

Behind every great temple is a kid rolling its eyes

- An overview article on temple of Sri Someshwara Swamy, Halasuru, Karnataka, India

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Introduction

Being a Bangalorean I was taken aback when the Nriyashilpa yatra schedule was announced by Noopura Bhramari. Why? Because a temple of such stately build is a rare find and it's even rare to preserve and sustain such a masterpiece. Yes, the architectural skill, vastness, and grandeur with which it is built are worth a visit.

One can reach Someshwara temple, Halasuru: by bus, rickshaw, private vehicles /cabs, and even Metro (purple line). The timings of the temple are 6AM to 12:30PM and 5:30PM to 9PM except on special days.

The temple of Someshwara also called Mandavya Maharishi kshetra as he is believed to be the founder of this holy spot is at least 571 years old and was initiated by the ruler of Yelahanka Nadu, Jayappa Gowda and is dedicated to the Hindu Lord Shiva as one can find it to be the culmination of the Indian architectural tradition of the Vijayanagara dynasty. It was later developed and modified by Hiriya Kempe Gowda (founder of Bangalore). It was Immadi Kempe Gowda who brought the best of the sculptors and shaped the temple what we see today.

Temple Layout



One is invited by a tall pillar which emblems Lord Ganesha, Nandi, Veerabhadra, and Mahakali at the base of It. The temple's overall form is dominated by its large colourful entrance (gopura), ardha mantapa or Nandi mantapa, an open mantapa (highlighting the sculptural skills), inner courtyard, square sanctum (Garbha Griha) which is surrounded by a narrow passage. Gorgeous idols of Shaiva and Vaishnava puranas are carved on Gopura. Entering the temple, we have fierceful guardians, Dwara Palakas acting as line of defence for Gods. This is followed by the view of Dwaja Sthambha, Bali Peeta, Nandi Mantapa.

The inner courtyard has the statue of Mandavya Maharishi (fig 1). What overwhelmed me was the lined Nayanmars and vaishnavas installed all along the narrow passage (fig2). They are 64 and 20 in numbers respectively. It reminded me of the Indian army highlighting the values of discipline and orderliness.

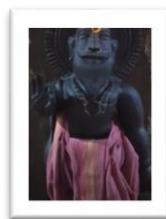


fig 1

fig2

Here are many small sanctuaries of Lord Ganesha, Vidhya Ganapati, Dakshinamoorthy, Arunachaleshwara, Chandikeshwara, goddess Saraswathi, Maha Vishnu, Subramanya Swamy with Valli, for personal interaction. Surprisingly we also find Lord Bhrama being worshipped here. It is at this Garbha Griha where Lord Shiva (Linga) is said to have descended from the mountain top and has become accessible to human beings in physical form. The intersection of the vertical axis (mountain top to Garbha Griha) and the horizontal axis (temple entrance to Garbha Griha), in other words, God's vertical axis intersecting with human's horizontal axis called sacred intersection emanates the entire universe. As it is the temple of Shiva, it goes without saying about the Nandi at the ardha mantapa, facing the main shrine. Hearing this surely changes the vibe, isn't it?

The zoomed open mantapa

The spacious mantapa consists of four large bays between 48 pillars. One should not forget the theme adopted to carve the stone-built structures or pillars. On the exteriors, one can find the grandest of the columns all carved from single stone blocks. A thick structural column paired with dynamic sculpture, depicting a scene of a rearing horse is impressive (fig3). As we move on to the pillars, one can observe the creativity of the artwork back in those days. Each row of pillars has a common theme like musical instruments (fig4), daily chores(fig5), hunting(fig6), animal act(fig7), etc.



Fig3



fig4



fig5



fig6



fig7

You not only find carvings of animal-headed Gods (Nandi, Narasimha, Ganesha etc) but also animal bodied structures (Patanjali, Vyagrahapada). Other notable and rare carvings include a man sitting on a scorpion and wild boar, a beast standing on a reclined man, and the most uncomfortable view being, the trunk and leg of an elephant chained together.

The outer structure of the temple has carvings of hunter Kannappa plucking his eyes to offer it to Lord Shiva, Durga slaying Mahishasura, neatly depicted Girija Kalyana, and so on.



Last but not the least This temple is just not for rasikas but also for the general public to appreciate how our society was years ago. It's a day out for all your children to get introduced not only to Indian Mythology but also paves way for out-of-the-box thinking. And for the ones who has studied the Puranas, it's going to be a visual treat. Art requires imagination, imagination requires creativity, creativity requires experience and experience comes from your life. We just saw life, 500 years old. Every temple has a life story and lessons to be learned. **Aren't we all kids in front of this majestic art?**

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