

# NUGGEHALLI LAKSHMINARASIMHA TEMPLE.

## History:

Nuggehalli is a village 18kms north-east of Channarayapatna in Hassan District of Karnataka. It was once a flourishing town as seen from the inscription Ch.238. The temple record states that in the reign of Somesvara Hoysala Bommanna, Dannayaka made Nuggehalli into an agrahara under the name Somanathapura and installed in 1246 A.D (or 1168saka) a temple dedicated to the gods Kesava, Narasimha and Gopala – Trikutachala (A configuration typical in construction of temples by the Hoysalas). This temple predates by about 20 years the Keshava temple at Somanathapur in the T. Narasipur Taluk. The temple is generally known as the Lakshminarasimha temple though the main god is Keshava. In 1249A.D. a temple dedicated to Sadashiva was constructed by one Kilaka. The name Nuggehalli to this place first appears around the 14-15 century (i.e. during Vijayanagar reign) & lore says that the word is coined from the word 'Nuggu or enter' as exclaimed by the then leader of the attacking army of the Palegars. The only remains of the fort is the 'Bagilu or the gateway' which houses the temple dedicated to God Ganesha.

## General Description:

At a later date, during the Vijayanagar period, additions to the temple in form of the present **navaranga** with its square granite pillars was constructed in front of the original porch which has lathe-turned soap-stone pillars and complete eaves. An Alwar sannadhi was added during this period housing Sri Ramanuja, Sri Somayaji etc. The **hajara** in front of the **patalankana** with 18 high fluted pillars are of still later construction belonging to somewhere about 1700 A.D. The south and North towers are also of about the same date and are made of brick and mortar.

Originally the **Mahadvara** or **upparige**, made of soap-stone supported by plain round pillars existed. In front of the Mahadvara stood two fine elephants which are now placed in front of the hajara (the elephants are well carved and a horseman is cantering on either side of the trunk). Additions & reinforcement were done during the Palegars reign notably adding the images of the presiding deities on the Mahadvara. On either side of the Mahadvara around the temple, there is a prakara wall of heavy stones which encloses a rectangular courtyard. Originally only the main cell had a tower made of soap-stone. To give the effect of Trikutachala two masonry towers have been built in the Palegars days. The sculptures of this temple are of a high order and are of the same class as those of Hosaholalu and Somanathapur and are the works of Mallitamma, Baichola and others. The sculpturer's names are chiselled in quite a few places.

## PLATFORM:

The temple is constructed on a raised platform of about four feet high. The exterior of the original temple is divided into 19 faces (as in the base-plan) inclusive of niches.

### **ELEPHANT FRIEZE:**

Akin to the other Hoysala temples, around the bottom of the temple wall runs a frieze of elephants. The animals are caparisoned and generally have two exaggeratedly (exceedingly) small men riding on the back of each. The animals are shown playing with their trunks, fighting with each other or with enemies. The most interesting groups are;



Face 5: Elephants wearing armour.

Face 6: Fighting each other.

Face 8: Two elephants with one head (These occur at most corners).

### **HORSEMEN FRIEZE:**

Immediately above the row of elephants is a frieze of horsemen, some of which are cantering/galloping forward, others are involved in fighting and still others moving slowly as in a procession.



Some interesting groups are

Face 5 : Horses with armour.

Face 15: Lancers charging.

Face 16: **Camels with drums** – a rare frieze unique to this temple.



### **SCROLL FRIEZE:**

Above this is a long creeper scroll with lion faces in the corners and buds, flowers, monkeys, birds, deer etc, in the convolutions. This frieze is neatly executed.



**MYTHOLOGICAL FRIEZE** (4<sup>th</sup> tier): The story of Bhagavata is narrated in detail,



Face Particulars of the story of Krishna (Bhagvatham)

- 1 This is now hidden by the additional structure of Alwars.
- 2 a An upset cart  
b Cowherds take offerings of milk and curds to Sri Krishna  
c Krishna shows his open mouth to Yashoda  
d He is scolded by his mother
- 3 Cowherds fight with Indra and the Dikpalas
- 4 a A royal personage falls at the feet of Krishna  
b Krishna is rocked in a cradle  
c Krishna kills putani  
d Krishna kills Sakatasura
- 5 a He destroys the twin trees and begs for butter  
b He dances when given butter which he shares with a cat  
c He steals butter  
d He is punished by the Gopis
- 6 a He steals butter from carts and men carrying pots slung (on addles) across their shoulders  
b He plays with the cattle and Radha in the groves  
c He plays with the cowherds who bring milk and butter for him
- 7 a The last scene is repeated in detail  
b He plays with the cowherds while watching the animals

