

## Chintala Venkataramana Temple, Tadipatri.

**B. Chinarayudu**

Academic Consultant, Department of Fine Arts, Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa, India  
Email – v.chinarayudu9999@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Chintala Venkataramana temple is located in Tadipatri town of Anantapur district. This was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Thimmanaidu, the son of Ramalinganaidu who was the chieftain of Vijayanagara kingdom. The entire temple is also built with black stone. In the Rangamandapa, Dasavatara sculpture are carved on the pillars, Paintings were executed on the ceiling. All these paintings depicts from Ramayana. Lepakshi and Somapalem paintings are similar style in these paintings. If Lepakshi murals depicted with shaivite theme, the Venkataramana temple is depicted with Ramayana themes as the temple is dedicated to God Vishnu as a Chintala Venkataramana Swami. The temple has a stone Chariot and Musical pillars like the Hampi Vitala temple, Ramayana and Bhagavata epics carved on temple walls. Gooty fort, Pamidi and Gandi fort based on Tadipatri temples.*

**Key Words:** *Vijayanagara, Architecture, Sculptures, Murals, Ramayana, Incarnations.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Sri Chintala Venkataramana swamy temple is a famous temple located in Tadipatri town of Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. This temple is located to Lord Vishnu, who is in the divine form of Chintala Venkataramana swamy.

This temple is believed to have been built in 16<sup>th</sup> century by Timmanaidu son of Ramalinganaidu, A chieftain of Vijayanagara kingdom<sup>1</sup>. It was built during the same time as the Vittala temple of Hampi in similar manner, most of the features at these two temples bear close resemblance to each other, being built on a similar ground plan while the stone Chariot here is compact and small in size when compared to the famous stone chariot at Hampi.

Originally the temple was called Chintala Tiruvengalanatha Swamy, spread across 5 acres of land, built according to the silpasatras. The carvings of episodes of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata Puranam seen around the Garbhagriha, rangamandapa, mukhamandapa, main Gopuram and the prakaraa. The Mukha mandapa has forty pillars in the Vijayanagara style, beyond the mukhamandapa is a rangamandapa, which has scenes of the Ramayana, and rare sculptures of the Vishnu incarnations, the Idol of Lord Venkataramana swamy is very beautiful and is a classical master piece of the Vijayanagara kingdom there are two other temples inside the complex, one dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi and the other Lord Anjaneya there is secret underground passage which believed to be leading to Gooty fort. Currently the tunnel is closed by the ASI. There is also a Thulabharam pillar, a typical trade mark of the Vijayanagara culture. Inside the temple every wall is loaded with beautiful and delicate carvings of gods and puranic scene.

The Raja gopuram face the east and is a solid structure, built using of stone and brick. The stone part contains figures of Vijayanagara Apsaras and Avataras, Elephants, Horses arranged in different levels of panels.

### 2. HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE:

Neither of the Tadipatri temple contain of foundation inscription, that they are of Vijayanagara times is a fact that leaps to the eye, but a more precise date has to be deduct from the inscription they contain.

Among the manuscripts that Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Collector of historical artefacts, gathered there is a "Tadpatri Kafiat". Documents of this kind are not always historical. They are apt to be a mixture of fact and fancy. But they are valuable as preserving the beliefs and Notions of the times, the end of the Eighteenth century and the beginning of the Nineteenth<sup>3</sup>.

In 1812 -13 A.D., Colonel Mackenzie deputed a person, named Ananda Rao to gather information of Tadpatri. He gathered information from the local people<sup>3</sup>.

According to local information that Tadpatri was established in Vijayanagara times. Its Vijayanagara name was Tadpatri. Its first settler was a Brahmin named Narayana Battu, after Vidyaranya had established the city of Vijayanagara, Narayana, who was “ from the east”, sought assistance of him. Vidyaranya, giving him some money, told him of a Bhaskara Kshetra on the bank of the pinakini are the pennar where there was a tract of palm trees in which some hunters lived. Narayana was to go there and build a house for himself “then village will develop”. Narayana came to “Tallapalli” and built a temple to Adhinarayanamurthi. South of this temple, at a distance of “Four feet’s” he also erected a mandapa in which he enshrined an image of Hanuman. Harihara and Bukka the first Vijayanagara emperors, gave Tadipatri to him as an “Agrahara”.

The region was under the political control of Gillella Chalapathi Raju, who was deputed by Bukka for the purpose, Chalapathi Raju built a fort of Gandikota, about twenty-five Miles east of Tadpatri. It was headquarters of the region in Vijayanagara time and later it became a prominent fortress and was frequently besieged by invaders. Under Harihara II (1377-1404) A.D. Nandala Viraraghava Raju displaced Chalapathi Raju, who went to Penukonda. Gooty, another important place in the area along with Yadiki, came under Viraraghava’s change.

