

Can anything be sadder than the work left unfinished?

- Sharmila R, Bengaluru

The Virabhadra temple of Lepakshi, known for its beautiful architecture and endless history is located in the district of Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh. It was built by the brothers Viranna and Virupanna who were the Governors of the Vijayanagara empire during the 16th century. The history is just not in the walls or pillars but also in the ceilings through paintings.



Image of Viranna and Virupanna

The brothers Viranna and Virupanna governed the empire during the reign of Achyutaraya's, brother of Krishnadevaraya. Just beside the main temple there is an unfinished KalayanaMantapa which has a story to be narrated. The unfinished or incomplete Kalyana mantapa is all about the story of Virupanna, jealousy, rumours and not allowing a masterpiece to take its shape.



Image of unfinished Kalyanamantapa

This Mantapa was built intending to glorify the marriage of Lord Shiva and Parvati. While Virupanna was building the Mantapa for Shiva and Parvati, the king Achyutaraya who was providing funds passed away in Penukonda. Since the king had no heir, his nephew took charge of the situation who got influenced by the accusations on misusing of funds by Virupanna and wanted to punish him by

blinding him. On hearing this, loyal Virupanna gouged his eyes and threw them on the wall where in the blood stains remains till date. Sources say the Government had these stains tested and has confirmed that they are blood stains. And it is believed, the place gets the name Lepa-Akshi (place of blinded eye). The dream of constructing a grand Mantapa ceased to come to an end!



Image of blood stains

One can see the exhibits of the couple Shiva and Parvati, Brahma, Sages, Ashta dikpalas, and so on. The Mantapa has 2 or 3 stones acting as roof and rest is open to the sky. At the entrance are the carvings of ten Rishis, who welcome the guests. The crowned Rishis are called Raja rishis and the rest known as Brahma rishis. As we enter, the Mantapa is designed in a circular fashion depicting the gods and their respective vehicles.



Image of Rishis



One can see Brahma at the entrance to invite the guests, moving on we can see a beautiful carving of Agasthya Muni performing the wedding of Shiva and Parvati.

Image of Agastya Muni performing the wedding of Shiva and Parvati.



Parvati's parents Maina Devi and Himavanth with flowers and water respectively performs the rituals of the wedding. The others Devendra with Vajrayudha on Airavata, Double headed Agni on sheep, Yama Dharmaraja on buffalo, Vashishta Muni, Varuna, the rain god on crocodile, Brihaspati, the three headed Dattatreya, Vayu Deva on deer, Kubera on horse, Vishwamitra grace the occasion.



With such a brilliant imagination of wedding in Kailasa, things should have been in favour of Virupanna. Instead, his death was the reason for this beautiful masterpiece to remain unfinished and none dared to complete it!

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