#### **SOUTH NICHE**

- 8 a Kalinga attacks him in the Yamuna and is slain  
b The cowherds celebrate Krishn's victory by dancing and
- 9 a bring shoulder-loads and cart-loads of goodies to Krishna  
b Krishna lifts up the Govardhana hill  
c Indra begs pardon

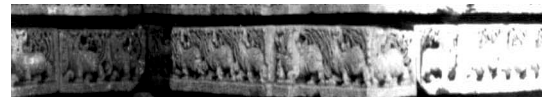
#### **WEST NICHE**

- 10 Krishna plays on the flute, while the cattle, cowherds and even the gods listen and admire. The gopis dance
- 11 a Krishna teaches philosophy to the Gopis  
b Rasakrida-Gopis dancing with a Krishna between every two of them  
c Krishna runs away with the clothes of the bathing Gopis and the latter beg for them
- 12 a Krishna fights Dhenukasura  
b Krishna fights Gardabhasura  
c He is taken out in procession on a chariot
- 13 Krishna slays a rakshasa and is taken in procession with Balarama, the cattle and cowherds proceeding him
- 14 a Yasodha brings up Krishna; Domestic scenes like rocking the cradle swung on the tree branches, Yasodha and the two boys seated playing with a calf, baby Krishna milching, baby begging for butter etc  
b Akrura with Krishna and Balarama in a chariot, start for Dwaraka

- c Cowherds accompany the chariot with shoulder-loads of milk and butter
- 15 a Krishna shows **Visvarupa** in the Yamuna to Akrura and to others as **Paravasudeva**
- b The chariot reaches the gates of Dwaraka
- 16 a The dwarf woman meets Krishna and is cured
- b The festival of weapons: the weapons are worshipped in a mantapa
- c Krishna fights the rakshasas
- d Krishna's coming is reported to Kamsa
- 17 a Kamsa commands his wrestlers to attack and destroy Krishna
- b Krishna kills the elephant
- c He slays the wrestlers
- 18 a Kamsa is surprised at the defeat of his wrestlers
- b Kamsa is slain by Sri Krishna
- 19 This sculpture is hidden in the wall

**MAKARA FRIEZE:**

The row of makaras (Mythological animal; having features of different animals like peacock tail, lion legs, boar body etc) is found distinctly as in all Hoysala architecture.



**SWANS FRIEZE:**

The swans are well made and are shown in their natural attitudes. In the corners, they are shown generally as two birds beaking one another.



**LARGE WALL IMAGES:**

The wall images of various gods are of nearly the same size of about 3ft 3in height including the base and toranas. The pedestals have friezes of scroll work having



Padmas, Garudas, lion faces, kirtimukhas, etc. The bases are bold and well executed.

The toranas above the figure are mostly composed of creepers, turned and twisted into



beautiful shapes. The images have been sculpted using the navatala measure (and not dasatala -as seen in Belur); but they are beautiful and are finely worked. Those on the southern half of the temple were carved by Baichoja of Nandi while those on the north side were made by Mallitamma. Both these sculptors have signed their names in many places. The chief image groups are

Face Particulars of the Images/ Large idols (Tier 7)

- 1 a **Kalpavriksha**  
b Mohini with Dakshinamurti  
c Keshava(embedded in the wall)
- 2 a Brahma standing on lotus: to his right is a lady with chamara  
b Narayana – The 24 forms of Vishnu are finely sculptured in order and most of them have their names inscribed on their pedestals in Kannada characters  
c Mohini dancing with Dakshinamurti (wearing a Kullavi cap, long coat, and sandals) holds danda and chakra
- 3 a **Dolotsava** – Krishna with consort being swung on jewelled swing-board hung with ropes from one ornamented beam supported by two plantain trees. From the tree is hanging a bunch of fruits though their steins are more like those of palm trees: monkeys are playing on the toranas  
b Rati and Manmatha  
c **A horse-headed musician** to their right carrying their betel bags  
d Madhava with Lakshmi holding bunches of flowers  
e Tandava-Ganapati with 8 hands (tusk, chakra, parasu, savargahasta, sankha, padma, lamba-hasta and apupa); mouse and musical accompaniments
- 4 a Amaranarayana or Paravasudeva seated on Ananta., Kannada inscription on pedestal: ‘Sri Adimurti devaranu Nandiya Baichoja madida kandire’ Below the god are Garuda, Prahlada & others. To his left stands a goddess with kalasa and chamara.  
b Govinda with consort to his right  
c **Yoganarasimha with two consorts** and Garuda & Prahalada below  
a Vishnu with consort  
b Varadaraja seated in sukhasana (abhaya, chakra, sankha, dana)  
Kannada inscription:Allal(apperuma)