The Pemmasani family, two members of which built the two temples, appears first in Tadpatri history in the reign of Praudha Devaraya (1422-1446) A.D. This family was one of the many which provided generals and governors to the empire for many generations. The emperor sent Pemmasani Timmanaidu as governor of this region. His headquarters was Yadiki.

Ramalinga Timma’s son, built the Bugga Ramalingeswara temple. The Chintala Venkataramana Temple came into being in the next generation. It was built by Timma, a son of Ramalinga. It too owed origin to an unusual incident in the “South East” direction of the village There was a cluster of tamarind tree. One particular tree broke into pieces one day and disclosed a Vishnu image inside. Timma, then living of Gandikota was informed of this by Uddanda Naidu, a relative of his, who was governing Tadpatri under him.

When Timma arrived in Tadipatri, he heard a big crackling sound and he saw the Vishnu image clearly. That night he had a dream in which he was told that he should build a temple. This was made known in the village by public outcry. Timma sent the news to Vijayanagara and obtained permission to build the temple. The “Kafiat” mention many of the structures that where build garbhagraha, suhana sika, soodile, madhyarangam, asthanam, sowdhanthrala, gopura prakara, stupile panchanalaya, yagasala, kalyana mandapa, Ashwaradhi mandapa, seshalaya, Garuda mandapa, varahamandapa and a vahanamandapa. Also mentioned are sculpture and damaged paintings of Bharata, Ranganatha and Asthadikpalas, Tirumalayaganini and Ramayavaram Ramacharlu were appointed “archakas”, Golla abaladasni, the store keeper.

In 1708 A.D Zulfikar Khan, a general of Aurangzeb destroyed the Rangaswami temple and mosque on the site<sup>3</sup>. It was handed over to Mir Mohammed, a ‘pahelwan’. The Venkataramana temple also damaged. Its mandapa was blasted, many sculptures defaced and walls built against doors so that worship ceased<sup>1</sup>. It was however restored presently. “Tundra Mallu” a Dewan of Daud khan, renewed it. He also constructed “forts” and office in the temples. Sivirisetti, he is from Mysore, lived in one of the forts. He built a shrine in the Venkataramana temple and installed an image of Chennakesava, providing for worship. Thammaji Timmappa, a deputy Daud Khan and an amaldar,

Tadipatri fell to Hyder Ali in 1775 A.D, and in 1793 A.D to the Nizam of Hyderabad. In 1800 Rayalaseema was handed over to the East India Company<sup>1</sup>. The British took two or Three year to restore order in the region. Sir Thomas Munro, the principal collector, took considerable interest in its temple. He ordered that “all the temple” and the kalyana mandapas in the Venkataramana temple. He also ordered that the temple be properly maintained.

### 3. ARCHITECTURE:

Sculpture, Architecture and painting in the Chintala Venkataramana temple occupied an important place in the evolution of Vijayanagar art. Their art contains little of that febrile magnificence that marks, for example the Vittala temple at Hampi. On the whole, Tadipatri art is subdued and serves as a complement to what may be called the martial art of many other Vijayanagar fans.

The temple is seventy- five yards long and about forty-five yards wide. Its architecture is compactly organized. Had the towering gopura survived in its entirety, the composition would have refuted a common criticism that Vijayanagara architecture is apt to be sprawling and formless. The sanctum of the Lord face east. In axial line with it there are an ardhmandapa with porches on either side, the magnificent mukhamandapa, a stone chariot enshrining Garuda, the dhvajastambha, the balipetha and finally, the Gopura. The thayar’s shrine is located to the left of that of the Lord and not as is usual in Vaishnava temples, to the right. According to a local tradition, based on the fact that the sankha is carved on the right side of the entrance to the ardhmandapa from the mukhamandapa and the chakra on the

left, the image enshrined is that of Chennakesava and that, consequently, the thayar shrine is located to the left. There is a shrine to Chennakesava in the temple, but it is located in the northern prakara. In any case, the earliest relevant inscription states clearly that the image is that of Chintala Tiruvenkatanatha.

The sanctum is, as it were, inset in the ardhmandapa, with no circumambulation path. There are four pillars in this mandapa. On the ceiling a lotus has been carved. There are three entrances to the mandapa, from the mukhamandapa and from two porches. The outer walls of the ardhmandapa and the shrine contain some superb small reliefs. It is for these that the temple is popularly known.

Thulasi Kota is a special attraction in this temple. This is made into upana, jagati, padma, tripattakamuda, kampa and kapota. Above the vedi the petal shaped stones enclose the square in which the tulasi is planted.



Fig -1: Chintala Venkataramana temple, Tadipatri.

