

Vadabandeshwara



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Ganeshan Venumadhav Bhat M Vadabandeshwara temple is one of the most prominent and oldest temples of Udupi, the temple town. This temple is more than 800 years old. Malpe, the coastal part of Udupi houses the Vadabandeshwara temple. The temple is a few kilometers away from the shoreline. This is one of Karnataka's oldest temple. This temple primarily worshipped Lord Subrahmanya, although it is famous for housing the deity Lord Balarama, the brother of Lord Krishna.

According to folklore, there was a sage by the name Vadabandeesha. He was a leper. He could not tolerate the disease and he started to penance. Lord Subrahmanya satisfied by his penance decided to relieve him of his disease. The Lord came in front of him and offered to cure him of his suffering, if he built a temple dedicated to the Lord. Sage Vadabandeesha then built the present temple in the Lord's name. Hence, this temple is also known as Anantheshwara temple. Anantheshwara, being the other name of Lord Subrahmanya.

At present the main deity is Lord Balarama, the brother of Krishna. Hence, in one sense we can call this temple as the brother temple of the Udupi Krishna mutt where devotees from all over the world come to experience the lord's grace. There is a folklore for Lord Balarama being the main deity now. The story goes that due to somebody vandalizing the statue of Lord Subrahmanya one of the arms of the idol broke. Due to this the idol could not be kept in the temple for worshipping.

So the people of the village decided to immerse the idol into the temple pond and named the pond Skanda Pushkarani. Skanda, being yet another name for Lord Subrahmanya or literally meaning the God of war. The great Vaishnavite Saint Shri Madhvacharya was meditating on the shores of Malpe. During this time he found that a ship was having trouble in the sea. So, he helped the ship to reach the shore. In gratitude the owner of the ship gave Saint Madhvacharya two rocks. One of these rocks cracked and the idol of Lord Balarama came out.

This idol of the lord was installed by the saint in Vadabandeshwara. The other stone contained the idol of the Lord Krishna which he installed in Udupi and built the famous Krishna Mutt. In dedication to Lord Subrahmanya the temple still houses a small statue of the lord along with Lord Balarama's idol. During the main festivities and celebrations he is kept as the Utsavamurthy and worshipped. The devotees usually are in many during the Mahalaya Amavasay (new moon day). They come to offer prayers to the lord and take a dip in the sea.

The temple due to its proximity to sea is also a place where many hindus come and perform the 12-13 day pujas of the dead. Fishermen and navigators perform pujas here after the rainy season before entering the sea for their voyage. The temple also houses smaller temples dedicated to the Lord's Ganesh and Durgaparameshwari. It also houses the Navagraha Devagudi. A small temple dedicated to the nine planets. The temple is not built completely in the Dravidian style of architecture. The idol of the main lord is installed in the main room around which the temple and the other smaller temples are built.

The whole temple is built in the form of a square. But there are no Gopurams. Directly in front of the Lord's room is the Dhwajastambha pillar where Lord Subrahmanya's statue is kept as the Utsavamurthy during the festivals. Behind this pillar is the Garudastambha pillar on which Lord Garuda's idol has been chiseled. The Garudastambha pillar is important as both Lord Balarama and Subrahmanya are two different forms of the Adishesha (the seat of Lord Vishnu, a god in the form of a snake), Lord Garuda is the only one who can bear the wrath of these two god's anger.

This is one of the Hindu mythology beliefs based on which it is built. Although now the temple worships the two different forms of Adishesha, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISCKON) perform their bhajans and dances in the name of Lord Krishna here. So, it is evident that even though it is not a Krishna temple it has been given the importance that it needs from other sects also. Hence, from the above mentioned facts we can conclude that Vadabandeshwara is one of the oldest and prominent temples of Udupi and we must do all that we can to not let this relic disappear into the sands of time.