- 5 a Harihara  
 b Madhusudana and his consort: holds up pasa and kalasa  
 c Trivikrama with the river Ganga  
 d Vamana receiving gift from Bali with Sukra protesting (right of Bali)
- 6 a Trivikrama standing with a Naga-kanya holding a jewelled necklace to his left.  
 b Bhairava with goblin to his left  
 c Durga dancing with a skeleton: a goblin stands to her right  
 d Vishnu as Vamana standing  
 e Sridhara  
 f Two monkeys fighting for a fruit (Vali & Sugreeva)
- 7 a Govardhanadhari : Kannada inscription on the pedestal: ‘Hari birida ruvari giri vajradanda viridaprasadi mastakasula ruvari Naniya Baicholamadida ruvara sri sri sri’. On the torana monkeys are playing. To the god’s left is a lady admiring her ear-ring in a mirror. (Is it Mohini or Lakshmi)  
 b Ugranarasimha with Garuda on left, Lakshmi on right and Prahalada below  
 c Hrishikesa – Inscription ‘Rishi Kesa’ in Kannada

#### SOUTH NICHE

- 8 a Varaha – seated with consort-inscription ‘Lokarti 5 ke ondu’  
 b Inside niche - Durga in sukhasana. The niches have one storey only  
 c Narasimha – seated
- 9 a Padmanabha – standing  
 b Venugopala  
 c Surya with adoring rishis, accompaniments and guards – A Chaaya on each side and Aruna driving the 7 horses on Pedestal  
 d Damodara

#### WEST NICHE

- 10 a Narayana seated with consorts  
 b Inside niche - Harihara standing (rosary, trident, chakra, bowl) Here is also kept a small figure of Chandikesa  
 c Seated goddesses: (A) Parvati – (Rosary, Trident, Fruit)  
 Kannada inscription – ‘Ruvvari Mallitammana bava (?) Bagiya ruvari’  
 (B) Lakshmi - seated (rosary, chakra, sankha, gada)  
 (C) Sarada - seated ( rosary, danda, ankusa, kalasa)
- 11 a Sankarashana – Kannada inscription – ‘Sankarusana’  
 b Indra and sachi on elephant in the parijata battle  
 Kannada Inscription – Mallitamma  
 c Krishna and Styabhama borne by garuda whose left hand holds the Prijata branch  
 d Vasudeva

## NORTH NICHE

- 12 a Yoganarayan with Lakshmi on left (Padma, Ankusa, pasa, padma):  
Kannada inscription – Lakshmi and  
Bhoomi on right (Padma, Ankusa, pasa and kalasa).  
b Inside niche – Sarada seated  
c Hayagriva seated (yogamudra, rosary, pustaka, phala), with Goddess  
Saraswati on left and Ganesha on right.
- 13 a Pradyumna  
b Dharani – Varaha  
c Venugopala  
d Garuda
- 14 a Aniruddha with the goddess Ushas on left. The latter is dancing  
holding her two long braided tresses one in each hand.  
b Halayudha  
c Purushottama  
d **Lakshmi dancing with 8 hands** ( abhaya, padma, chakra, svarga  
hasta, sankha, phala, lamba-hasta, danahasta). On the left one  
drummer and one with davane is on the right  
e Mahishasuramardini – by Mallitamma – inscription 'Durgi'  
f Mohini dancing with cobra in her hands and long ringlets hair  
falling behind her  
g Adhokshaja
- 15 a Kalingamardana with a Nagini on each side  
b Narasimha standing **with a lion head**  
c Arjuna shooting the matsya-yantra with oil bowl below.  
Hanumadhvaja and Draupadi with garland to left
- 16 a Lakshmi or Mohini standing in Samabhanga with Dakshinamurti on  
right (4 hands –phala, gada, shield & bowl).  
b Mohini molested by monkey  
c Achyuta  
d Parasurama  
e Lakshminarayan in sukhasana  
f Janardana  
g Mother with child on right hip  
h **Sarada dancing** (8 hands rosary, phala, ankusa, svargajasta, pasa,  
padma, lamba-hasta, pustaka)
- 17 a **Hayagriva with a fallen rakshasa** on the pedestal (8 hands –  
arrows, gada, chakra, sword, sankha, shield, bow & padma.)  
On his right is a lady with long tailed bird perched on her right hand.  
b Upendra  
c Kodandarama with Lakshmana & Hanuman on right and Sita on left.
- 18 a Hari

- b Vishnu seated in padmasana holding bowl of sweets in the right hand and kalasa in the left: chakra in field on right, sankha on left, the ten avataras on the torana & Garuda on pedestal Inscription: Mallitamma.
- 19 a Sri Krishna
- b **Kamadhenu with umbrella above**, a lady attendant on each side and 5 friezes on pedestal, consisting of elephants, horses, nagas, kalasas and canopies.