The upana Jagati carries the relief of dancing figures of ganas and apsaras. On the Tripatta Kumuda a seated figures of a devotee is seen on all sides. In the Kantha, Balakrishna standing with a ball of butter is seen in the Bhadhra on all the sides. At the top, above the vedi, the leaf design frames sankha, cakra, Padma, Garuda stambha are carved. Artistically speaking, Chintala Venkataramana temple is notable as prefiguring the development that were in store, more particularly in the temple of the capital, but also in the Ramalinga temple. The culmination was the Vittala, but the Tadipatri Vaishnava temple, deriving from the art of the Saiva fane, shows the way. Probably because the provinces felt the martial spirit of the times less than the capital, the Venkataramana temple, which must have been built when percipient people must have sensed the approach of disaster, is a lyric in stone. The wonderful temple of Vijayanagar art. It may be described as a jewel box. Less attention has been paid to gopura, but more, so characteristically Vijayanagara, to the mandapa. The variety, the planning and the achievement to be noticed in the art of the mandapa are remarkable. While the artistic emphasis in the Chintala Venkataramana temple is on the gopuram which, unusually, enough, were selected to be sculptured, it is agreeably to the common Vijayanagar mode on the mandapa and its pillars in the Venkataramana temple, about a furlong away. This temple suffered under the Muslims. Some of the sculptures have been knocked about. But the temple has survived substantially as its builders left it. The main gopura, on the east, is badly damaged. It is said to have been struck by a thunderbolt. The eastern prakara wall seems to be of a later date than the rest.

The main entrance, towards east, overlooking the river at a distance, having become impracticable, devotees enter through a narrow aperture on the north wall. There is a small gopura above this entrance.

**SCULPTURE:** The narrative sculpture of Chintala Venkataramana temple is inspired by the Ramayana, the great epic of the Bhagavata purana. It is in the fitness of things as the Vijayanagara period was steeped in the Vaisnava tradition and the cults of Rama and Hanuma.

Narration of the Ramayana theme though frequently occurs in the Gupta temples, the first systematic attempt to represent the story of Rama in sequence with appropriate labels, indicating the characters and episodes is seen in the Papanatha at Pattadakal. Smaller panels of the Ramayana theme occur also in virupaksa and the



Fig-2: The episodes of Ramayana and Bhagavata on outer wall in Chintala Venkataramana temple

Mallikarjuna temple at Pattadakal. Among the Rastrakuta temples the Kailasa temple has a series of episodes of Ramayana. In Andhradesa, however, such a systematic attempt was not made although sporadic and significant themes were represented. The Hoyasala temple, on the other hand, have the Ramayana and bhagavata story in sequential manner.

The Vijayanagara tradition, inspired by Hoyasala art <sup>2</sup>, continues this aspect in a significant manner. Like the Hazara Ramaswami temple at Hampi.

The Chintala Venkataramana temple in Rangamandapa directly in front of the central sanctum, with intricately carved pillars, is of arresting beauty. One of the rare sculptures in this mandapa is the Matsya (fish) incarnation of Vishnu killing a demon named Hayagriva. The most eye-catching feature of this temple is the carvings of numerous episodes of the Ramayana on the outer walls of principal sanctum in three tiers.

The carved outer wall of the ardhamanadapa and the shrine contain some superb small reliefs. It is for these that the temple is popularly known. Various scenes from the “Ramayana” and “Mahabharatha” are illustrated in neat small panels. These are set against a background, as it were, of restrained decoration on the wall surface is divided into three by pilasters there are also devakoshtas and kumbhapanjaras. Between them are three horizontal rows of reliefs.

The scenes include the sacrifice Dasaratha performed to obtain issue of Rama’s marriage with Sita. Lord Anjaneya’s adventures in Lanka while searching for Sita – seeking Lord Rama’s blessings, meeting Sita and receiving her as proof for Lord Rama, Hanuman seating himself in Ravana’s court on a little mountain of his own tail. Hanuman handing over the insignia to Sita, destroying Asoka Vana, getting captured and his face to face with the Ten headed Ravana. In front of this panel is Agni testifying to Sita’s sanctity. There is an iconographically unusual panel depicting lord Narasimha killing the Demon. He wrestles with him foot to foot before depicting him. The sculpture of the Vamana incarnation is also striking. Scenes from the “Bhagavatha” are also illustrated, but not consecutively. The “kaliyamardhana” scene, so beloved of Hindu Artists down the ages, is a little Masterpiece.

The mukhamandapa is splendidly organized structure though it may seem a little short. The mandapa, which contains forty pillars, is not a forest of stone, but a handsome garden of granite. When its sculpture was unmutilated and when the paintings glowed on its ceiling, it must have been a wonderful sight.

