ గగనయ మదివ్రతం మమకామ పుకయం తెం-
- 23 దు మమకామిట్టి వచ్చిన పం నవ్వు క గతి క్రయంరొజు వ గ ౨౦
- 24 అహరాంశు యిచ్చై వరహాలు నమహించి అ మందము
- 25 పురమ అరగించి కలద తేన వివరం తిమిరులు తేనేనే పూ-
- 26 లు గతి మహోహారం మది గతి దియం మం మమన శక్తి మం
- 27 నెయ్యింట్లు తెల్లం వ ౬౦ మిరియాల కాలుచిలెందు యాత్రా-
- 28 కి గం యెత్తు రోజులు క [మ] అకులు ౬ [మ] ఇతలను పూటలు ౨౦౦
- 29 కి దియం పం ౧౦౦ గతి క్రయం గ ౨౦౦ గతి మమన శక్తి అ అం
- 30 గతి మమములు పం ౧౦౦ గతి క్రయం గ ౨౦౦ గతి నెయ్యి
- 31 అం ౧౦౦ అం ౧౦౦ గ ౨౦౦ గతి మిరియాల ము ౬౦ గ ౨౦౦ గతి
- 32 తే న గతి ౧౦౦ గ ౨౦౦ గతి ౧౦౦ గతి గతి - హావలు ౬౦౦
- 33 ౧౦౦ అకులు ౧౦౦ ౧౦౦ ౧౦౦ నెయ్యింట్లు గతి వంటె-
- 34 దుమ్ము గం వందందేరాధిగం మమమంద్రదండేరాధిగం ౦ చిల్ల-
- 35 లోంట్లు గ గ ౧౦౦ అంట్లు హింసోటు దివ్యక్రయం గ ౧౦౦ అం-
- 36 రామ ఇరువై వరహం నెయ్యిమ్మ శ్రీరామోత్సవము
- 37 మహోత్సవ కాలం తిమిరులు తేనేనే పూటలను
- 38 అరగియ కావంకంపాదు క గ్రమం మో పుకరహాత్ర-
- 39 హరవరకృతగాను అరంధ్రాశ్చర్యహింగాను వరహం
- 40 హరము ఇ అరగించిన మహోహారాలు విమియంగం
- 41 హింసోటు హాత్రాగం హింసో మూతిగ ఇ మిమిం

TEXT .

- 1 కుకమమ్మ . దేవత్రాణి శరీరవృం దై త్వ ద్విమమూయ -
- 2 శంఖమును శ్రీమహానాథుని దేవదేవుని వాచనం . యుకమ్మ -
- 3 రామచారిక ముఖ్యశ్రేణివిరాజితం అవరోహం వృథం -
- 4 వ్యాఖ్య దేవదేవుని వాచనం . పై ప్రి శ్రీ జయభక్తరాయ
- 5 వాచిచారిత్ర శకవేషణములు గణన అగులేది ను -
- 6 ఎదురి సంవత్సర మేమి ౩౩ బు శ్రీమహానాథిరాం
- 7 రాం దేవదేవుని శ్రీనిరద్రావ శ్రీనిర వరావితదేవ -
- 8 మహానాథులు విరాజితగరమందు విప్రసంహృత -
- 9 వాచిచారిత్ర వృద్ధిపాఠమాం శేయుచు -
- 10 దామ శ్రీమతే రామమూయ [౩౩] ము శ్రీమదేవమా -
- 11 గ. ప్రతిష్ఠాపరాచార్య వరమహావ్య పరిచారకారా -
- 12 త్వ పరాశరత్రావృత్తిత పుత్రయదేరాంబారావృత్తి -
- 13 తై వ శ్రీవరాంకుర శ్రీ మం శకగోపతయ్యంగారి ము .
- 14 ద్రోశక శ్రీరామమహానాథునిము శ్రీ అవరో -
- 15 వం వీరవరాంకుర శ్రీమదేవదేవుని వృద్ధిరేవ [రా] -
- 16 మరాళ తిరుమలరాంబుదేవ మహారాణం -
- 17 య్యచారి శార్యకకాంబువ పుగ్గర్భింగారుము పా -
- 18 మహాంబు అవ్యుము విశ్వామిత్రగోత్రం అవ్య -
- 19 తాయవ మూత్రం రుఖపాతానాథాయుతై వ మార్యవం -
- 20 శోభ్యతై వ శ్రీమదేవదేవుని వృద్ధిరేవ దోచిరా -
- 21 రామరాంబురి వృత్తులు వోబురాంబురి పుత్ర -
- 22 బు వోబురాంబురి యుచిన క్రయ సంస్కారకావక క్ర -
- 23 ముమృష్ణు ము శ్రీ అవరోహితేవయం రుచితరు -
- 24 ప్రవృత్తవరముల దేవదేవుని తిరుమల విరాజిత -
- 25 సం తిరువున వంశాచారాం శోచిరాంబు అవ -
- 26 వాచా అరగింపులగామ మేమి వగర క్రయం
- 27 ఇచిత మది మరుకు ౧.౩ వ గ ౧.౦౦ దేవదేవ తే -
- 28 మ ము శ్రీ అవరోహితేవయం శ్రీరంధారావ -
- 29 ము తైలించినరాంబు మది వ గ ౧.౦౦ అవరా -
- 30 ము అవ్య[మ]రు వరహాంబు మేమి శ్రీరంధారా -
- 31 వకు తైలించినరాంబు గవక వాంబురి తిరు -
- 32 పుత్ర క్రయం ఇచ్చిన మది పాత్రుని తిరువునిర
- 33 చింతించెవు పుత్ర వరమ రామరంధారి కరణ -
- 34 ం[రా]వృత్తి తిరుమయ నూనావకు దక్షణం అది -
- 35 గామ వాచారి [త]మమూత్రం తిరుమయ ము క్ర -
- 36 యం ఇచ్చిత మదిమరుకు ౧.౦౦ అది మరుకు -
- 37 వా మదిచ్చి ము క్రయం పుత్రాది ౩ మది శోచి -
- 38 మ మమూత్రం ఇచ్చి యుచున్న శ్రీరంధారావకు
- 39 రా గర్భితరేవ వృత్తి పగలి మరుకు ౧.౩ వృత్తి బు
- 40 యుచు పుత్ర వృత్తిమకు వ[త] వృత్తి ౩ ౩౦ ఇ ము -