### CORNICE:



Above the large images runs cornice-like shaped eaves and ornamented with small kirtimukhas and beaded pendants. It looks as if this cornice originally marked the first floor, the portion above being

the second floor. It is possible that when the temple came to be constructed of stone, the two floors were reduced to the present miniature size.

### SMALL IMAGES UNDER CONOPIES:

Above the cornice is the row of pilasters and canopies under which are small seated figures consisting of gods and heavenly beings. Important ones are



Face (4) Surya with Chaaya.

(7) Dancing Lakshmi.

(11) to (15) the ten avataras of Vishnu and Mandara-parvata with vasuki as rope.

(16) Anantasayana.

### TURRETS:

Above these small figures is the row of turrets with indented square-shaped, star-shaped and multi turreted plans

### EAVES:

The eaves is a parapet, more than 4 feet high, made up of rows of larger pilasters whose sikharas and intervening spaces are ornamented with rows of Yakshas and standing forms of Vishnu. This parapet covers the sides of the hollow roof, a peep into which can be obtained from a hole above the outer north niche.

**TOWER:** The north and south towers which are of brick and mortar are of the seventeenth century or even later workmanship and have been put in to raise the temple to the dignity of a complete trikutachala. The main west tower, though square in plan, is



of soap-stone and typically Hoysala in design being composed of three rows of turrets with a stone sikhara on top surmounted by a stone kalasa. It has the usual projection over the sukhanasi. Its face has a kirtimukha with Garuda in the centre.



**NAVARANGA:** As has been already stated the patalankana, hajara and outer navaranga of granite pillars are all of later structures. The porch of the outer navaranga, however, is a Hoysala building contemporaneous with the main temple. It has four round lathe-turned pillars and is remarkable for the absence of jagali and for its complete eaves. Its Bhuvaneshvari or dome has a row of images and lions below with circular rafters. One ankana on its south has been converted into the Alvar's sannidhi in which are now placed late Vijayanagar period images of Ramanuja and others.

The navaranga doorway has an interesting lintel on which is a seated Goddess **Saraswati playing on veena** instead of the usual Gajalakshmi. The navaranga is of nine ankanas. Ganapati and Mahishanuramardini are placed in its western wall, Visveksenar & Gajendra moksha idols are placed in its northern wall.

**Pillars & Ceilings:** There are 4 pillars in the navaranga of the round lathe-turned type. The wall pilasters, however, are of the usual indented square shape. There are 9 ceilings, the more remarkable of which are here named commencing pradakshina-wise from the navaranga doorway:

1. Star-shaped gallery and rafters shaped like a star with twelve points.
2. Similar with obtuse angles.
3. Circular rafters.
4. Rounded Srichakra pattern with indented corners.
5. Square with inset octagon and interlaced band.
6. Flat roofed with yaksha panels, and the 8 Dikpalakas below.
7. Star-shaped, with eight points.
8. Circular rafters with Dikpalas below:
9. Central Ceiling: Dikpalas below; then lions friezes; then star - shaped gallery; Circular rafters above.

#### GARBHAGUDI/ SANCTUM

**South Cell:** The South cell has no sukhanasi having a deep lotus ceiling and has on the lintel Amarnarayana. This cell has on a Garuda pedestal on it is a finely sculpted Venugopala.

**North Cell:** The north cell is similar to the south cell but has on the lintel of the doorway Lakshminarashimha and above the cornice between the makaras- mythical animals the image of Yoganarashmha. Inside the cell on a Garuda pedestal is Lakshminarasimha seated in sukhasana poise.

**West cell:** The Sukhanasi doorway has seated Laksmi on the lintel and an uncertain figure between two hamsas above the cornice. As in the other cells, here also is a deep padma ceiling. On the main garbhagriha doorway, the lintel has Lakshminaranyana with Kesava above the cornice. The main cell has on a Garuda pedestal an image of Kesava. All the three chief images have the **ten avatars of Vishnu on the toranas** & are about 4 & half feet high.