A passage at ground level leads from the ardhmandapa to the stone chariot. There are raised platforms on either side, with twenty pillars on each. The columns stand in three rows. That at the edge of the platform begins at the turn of the contours and runs near the wall of the ardhmandapa. The second row. There are four pillars in the third row adjoining the passage, three in succession immediately after the steps and the fourth opposite the seventh in the second row, near where a flight of steps leads from the mukhamandapa to the ardhmandapa.

The pillars are real work of art. Some of them carry figures of women with heavy coiffeur ornaments. All these sculptures are mutilated, the hands being lost. This type of pillars stands on either side of the entrance from both the prakaras, but there are a few elsewhere too. Facing into the mandapa there are seventeen pillars with yalis. There are two similar columns on either side of the stone chariot. It is said that most of the shafts are musical pillars. A typical pillars is in three sections. The capitals contain flower volutes on either side. Depending from the main shaft of the pillar are huge sculptures of riders on rearing valis. Some of the square surfaces contain a few reliefs. There are carvings of music players at the bottom of some of the pillars looking inside.

The pillars are real work of art. Some of them carry figures of women with heavy coiffeur ornaments. All these sculptures are mutilated, the hands being lost. This type of pillars stands on either side of the entrance from both the prakaras, but there are a few elsewhere too. Facing into the mandapa there are seventeen pillars with yalis. There are two similar columns on either side of the stone chariot. It is said that most of the shafts are musical pillars. A typical pillars is in three sections. The capitals contain flower volutes on either side. Depending from the main shaft of the pillar are huge sculptures of riders on rearing valis. Some of the square surfaces contain a few reliefs. There are carvings of music players at the bottom of some of the pillars looking inside.



Fig-3: Matsya avatara carving on a pillar in mandapa



Fig -4 : lord Narasimha killing the Hiranyakasyapa.

The murals in the Venkataramana temple are far from extensive, only a few patches on the porches and on a part of the mukhamandapa. Yet, enough has survived to affirm their Lepakshi idiom. Some damaged paintings are seen on ceiling.

The paintings occur on the ceiling in that part of the mukhamandapa which adjoins the ardhmandapa wall and also a little to the front. But it is on the ceiling of the porches that the best survivals are to be found. The left one contains a big panel of lord Vishnu and two consorts. There are also two attendants with chowries. On the ceiling of the mukhamandapa, a sage is represented. In another part three rows have survived, separated by bands not unlike the rows of relief on the outer wall of the lord's shrine. These are all that have survived of the paintings which must once have covered the entire ceiling.



Fig 5: The wedding scene of Sitarama from Ramayanam painted on the ceiling

a gigantic masterpiece, the Vishnu panel at Tadipatri attracts attention. It is a magnificent creation, the devotion of painter suffusing his technical skill.

The Chintala Venkataramana temple, so notable for their art, so important place in the history of Vijayanagar art, and unlike most other Vijayanagara temple, living centers of faith, deserve to be cherished.

**Figures: (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)** all the images are belongs to Author's field work.

## CONCLUSION:

The Chintala Venkataramana temple was built in 16<sup>th</sup> century, there are sculptures and paintings on Ramayana and Bhagavata themes, inspired from local Telugu literature Ranganatha Ramayana and Valmiki Ramayana. The influence of the Vijayanagar art on this temple is mostly visible, filled with "kumbhayapanjara" element decoration. All the sculptures has resembled the style of the Hoyasala in decoration of the garments and pillars. The entire temple has pictures of Lord Vishnu.

When the Mughals invaded the temple, most of the sculptures, main damaged and the painting in the Rangamandapam was also damaged and there was a line with red. Today we are able to see the red-colored line and impressions, as some percolated which too fading away. As a result of human negligence, especially of uncleaning and damping and leakage, sinking of water thorough the cleavages of ceilings causing the painting into the stage of deterioration. The glorious Ramayana story now has shrunk to a few patches here and there. 95% of the visual appearance of paintings is lost which we can't restore their charm again. The government should pay special attention on this temple, which has been seen by earlier generations, and it would be better if a guide is appointed and developed as a tourist Centre.

## REFERENCES:

### Books:

1. Ramaswami. N.S (1976). "*Temples of Tadipatri*", (A.P Archaeological series No.45) (pp.6-12). A.P Govt, Hyderabad, HYD: Text-Book Press.
2. V. Jayaprada (1998). "*Vijayanagara Temples*". Bharatiya Kala Parakashan, Delhi. (pp.84-86).

### Chapters in Books:

1. V. Kamesvara Rao (1976). "*Vijayanagara Temple of Rayalaseema*" (A.P Archaeological series No.47), (pp.5). A.P Govt, Hyderabad, HYD: Text-Book Press.