- 41 య పుష్పకము ప్రసాదించు రాజుడు -
- 42 కొని యా సర్వమునకు ప్రసాదించు రాజుడు -
- 43 పది అగ్రమునకు ప్రసాదించు రాజుడు -
- 44 మృత్యు కృత్యమునకు ప్రసాదించు రాజుడు -
- 45 ప కొనియేమిది సమయమునకు అగ్రమునకు
- 46 యచ్చ కృత్యమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము ము -
- 47 ప కొని కృత్యమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 48 ప్రసాదమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 49 ప్రసాదమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 50 ప్రసాదమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 51 ప్రసాదమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 52 ప్రసాదమునకు పది పది ము ము ము ము -
- 53 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 54 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 55 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 56 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 57 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 58 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 59 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -

## No. 23

### TEXT

- 1 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము -
- 2 ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము ము రు -
- 3 ము ము ము ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 4 ప ము ము ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 5 ప ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 6 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 7 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 8 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 9 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 10 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 11 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 12 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 13 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 14 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 15 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 16 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 17 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 18 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 19 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 20 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 21 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -
- 22 ము రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు రు -





11 తండ్రివలెనే కుమార్తె ప్రాంతాంతరమున  
 12 ప్రసాదమునకు ప్రాంతం కలగజేయుటగాను అం-  
 13 తాంతరమున ప్రాంతాంతరమున కలగజేయ-  
 14 వున ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను (ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయ-  
 15 వున ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను) అనంతమున  
 16 ఏదియైతే ప్రాంతాంతరమున కలగజేయవలెను  
 17 అయితే ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 18 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 19 ము కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 20 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 21 ఏదియైతే ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 22 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 23 అయితే ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 24 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 25 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 26 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 27 అయితే ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 28 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 29 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 30 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 31 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 32 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 33 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున  
 34 ప్రాంతమున కలగజేయవలెను అనంతమున



- 1 . . . . . తిరుమల . . . . .
- 2 . . . . . యుద్ధవ గ్రామదారిపట్టు శ్రమమెట్లమీద నెలపడెదమ-
- 3 హరియట ముకు వాయుగవామ పారిచిన దారికి ప్రియమో-
- 4 ఏ [౧]వారి గ్రామం గల తిలవళ గలం అకరాలమ తగ్గ [మమ్మూరు]
- 5 వరహంతుమ్మ యీ మనవర కా త్రిక అభ్యుదామ శ్రీఅహంశేషులం
- 6 శ్రీఅంబారామ గ్రామం మమహంబు పారిపుట[గట్టు] వివరము. . . . .
- 7 గ తిరువున మొంపున తిరువందవముం . . . . . గట్టించిన వరహంతు మంబా[ం]-
- 8 ముడపానమ శ్రీఅహంశేషులు విరి మీరమం మరమహంబు[ం]-
- 9 ంమ మేత్తే పూలులము తిరు తిరుమలమంది విరిమిరి మేత్తే పూలు-
- 10 మ . . . . . య గల అరగంబే పూలుల . . . . . పూలు గల తరమకు వియ్యం ౦౦
- 11 పెరులు అ తిరులు అప్పి పురు మ గ మిరియాల . . . . . అచాల
- 12 . . . . . తిల్ల . . . . . మనరాత గ మమ్మ[ం] . . . . .

