

# Lepakshi temples

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**In News:** A tableau on Lepakshi temple has been selected for the Republic Day parade to be held in New Delhi, representing Andhra Pradesh.

## History Of Temple

- The Lepakshi temple is a 500-year-old marvel of Ancient Indian Architecture.
- It is also known as Veerabhadra Swamy temple and was built by the brothers Virupanna and Veeranna, who were initially in the service of the Vijayanagar kings.
- Built in the 16th century, the architectural features of the temple are in the Vijayanagara style with the profusion of carvings and paintings on almost every exposed surface of the temple.
- It contains idols of Ganesha, Veerabhadra, Shiva, Bhadrakali, Vishnu and Lakshmi.
- There is a very large Nandi (bull), about 200 meters away from the temple which is carved from a single block of stone, which is said to be one of the largest of its type in the world is one of the main attractions in Lepakshi.

## Location

- The Lepakshi temple in Andhra Pradesh
- This temple is just 120 km from Bangalore. As a person in Bangalore
- The place where this temple is located is the place where Jatayu (the Vulture that stopped Ravana while abducting Sita to Lanka) died. This place has got the name when Rama told Jatayu - Le Pakshi - Get up Bird when Jatayu was dying.
- But this temple is not a Rama Temple but is a Veerabhadra Temple. (Veerabhadra was born from Lord

Shiva's hair-Jadamudi.

## **Architect Significance Lepakshi Temple**

- Hanging Pillar of Lepakshi
- Largest Monolithic Nandi in India
- Largest Monolithic Nagalinga in India
- Lepakshi Saree Designs
- Unfinished Kalyana Mantapa
- Durga Padam
- Eyes of Virupanna
- Mural Paintings which include the largest portrait painting in the world (Portrait of Veerabadra Swamy in the ceiling, in front of the main temple)
- Carved Ganesha Statues

## **Hanging Pillar**

- Every pillar here is a masterpiece.
- One of the most interesting one is that of the suspended pillar in the main hall supposed to be the reception hall of Shiva Parvathy marriage. This is the pillar which does not rest on the ground fully.
- There are about 70 pillars at this fabulous 16th-century temple of stone in Vijayanagar style, but this one is the best known and a tribute to the engineering genius of ancient and medieval India's temple builders.
- However, it is a bit dislodged from its original position.
- It is said that during the British era, a British engineer tried to move it in an unsuccessful attempt to uncover the secret of its support.

## **Mural Paintings**

- The Lepakshi temple also has the finest specimens of mural paintings of the Vijayanagara period.
- The 24 by 14 ft fresco of Veerabhadra on the ceiling before the main sanctum sanctorum is the largest in

India of any single figure. The rest of the frescoes are also beautiful and show an impressive attention to detail with colors strikingly contrasted – black limework against an orange-red background with some green, white, black, and shades of ochre-gold and brown mostly applied to a stucco surface specially treated with lime.

- The fresco in the ceiling of ardha mantapa (antechamber), which is said to be Asia's largest, measures 23 by 13 feet (7.0 m × 4.0 m). It has frescoes of the 14 avatars of Lord Shiva as: Yogadakshinamurthy, Chandes Anugraha Murthy, Bhikshatana, Harihara, Ardhanarishwara Kalyanasundara, Tripuranthaka, Nataraja, Gouriprasadaka, Lingodhbava, Andhakasura Mahara and so forth.

### **Nagalinga**

- Monolithic snake structure in Lepakshi is the Largest Monolithic Nagalinga in India.

### **Lepakshi Nandi**

- The monolithic Nandi sculpture in Lepakshi, is said to be the biggest monolithic Nandi in India.
- It is 4.5m high and 8.23m long.
- The big granite bull is on the main road, approximately 200 meters from the temple.
- It has been positioned such that it faces the shivalinga shielded by a huge serpent inside the temple.
- It is the second largest monolith in India, after Gomateshwara.
- The Nandi sports a huge kaasu malai, a bell chain, earrings and other jewelry.

### **Veerabhadra Temple**

- The Veerabhadra Temple of Lepakshi is a notable example of the Vijayanagara architectural style.

- There are many peculiarities in this temple such as a rock chain, Vastu Purush, the Padmini Race Lady, Durga Paadam, Lepakshi saree designs, 100-pillared dance hall, beautiful and intricate carvings, paintings on the ceilings, the hanging pillar that barely touches the ground, the monolithic Nagalinga, the monolithic Nandi, the unfinished wedding hall and others.
- The paintings on the roof are done in natural pigments.
- One noted spot in the temple is the “Eyes of Viroopaakshanna”.

### **Connection with Ramayana**

- The historic town of Lepakshi has been connected with an occurrence of the Indian epic of Ramayana.
- According to the Valmiki's Ramayana, when Ram accompanied by Hanuman, met the dying Jatayu, they helped him attain moksha by uttering the words “Le Pakshi,” which in Telugu means “Rise, bird”.
- Hence the name, Lepakshi.