



# reach foundation

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## REPORT ON CONSERVATION OF LAXMI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE, MANGALAGIRI, GUNTUR DISTRICT

### History and background:

#### **Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple**

At the foot of the hill, there is this temple whose origin is traced to olden days but it was generally believed that the temple was constructed by Saluva Narasingha Raya during 15<sup>th</sup> century and the deity here is called Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy. About 200 years back Raja Vasireddy Venkatadri Naidu who ruled from Amravati as his capital constructed a stupendous Gopuram (tower) on the eastern gate of the Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy. It is one of the highest gopurams in South India and only one of its types in this part of India. It is 153ft. in height and 49 feet wide with 11 storey, and gates facing east and west. This great and imposing tower is the centre of attraction in this place. The devoted patience of thousands of skilled craftsmen and the labour of many more apprentices which had gone into this great structure is a testimony to the religious fervour which characterized the builder. After constructing the Gopuram, it was leaning towards one direction. The Kanchipuram Architects suggested digging a tank opposite to the tower. After digging the tank, it is said that, the tower became straight.

#### Panaka Narasimhaswamy Hill Temple:

The temple of Sri Panakala Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy is situated on a hill which is located centrally in between Vijayawada and Guntur. It is said that here, god is self-existent. The main deity on the temple atop the hill consumes Panaka (sweet Jaggery water with cardamom and Tulasi) just half the volume of what is fed to him.

On the right side of the steps provided to reach the temple, there is a stone inscription by Sri Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar and a little further up, the foot prints of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya are to be seen. A Dhvajasthambam was erected in front of the temple in 1955. Behind the temple there is the temple of Sri Lakshmi, to the west of which there is a tunnel which is believed to lead to Vundavalli caves on the banks of the Krishna. The stone inscription of the kings of Vijayanagar relates besides to the conquest of Rayalu over Kondapalli etc., also mentioning one Siddhiraju Thimmarajayya Devara granted endowments to Mangalagiri Temples.

The steps to the temple were constructed by Sri Channapragada Balaramadasu in 1890. There was a cave next the Devi temple on the hill. It is said that, there is a way to Vundavalli from that cave, and the sages used to go by that way to take bath in Krishna River.

Date of visit: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

**Members present from REACH:**

S/S T Satyamurthy – Founder Trustee, REACH FOUNDATION, S. Dhandapani – Honorary Senior engineer REACH FOUNDATION, Shri. J. Chandrasekaran – P.R.O & Secretary, REACH FOUNDATION.

**Members present from Endowments Department:**

Shri. N. Srinivasa Reddy - Executive Officer, Mangalagiri and his team members

**The team's visit and observations:**

➤ **1. The West Gopura:**

The Gopura on the eastern side is the imposing structure of 138' with eleven floors

The ground and the first floors are constructed with stone walls, beams and ceiling slabs.

Other tiers are constructed with brick and mortar walls and wooden attics form the floor of the each floor. The wooden beams are lofty and heavy and interlink the walls (second tier to the eleventh). Two sets of door jams and lintel beams divide the gateway into a central bay and two aisles.

**The visible problems**

The entrance Mahadwara on the East – The floral decorative beam below the door jam has developed crack.

Beams on the ground and first floor on the Mahadwara side aisles are also broken. The cracks are noticed on both the sides of the Aisles and this fact indicates that there is an even settlement. It is reported that few years back the stone members were cleaned by sand blasting. This also one of the reasons for cracks in the lower parts of the Adhishatana.

Broken beams on the side aisles have been given support by the erection of stone masonry walls over the lower beams. Actually instead of supporting the thalas atop, the stone masonry walls have created dead weight over the beams and the beams have cracked. The beams can not be removed due to the heavy floors above.

The wooden thalas, originally found to be laid with a floor of rammed brick bats and lime mortar. Some years back one more layer of floor was added in all thalas. This has also increased the dead weight over the superstructure.

All the wooden beams and lintels have been covered with plaster. With out breathing surface the wooden members have become rotten.

## **Measures**

**The Cracks over the ornamental door jam can be attended by inserting a steel flat of appropriate width and length. This lintel is only ornamental and not bearing the weight of the superstructure.**

**The cracked aisle beams can also be mended by inserting an I section girder of appropriate width properly after strengthening them, and removing the accretion like extra walls.**

**Approximately 12 feet long I section can be inserted on either side by creating a chiseled cavity on to the existing stone surface, covering the cracked portions, not by drilling but by manual chiseling. Then the I section can be inserted, and grouted with suitable epoxy grouting, after which stone slab can be kept above the chiseled area and covered up for aesthetics.**

All the floor slabs (thalas) were built with wooden planks and wooden beams were available up to lintel levels. Now, the wooden beams are covered with thick RCC flooring.

**The RCC flooring from all thalas should be removed manually till the wooden lintels are exposed. In first few floors from the bottom, old lime mortar flooring is placed above the wooden slabs. Those can be retained. The lime flooring can be checked for its strength. If found disintegrated they can be scrapped and fresh lime mortar with brick bats can be laid over the wooden floors.**

**The original beams and walls both made of wood should be exposed to retain the original design. All extra cement floors, steps, etc. made in each floor should be removed.**

**After exposing the wooden members, they should be treated with termite resistant preservative.**

**There are sign boards fitted over the wooden and stone members of the talas.**

**Due to constant wind pressure at that height there is notable distortion over the wooden floors of the talas and they are all inter-connected. Unwanted electrical fittings, sign board (seen at the first floor facing the main entrance road) should be removed to balance the dead weight on the tower.**

**I t is reported that the masonry walls of first two tiers were erected some years ago covering the inner wooden infrastructure. This fact is to be verified during the works and if so it can be exposed and a decision can be taken during the work in progress.**

## ➤ 2. Main Mandapa

The front pillared Mandapa has leakages during rainy season. The beams and ceiling slabs in many places are broken. This is due to the over burdened terrace RCC poured on and above the dead lime mortar ceiling which once existed.

The existing RCC terrace layer and dead weathered materials above should be removed to full depth till the original level. Water tightening on the terrace needs to be done with required thickness and maintaining a slope towards the corners and ends. This is to be done after the replacement of the broken beams, slabs and lintels.

The Mandapa's weight is distributed over to the main shrine from the eastern side. This can be separated and additional pillar be erected at the bottom of the Mandapa, relieving the main shrine from bearing the load of the Mahamandapa.

### **Other observations:**

Some accretions and displays are seen near and on the Mahadwara at the North side. Due to that earth and other materials accumulate near the Gopura which leads to percolation of water to the stone wall. Hence such RCC displays and any accretions around the original stone wall should be removed, exposing the original plinth. Stone aprons can be provided to protect these walls, which would stop water from percolation into the foundation.

There was some complaint from some common public, about sand blasting done earlier on the temple Gopuras. If so, sand blasting should be avoided henceforth.

The Endowment officers in the temple showed great interest in learning conservation measures and do the same themselves.

There is also some demand for building up the Eastern Gopura. This would be taken up after studying the load bearing properties of the existing stone base of the Gopura, by IIT, Chennai. A separate study by them can be arranged once we get the clearance from the department.

**Submitted by**  
**REACH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**