No. 26  
Text

- 1 మహమ్మద మేత్తేన తిలవళం. . . . . తిలవళం మహమ్మదం. . . . .
- 2 తు శ్రీపురియప్ప. . . . . తిలవళం . . . . . ప్రియశ్రీ మహమ్మదం
- 3 కారిపానాన తరవళంబులు గలం అగ్గిపీలి తారణ వంశ-
- 4 తల్ల పైకల తు గళలు శ్రీమద్రాజారాం రాంబరమేళం
- 5 శ్రీమద్రాజు శ్రీమి శ్రీమహమ్మదమహారాయలు-
- 6 అగరు పెనగొండ వగరమందు వళింబంబాభూతులై వ్య-
- 7 తిలవళంబులై నేయుమంబంగామ శ్రీమతే రామమహాయ
- 8 వమ శ్రీమద్రేమగళాప్రతిష్ఠాపహారాత్మ వివరముల పరి-
- 9 వ్రాంబాంబు మధ్యకంధస్యంబైన పుణ్యపరం బ్రా[ం]రాయలై -
- 10 న శ్రీ[రంబ] శ్రీ మ తిలవళం తియగారి శ్రీరాత్మతరణంబున వళు-
- 11 కరివం(తం) తియగారుమీ శ్రీమద్రాజారాం రాంబరమేళం
- 12 శ్రీమద్రాజు శ్రీమి శ్రీమహమ్మదమహారాయలు అయ్యువా-
- 13 తి కార్యకర్తలంబున రావచ్చగారుమీ శ్రీఅహంశేషులం వారుమీ
- 14 కార్యమగ్గి అపి మంబాగ్గి అగ్గిరాజురాయలై వ కార్యం-
- 15 గోదప్పలై వ మారురాయలంబులంబు గు తిలవళంబులగంధ తియగ-
- 16 యూరి పురవరారీశ్వరలై వ శ్రీమత్ మహమ్మదశేషుల కొంబాం తి-
- 17 మరలగారి పురవలై వ తిలవళంబులగారి పురలై వ తిల[బ్రా]ం తి-
- 18 వోదమహమ్మదంబులగారి యుద్ధవ గ్రామమగ్గిశ్రమమెట్లమీద
- 19 నామ మహారాత్మ మనవర వ తిరుకామయాల పారిదేవారి వి-
- 20 తిలవళం తిలవళం తిలవళం తిలవళం తిలవళం తిలవళం తిలవళం
- 21 అహంశేషం అహం శామిపే అహంశేషం అహంశేషం అహంశేషం
- 22 ంమ తమవం మేమ అగ్గిమిచ్చి తమ[ప్ర]పుణ్య[మ] విమిక్తం శ్రీ -
- 23 వగ్గి[శేష]లు మహమ్మద ప్రహంబి[ం]న అతిమమంబున వం తరగో-
- 24 వ తియగారి తిలవళం మై శ్రీమదుదా త్తమ అగ్గిరాయ-
- 25 వ ప్రతిష్ఠాపి ముకుందరేవురే పూగొని రామమిరగో-
- 26 క్కాతలై వ శ్రీవరాంబరమహమ్మది శిష్యులై నేమిరంబ శ్రీ మ త-
- 27 గోదప్పగారు వళం యీ తిలవళం అయిన విమిక్తం శ్రీతరగో-
- 28 దేవమహమ్మదం ముఖానకు కామ విరే మీరు యీ తిలవళం
- 29 తిలవళం వారుమీ పురిమీ మీ మంబుమి అయిన అహంశేష-
- 30 తిలవళం వళం తురుప్పా[ం]కం అయిపుచ్చి రి రామి రోగిల అగ్గి

No. 27  
Text

**TEXT**

- [illegible]

- 41 మన దిలక పట్టెను మరలను దిలకెను పొందుచు తోలు  
42 కేసరియి తోమలు గలకరియి మేలును గల గల మరలయిదు -  
43 పుట్టియి అయిదుగలదెనుకెను మరలను మరలను మరలను  
44 గల గల గల మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను  
45 మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను  
46 మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను  
47 ను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను  
48 గల మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను మరలను

## No. 29      TEST

- [illegible]

**Text**

- [illegible]

- 1 కుళమన్న పరశురామరాధికమౌళిశ్రేణిరాజతం । అశ్వశుభ-
- 2 బ్రహ్మపిపాసకం దేవదేవతానామం । వృద్ధి శ్రీకవచంబులు ౧౩౩౨ అను గా-
- 3 ౦౦౦ బ్రహ్మపిపాసకం మౌళిశ్రేణి కు గా ౧౦ చారామను శ్రీమహాబలదేవత గి-
- 4 ర్థ ఆజ్ఞాపాతం కొమరగిరిరెడ్డింగార్చి శుభకృత్యముగామే కాటకురె-
- 5 డ్డిదేవమౌళిరెడ్డింగారు కయవేలు కొమరగిరిపుర మని చారత్రాసి
- 6 వజ్రాక్షణి నీలి క జయ కాటయకౌళి పౌత్రో మారవ్య కాట-
- 7 వ్యవహాసు । దిరాన్న పోతవ్యవరే వామదానా బయలి వేమదానాం । కొ-
- 8 మరగిరియ్యంగార్చిని వజ్రాక్షణియందైన కాటయరెడ్డివేమారెడ్డింగార్చి క-
- 9 వకు పాన్యు అభిన కొమరగిరియ్యంగార్చిని చారి దేవులైన అమ్మంగుగాను-
- 10 లకుమ్మ అమ్మశుభకృత్యముగాను దేవగర్భుమ్మ బ్రాహ్మలకుమ్మ చారత్రా-
- 11 కి శి ధర్మిన కొమరగిరిమండలం । పెదకొమరగిరిపురం । అమ్మలపురం ।
- 12 శ్రీచారణాసిద్ధిశ్రీవ్యవదేవత కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీవర్ధననారసి కుమర-
- 13 గిరిపురం । వంగుదారి-వజ్రకరయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । వంగుదారి ధి-
- 14 ముదయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీభట్టకయంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । కంచాకయ-
- 15 ంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీంగారరామసి కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీవర్ధనరపు రావ-
- 16 య్య కొమరగిరిపురం । మురందేవరదేవత కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీశ్రుల కుమరగిరిపురం । పా-
- 17 త్రిపుల కొమరగిరిపురం । పాల్లచారి కొమరగిరిపురం । పామనేచారి కొమరగిరిపురం । పా-
- 18 మారావ్యుల కొమరగిరిపురం । పానావలిపల్లభమ్మ కొమరగిరిపురం । శ్రీగోవిందాభునిఅమ్మర
- 19 కొమరగిరిపురం । [1] బ్రహ్మమయశ్రీపాచాల కొమరగిరిపురం । వేదామూర్తుల కొమరగిరి-
- 20 పురం । పా-
- 21 గ్గరపు మారరాజాచారి కొమరగిరిపురం । మహాదేవయ్యంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । దేవు-
- 22 చానకృం-
- 23 గారి సింగవేదామూర్తుల కొమరగిరిపురం । జరవము పెద్దిరాజాచారి కొమరగిరిపురం । మంబ-
- 24 య రామనాథవేదామూర్తులచారి దుద్రభట్లమూర్తుల కొమరగిరిపురం । గ్రామాశ్రీకుల
- 25 కొమర-
- 26 గిరిపురం । అన్న దానం ఆచార్యకయంగారి రామనంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । వంశవల్లి ఆచ-
- 27 ర్యభట్ల
- 28 కొమరగిరిపురం । [[శ్రీ]వారంబీరభుంట్ల శ్రీరామ్మంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । విరూపాక్ష
- 29 కొమరగిరిపురం ।
- 30 . . . . కొమరగిరిపురం । . . . పోతరాజాచారి కొమరగిరిపురం । త్రుత్రాయపల్లె-
- 31 [౦౪] కొమరగిరిపురం । త్రుదరాచారి రట్ల[౧౨]గడకొమరగిరిపురం । వేదాశ్రీమ
- 32 దివ్యదేవత
- 33 కొమరగిరిపురం । కూరిరాజ తిప్పనంగారి కొమరగిరిపురం । ఆరాభట్ల మల్లుభంగారి కొమ-
- 34 రగిరిపురం । చేయలి శ్రీశేవమాధుని కొమరగిరిపురం । కాంచ శ్రీవజ్రాక్షణిదేవత కొ-
- 35 మరగిరిపురం । మొదలవేదామూర్తుల కొమరగిరిపురం । దామారి శ్రీమయాలాచారి
- 36 మల్లారట్ల కొమరగిరిపురం । శిరామయమండలంబారి విశ్వవ్యాధిమల్లుకొమరగిరిపురం । శి-

## APPENDIX - II

### SUMMARY OF INSCRIPTIONS FROM UPPER AND LOWER AHOBILAM (Chronologically arranged)

S.No	Date	King	Location	Language	Summary	Reference
1	C.8th Century A.D.	Kirivarama II (744-755 A.D)	Peddapeta Anantapur (Dt.)	Sanskrit	This inscription is engraved on a stone lying in a field to the east of the village Peddapeta which is a hamlet of Yadiki. Line 14-15 referring to the word Vobula	E.I. vol. XXXVIII Part - VII. Pp. 339-340. (A.R.Ep., 1958- 59 No. B23)
2	1124 A.D.	Tribhuvana malladeva (Western Chalukya)	(On the slab set up to the west of the Siva Temple) Poddamudiya Jammalamadugu (Tq.) Cuddapah (Dt.)	Sanskrit and Kanarese	It refers itself to the reign of the Chalukya King Tribhuvanamalladeva ruling from Jayantipura and mentions his feudatory, the Mahamandalesvara Atyanchola, Maharaja, son of Sovanachola Maharaja and Gosanamahadevi Atyana's feudatory, the Mahamandalesvara Chiddana- Chola Maharaja is stated to have made a grant of the village Mudivemu to the Mahajanas of that place. The grant was made in the presence of God Narasimha deva of Ahobala	S.I.I. Vol. IX No.207. PP 208-209 (A.R.No.350 of 1905)
3	1378 A.D.	Proloya Vemareddy (1325-1353 A D)	Veerasaiva Mantapam Srisailam Kurnool (Dt.)	Telugu	An inscription in the Srisailam temple gives epigraphical confirmation of the history of Ahobilam	Inscriptions of Andhra desa, Vol. II, Part-I S No 472. P. 274

4	1378 A.D.	Reddy King Anavema (1384-86)	Upper Ahobilam	Sanskrit	Building of steps to Ahobilam. Probably this is an addition to the repairs to the former steps.	Copperplate inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, Government Museum, Hyderabad. P.182
5.	1395 A.D.	Hairhara Maharaya II (1377-1404)	Upper Ahobilam	Telugu	The Mackenzie manuscript of Ahobilam <i>kailiyat</i> also mentions an inscription (not discovered and read so far by epigraphists) referring to the construction of a Mukhamandapam in Upper Ahobilam.	Mackenzie Manuscript Vol.No. 100.
6.	1410 A.D.	Katama Reddy Vema Reddi (1402 - ?)	On the way to the Pamuleti Narasimha Temple Upper Ahobilam	Telugu	States that Katama-Reddy Vema - Reddi made a gift of several villages to temples and Brahmins renaming those villages Komaragiri in honour of King Komaragiri Reddi and also ten villages with the name of Vemavaram. It also states that Katama Reddi's wife Mallamma made a gift of Mallavaram to God Markandisvara of Rajamahindravaram	S.I.I. Vol. X No.577 PP. 319-320 (A.R.No. 84 of 1915)

7	1515 A D	Sri Krishnadevaraya (1509 - 1529 A D )	On a slab set up at the entrance into the Narasimha Svami Shrine in the Narasimha Svami Temple Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	An inscription issued by him indicates that he visited the temple on his way towards Kalinga and offered the God, a necklace, a pendant of diamonds, rubies inset with emerald a pair of bangles covered with rubies, a golden plate and thousand varahas while his two queens Chirina Devi and Tirumala Devi presented a pendant Maddur Village in Chagalamam was also gifted to the Lord for the Angaranga Bhogas of the Deity The inscription also makes a mention of the exploits of Krishnadevaraya and gives his title as Purva Dakshina - Paschima Samudradhisvara, Yvanarayasthapanacharya and Gajapati deva Vibhu etc	SII Vol XVI, No 53 PP 64-65 (A R No 64 of 1915)
8	1532 A D	Achyutadevaraya (1529-1542 A D )	Round the base of the central Shrines of the Narasimha Svami temple Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	It registers gift of lands after purchase to God Ahobalesvara by Abbaraju, son of Gubbaraju Tipparaju of Vasishtha gotra, Asvalayana-sutra, Rik-Sakha and a resident of Pourmamilla	SII Vol XVI No 96 P 111 (A R No 56 of 1915)
9	1535 A D	Achyutadevaraya (1529-1542 A D )	Round the base of the central	Telugu	The epigraph is damaged It seems to register some grant to Vithalam Anantappa by	SII vol XVI No 109 P 124



			Shrines of the Narasimha Svami temple Lower Ahobilam		Purushottama - Jyyar, of the temple and Vithalam Timmarasu, the agent of Chinn Tirumalarajayya for offerings to the God on certain occasions (Tithiargas)	(A R No 55 of 1915)
10	1546 A D	Sadasivaraya (1542-1570 A D )	On the west wall of the main shrine in the Narasimha svami temple Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	The details of the date are lost The inscription is damaged and fragmentary It seems it records a provision made for certain offerings to the deity on some specified occasions out of the proceeds of a village obtained by him from king Achyutaraya and endowed for the purpose of the offerings by the son (name lost) of Bhutanatha Brahma - Jyoyasa of Asvalayana- Sutra and Rik-Sakha	S II Vol XVI No 155 PP 163- 164 (A R No 60 of 1915)
11	1547 A D	Sadasiva Raya	On the North wall of the goddess in the Narasimha Svami temple Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	It records an endowment of 120 varahas into the temple treasury by Uggarasayya, Son of Ramarasayya and Grandson of Uggarasayya of Gudiya Chelluru and belonging to the Kasyapa- gotra, Apastamba-sutra and Yajus-sakha, stipulating that the interest accruing from the amount was to be spent for offerings to God Vira Narasimha of Ahobilam during the Kshirabdhni and other festivals	S II Vol XVI, No 159, p 167 (A R No 58 of 1915)

12	1548 A.D.	Sadasiva Raya	On a Slab set up in the courtyard of the Narasimha Svami Temple Upper Ahobilam	Telugu	It registers the grant of the village Jambuladinne in Koyilakuntla-sima for providing six plates of offerings to the God Ahobilesvara by Mahamandalesvara Nandyala China Avubhalayya, Son of Narasingayyadeva, maharaju and the grandson of Singarayya-deva maharaju of Atreya-gotra and Soma-Vamsa for the merit of Havalı Peda Avubhala deva-maharaju.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No.165, pp. 172-173. (A.R.No. 81 of 1915)
13	1548 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	On the westwall of the Narasimhasvami temple Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription states that Narasamma, wife of Mahamandaleswara Goburi Vobaya of Kasyapa-gotra and Yajus-saktha having constructed a Vasantha mandapam to the north of Diguva-Tirupati, endowed 120 varahas to the temple for conducting out of its interest the festivals for the God Ahobalesvara. The four sons of the Donor Narasamma namely, Narasing Raju, Narasaraju, Timmaraju and other (name missing ) were to supervise the proper conduct of the festivals enjoined in the gift.	S.I.I. Vol.XVI No. 169,P. 177. (A.R. No. 63 of 1915)
14	1550 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	Round the platform of the	Telugu	It registers the gift of a piece of land in the Village Alamuru purchased from Van sathagopa	S.I.I. Vol. XVI No. 174, P.181.

			huge pillar (Jayastambha) in the Narasimhasvami temple. Lower Ahobilam,		Jiyyamgaru and other officials connected with the management of the temple, for raising a garden, the coconut and other trees, in favour of God Ahobalesvara by Avubhairaju, Son of Thimmaya deva maharaju of Gargya-gotra. Apastamba sutra and Yajus Saka.	(A.R. No. 75 of 1915)
15	1552 A.D.	Sadasiva Raya	(West wall of the Narasimhasvami Temple) Lower Ahobilam,	Telugu	The inscription records the endowment of the village Gunjepalli in Dupati-sima as a poliyutugrama to the temple treasury of Ahobalesvara by Mahamandalesvara Kondayadeva maharaja, Son of Ramaraju Koneti raju who sold the village for 500 varahas for the Ramanuja Kutam Vaishnavas at Diguva Tirupati. The donor belonged to Atreya-gotra, Apastamba Sutra and Yaju-sakhi and claimed his descent from the lunar race. He held Dupati-Sima as nayankara conferred on him by the king.	S.I.I. Vol XVI No. 181. Pp. 187-88.  (A.R. No. 61 of 1915)
16	1553 A.D.	Sadasiva Raya	(Slab set up near the Durudumandapa	Telugu	The inscription records an endowment of twenty varahas as poliyutu for maintaining offerings during the 16 days of festivals every year when	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 188. P. 188  (A.R. No. 80 of

			on the way to Upper Ahobilam Upper Ahobilam		the God Ahobalesvara was seated in the 16- pillared Mandapa built by Mahamandalesvara Aparatikamalla Kurujeti Venkatadri deva Maharaju Son of Obularaju and grandson of Timmaraju of Kasyapagotra, Apastamba, Yajus- sakha and solar-race	1915)
17	1554 A D	Sadasiva Raya	(Slab set up in the court yard of the Narasimha Swami . Temple) Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	The inscription registers the <i>dasavanda-manyu</i> grant of land in the village of Pedakallu to Mahamandalesvara Avubhalaraju, Son of Konetirajayya and grandson of Rama Raju Pedakondayyadeva maharaju of the lunar race by Parankusa van Sathagopa Jiyyar, the trustee of the temple Hanharanathuni Peddayya, the agent of Mahamandalesvara Aliya Ramappayya and the <i>adhiyamvaru</i> , for his having constructed the tank of Konasamudram alias Snmannarayana Samudram near Alamuru	S II XVI, No 199 Pp 205-206  (A R No 65 of 1915)
18	1554 A D	Sadasivaraya	(Slab set up in the courtyard of the Narasimhaswami temple) Lower Ahobilam	Telugu	The inscription records the sale of a grove and a flower garden for 50 varahas in the village Alamuru belonging to the god Ahobalesvara by Parankusa Van Sathagopajyyar, the trustees of the temple Hanharanathuni Peddiraju and	S II Vol XVI No 200 p 207  (A R No 66 of 1915)

					others to Mahamandalesvara Avubhalaraju, Son of Konetiraju and grandson of Ramaraju Peda Kondayadeva Maharaju of the Lunar race, stipulating that a third share of the produce was to be enjoyed by the God and the rest by donor.	
19	1555A.D.	Sadasivaraya	(Westwall of the Narasimha svami Temple) Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The record is incomplete. It seems to register a gift (of land) to the God Ahobala Narasimha by Mahamandaleswara Ganapatiadeva Maharaju, of Kasyapa-gotram, Apastambasutra, and Yajus sakha and the son of Nandiraju and grand son of Krishnaraju of the Solar race.	S.I.I. Vol.XVI No. 205 p.212 (A.R. No. 59 of 1915).
20	1558 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	(Slab set up near the sixteen pillared mandapam) Upper Ahobilam.	Telugu	This partly damaged inscription records the grant of a piece of land and some money by Emberumanar Jiyamgaru, the <i>mudra-karta</i> of Van sathagopa Jiyangaru and others for conducting certain festivals when God Ahobileswara was seated in the 16-pillared mandapa constructed by Mahamandalesvara kuruceti Thimmaraju Son of Vobularaju and grand son of Baicana deva coda maharaju, Son of Vobularaju and grandson of Baicana deva-coda maharaju of the solar race, when the God was taken in procession to the Lower Tirupati	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 235. P.241. (A.R. No. 79 of 1915)

					(Ahobilam) and back to the temple. The details of the offerings on the occasions are given, but they are not clear.	
21	1560 A.D.	Ssdasivaraya	(Slab set up on the way to Upper Ahobalam to the south-east of the Narasimhasvami temple) Upper Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers the purchase of a piece of land for 200 varahas from the temple treasury and gift of income derived from it for conducting the festivals in the mandapa in front of the Prahladavarada temple at Diguva Tinupati to the God Ahobaleswara by Mahamandalesvara Gopinath raju, Son of Goparaju and grandson of Juturi Bhatraju of the lunar race, Atreya-gotra and Apastamba Sutra. The items of offerings are specified.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 248 pp. 253-254 (A.R. 78 of 1915)
22	1563 A.D.	sadasivaraya	Slab set up to the right of the entrance of kanchugumbha - gopura in the Narasimhasvami temple. Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription records the sale of 6 marututs of land by Ramanuja Jijyyar, the Karya-karta of mahamandalesvara Ramaraju Tirumalaja-jayyadeva - maharaju and other temple officials to mahamandalesvara vobularaju, Son of Vobularaju and grand son of pociraju Ramaraju for a sum of 600 varahas remitted by him into the temple treasury and registers the grant of this land by vobularaju for worship and offerings in the temple of Nammalvar and for feeding twelve Srivaishnavas out of the yield from these lands.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 257 p. 262-264 (A.R. No. 69 of 19.15)

23	1563 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	(Slab set up near the Kanchugubba gopura of the Narasimhaswami Temple) Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers a grant of lands in the villages kalutapalle in Korokola-sima, and Pedakallu, Domipadu, Injedu and Bayyapaguduru, yielding a total income of 308 varahas to be utilised for offerings to the God Ahobalesvara by mahamandalesvara Koneti Obularajayyadeva-maharaju, son of Koneti Ayyadeva maharaju and grandson of Ramaraju Pedda Kondarajayya deva maharaju of Atreyagotra, Apastambasutra and yajus sakha.	S.I.I. Vol.XVI No. 260 pp.265-266 (A.R. No.72 of 1915)
24	1563 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	(Slab in the courtyard of the Narasimha Swami Temple) Upper Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription records the construction of a four-pillared mandapa and a matha and registers a grant of a piece of a land in the village Cinna komerla in Ghandi Kota-sima by parankusa van sathagopa-Jiyyamgaru stipulating that the income derived from the gift-land was to be utilised for the offerings on the occasions when the god Ahobilesvara was seated in the mandapa during the pancha-parvas and two tirunalu when the deity was taken out in procession from the hill down and back again.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI No. 261. Pp. 267-268 (A.R. No. 82 of 1915)

25	1564 A.D.	Sadasivaraya	(Slab set up near the entrance of Kanchugumba gopura of the Narasimhasvami Temple) Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers the grant of a piece of land in Lingamdinne in Ghandikota-sima to the God Ahobulesvara for specified offerings and their distribution during the festivals in the month of Caitra, near the tank constructed by him on the way to Bhargavam by Parankusa Van Sathagopa Jiyar who received this piece of land from Narasayya who is stated to have obtained the village Lingamadinne from Nandela Timmaraju.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI No. 263. Pp.269-270  (A.R. No. 73 of 1915)
26		Sadasivaraya	(On the west wall of the Narasimhasvami Temple) Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	This fragmentary inscription registers the grant of 300 chakra gadyas to the temple treasury of the God Ahobalesvara for the Village Ciluru in Podili-sima, as a perpetual endowment (Pōḷivutu) for offerings and services to the God when he halted in the 16-pillared mandapa built in the temple garden on specified occasions. The name of the donor who held Podili-sima as his nayankara and the details of the date are lost.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 271. P. 278  (A.R. No. 62 of 1915)
27	1584 A.D.	Srirangaraya I (1572-1585 A.D.)	Slab set up near the entrance of the kanchu-	Telugu	The inscription states that on a former occasion in the year Bahudhanya (1579A.D.) Ibrahim with the Hande chiefs captured Ahobalam and held it	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 296, pp. 302-303



			gumba gopura of the Narasimhasvamin temple. Lower Ahobilam		for 5 or 6 years. On the representation of Van Sathagopa Jiyyar, Venkataraju who took an active part in recapturing the place and restoring it to its past glory was granted temple honours such as <i>pariyavattam</i> , <i>tirtham</i> , <i>sathagopam</i> , etc., by vakulabharana Jiyyar, the <i>karya-karta</i> of Vansathagopa Jiyyar Racappa, the <i>Karya-karta</i> of the king and the <i>sthanikas</i> of the temple.	(A.R. No. 70 of 1915)
28	1586 A.D.	Venkatapatiraya II (1585-1614 A.D.)	Slab set up near the entrance of the kanchugumba gopuram of the Narasimhasvami in Temple. Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers poliyuttu gift of eighty <i>varahas</i> being the income derived from ten Tiruvilaiyattam villages of the temple by Mahanandaleswara Venkatraju Devachodamaharaju, son of Timmanna and grandson of kondraju Timmaraju of the Kasyapa-gotra, Apastamba sutra, Yajus Sakha and solar race, for the maintenance of several services in the temple of Ahobila.	S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No. 299. Pp. 306-307 (A.R. No. 71 of 1915)
29	1590 A.D.	Venkatapati II	Slab set up in the Kanchugumba gopuram of the Narasimhasvamin temple Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers a gift of land for offerings during the procession of god Prahlada-varada at Diguva Tirupati by Savaram Rangapparaju, son of Yellapparaju and grandson of Suraparaju of Mallapa chintakunta.	S.I.I. Vol. No. XVI No. 301, pp 308-09 (A.R. No., 68 of 1915)

30	1609 A.D.	Venkatapati II	Slab set up near the entrance of kanchugumba-gopuram of the Narasimha svamin temple, Lower Ahobilam.	Telugu	The inscription registers the gift of seven gold gilded pinnacles, two fly whisks and white silk umbrella to the god Ahobala at Diguva Tirupati by Madiseti Rudrayya and others for the merit of 150 nagarasvarnis who bear among others the title <i>penugonda puravardhisvara</i> .	S.I.I. Vol.XVI No. 310. P.317 (A.R. 67 of 1915)
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#### **D. GAZETTEERS**

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## GLOSSARY

Abhaya	A posture of Protection
Abhishekam	Religious rite of pouring or sprinkling sacred water on the image of a deity.
Acharyas	Religious preachers
Agamas	sacred texts related to the conduct of worship
Agraharam	Village gifted away to Brahmins
Akasvani	A heavenly voice
Akanda dipam	Perpetual lamp
Alagia Singer	God Narasimha (Alagia=beautiful)
Alankara	Decoration, ornamentation
Alvar	A Vaishnavite Saint
Angaranga bhogas	Procession and rituals with pomp
Antarala	Ante-Chamber
Aradhana	Special Worship
Argya	Washing the hands
Asana	Offering of a seat
Avahana	Localisation
Avatar	Manifestation, incarnation
Bhogam	Food offering to the deity
Brahmotsavam	Annual festival, Grand festival
Chakra	The weapon of Lord Vishnu, Disc
Chamara	Fan made of silk fibres for fanning the celestial beings
Chandanam	Sandal Paste
Dasavataras	Ten incarnations of God Vishnu
Dhanurmasotsavam	Month during which worship of God is celebrated early in the morning
Dharma	The approved way of life
Dhupam	The wave of incense smoke
Dhvaja Stambham	Pillar in front of the temple
Dikpalakas	Guardian deities
Dipotsavam	Festival of burning of oil lamps
Dvara Palakas	Sentinels on either side at the entrance of a temple
Ekadasi	Eleventh day, after the full moon.
Gadyana	Gold coin, money.
Garidham	Sandal-wood paste
Garbhagriha	Sanctum Sanctorum, inner sanctum
Garuda	The Vehicle of Lord Vishnu, a divine eagle
Giri	Hill
Gopuram	Tower before a temple
Gram Seva	A procession of the deity round the village
Kaifiyat	A written document
Kalyana mandapam	Wedding hall
Kiritaam	Crown
Kirti mukha	Lion's face



Koneru	Pond
Kshetram	A holy place
Kurtcha	A measure used for liquid
Mada	A coin in the medieval times
Mahatmayam	Power or greatness
Mahotsavam	Great festival
Makuta	A crown, cap
Makara Toranam	A type of festoon in a temple, makara canopy
Malya	Decoration with garlands and flowers
Mandapam	A hall with art side-walls, but with pillars and roof of stones
Maridalesvara	Head of a small group
Manika	Liquid measure
Matha	Monastery, place of residence of religious mendicants
Masotsavas	Monthly festivals
Mula Vighram	Presiding deity
Mukha Mandapam	Entrance hall, front hall
Nambi	A Non-brahmin Vaishnava priest
Naivedyam	Offering in kind made to the deity
Narasimha	Man-lion (Human body with lion's face)
Nirajana	Circumambulation of a lamp
Padma	Lotus
Pakshotsavas	Fortnightly festivals
Panakam	Jaggery solution tastefully spiced
Pavalimpu Utsavam or Parrupu seva	Sending the Lord to bed with soft music etc.
Paruvettai	'Paru' means run and 'Veta' means hunt
Prakara	Enclosure
Pradakshina	Going round the deity or the temple, circumambulation
Prasadam	Eatable distributed after offering to the deity
Parivara Devatas	Subsidiary deities
Puja	Worship
Pujari	Priest
Puranas	Hindu religious books
Pushpa	A flower
Pushkarani	Sacred pond
Pushpamalalu	Garlands of flowers
Putti	Grain measure (basket)
Rathotsavam	Temple car festival
Sahaaranama Puja	Worship chanting the thousand names of the deity
Samprokshana	Hallowing by cleansing
Sankha	Conch
Sannidhi	A shrine
Sarvamanya	Exclusive gift of land

<b>Satakam</b>	<b>A book of 100 poems</b>
<b>Senabova</b>	<b>Village writer/accountant</b>
<b>Stoka</b>	<b>Couplet or quatrain in Sanskrit</b>
<b>Soumyarupa</b>	<b>Graceful form</b>
<b>Sthala Puranam</b>	<b>History of the place</b>
<b>Sthanapati</b>	<b>An official-in-charge of the temple</b>
<b>Stambham</b>	<b>Pillar</b>
<b>Svayambhu</b>	<b>Self-manifest</b>
<b>Tirtham</b>	<b>Sacred or sanctified water</b>
<b>Tirumanjanam</b>	<b>Holy bathing</b>
<b>Tirunakahatram</b>	<b>Natal Constellations obtaining at the time of birth</b>
<b>Tirunal</b>	<b>Festival</b>
<b>Tiruvidhi</b>	<b>Taking procession around the temple street</b>
<b>Tulasimala</b>	<b>Garland of bunches of basil-leaves</b>
<b>Tum</b>	<b>Measure of land</b>
<b>Tumu</b>	<b>Grain measure</b>
<b>Ugrarupa</b>	<b>Awe-inspiring posture</b>
<b>Utsavam</b>	<b>Ceremony</b>
<b>Utsava Vighrahas</b>	<b>Procession images</b>
<b>Vahanam</b>	<b>Vehicle</b>
<b>Varaha</b>	<b>Gold coin</b>
<b>Vargjas</b>	<b>Columns</b>
<b>Varotsavas</b>	<b>Weekly festivals</b>
<b>Vasantotsavam</b>	<b>Celebration of a festival connected with sprinkling of coloured water in the spring season</b>
<b>Vastra</b>	<b>Clothing</b>
<b>Venjamara</b>	<b>A white fly-whisk</b>
<b>Yajnopavita</b>	<b>Sacred thread across the shoulder</b>
<b>Yuga</b>	<b>Period of time according to Hindu tradition</b>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>A.R.I.E.</b>		<b>Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy</b>
<b>A.R.S.I.E.</b>	...	<b>Annual Reports on South Indian Epigraphy</b>
<b>EL</b>		<b>Epigraphia Indica</b>
<b>Ep. Car</b>		<b>Epigraphia Carnatica</b>
<b>H.A.S.</b>		<b>Hyderabad Archaeological Series</b>
<b>I.A.P.C.</b>		<b>Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, Cuddapah District</b>
<b>Ind. Ant.</b>		<b>Indian Antiquary</b>
<b>J.A.H.R.S.</b>	...	<b>Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society</b>
<b>L.A.</b>	...	<b>Lower Ahobilam</b>
<b>L.R.</b>	...	<b>Local Records</b>
<b>Mack. MSS</b>		<b>Mackenzie Manuscripts</b>
<b>M.E.R.</b>		<b>Madras Epigraphical Reports</b>
<b>Q.J.M.S.</b>		<b>Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society</b>
<b>S.A.</b>		<b>Sahitya Academy</b>
<b>S.I.I.</b>		<b>South Indian Inscriptions</b>
<b>T.T.D.I.</b>		<b>Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams Inscriptions</b>
<b>U.A.</b>		<b>Upper Ahobilam</b>