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Ever heard of a temple where the statue of the Goddess was found in a field in 1936 after spending almost a millenia under the soil?And is worshipped as the Tri-Sakthi-Swaroopini?
No?
I shall narrate the story of Nidadavole Kota Satthema temple in West Godavari district, Andhra



Nidadavole is a sleepy little town in the district of West Godavari, located a few kilometres from the Godavari. Among other things, it is famous for its Gramadevatha and Kshetrapalika, the Goddess Kota Satthema



In the tenth century, Nidadavole was known as Nirvadhyapuram, and was under the rule of the Eastern Chalukyas. They were nominal feudatories of the Kakatiyas of Warangal. The local Sthalapurana indicates that the original temple was built by one king called Virabhadra.



This Virabhadra has been identified as the husband and royal regent of the Kakatiya Empress, Rani Rudramadevi who ruled Central Deccan during the period. The original stone figure of the Goddess was built within a fort during his reign.



The goddess was worshipped as the Shakti of the Fort. Over time the name entered the vernacular parlance as Kota (the telugu word for Fort) and Satthema (a local vulgarisation of the word Shakti).

Local legend says that a flood (or several floods) destroyed the fort and the temple beneath it. This perhaps coincided with the fall of the Kakatiya Empire.
And the idol was buried within the earth, hidden from all the eyes for several centuries



And the Goddess resurfaces in the 20th century, miraculously emerging in front of a Brahmin, Devulapalli Ramamurthy Sastry in the agraharam village of Timmarajupalem when he was ploughing the fields in the year 1936.



In contrast to other such images which have resurfaced, Kota Sathema is a large statue. Over ten feet tall and carved in black stone. A temple was built on the location which is where she presently resides.

(This picture gives the correct dimensions of the statue)



The idol is worshipped as Trisakti Swaroopini. She holds a Trisulam (Trident) in one hand, representing Parvathi. She bears a Shankh and Chakra as well, representing Lakshmi. And surprisingly, she wears a Yagnopavita (Janayu), respresenting Saraswati. The holy female trinity



A better photo where you can see the Shankh and Chakra as well, along with the Trishul.

As a result, she is worshipped as a triple incarnation of Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Gayatri in this temple.



Among all the festivals celebrated here, her birthday (the day she emerged out of the earth in 1936) is the grandest of the affairs. That is the day of Margasira Pournami.



Surprisingly, the temple and the deity is also venerated by Members of the local Muslim community.

The town of Nidadavole has a sizeable Muslim population, and perhaps this is an example of local cultural sentiments permeating across religious barriers.



The beautifully decked and decorated hallway of the temple is a special attraction. Not to mention the amazing laddu you receive as prasad as well ■



Nidadavole Kota Satthema is a part of the larger Telugu cultural milieu, where every village has a protectress diety or a Gramadevatha. This is why such Shakta temples are prevalent all across the states. And even surprising is the lack of a consort or male god in these temples.

My grandmother often told me the legend of the 101 sisters (Nutokka Akkachellellu), representing 101 such local goddesses. They have only one brother apparently, Pothuraju, The local avatar of Vishnu.

Kota Satthema is one such goddess who has become synonymous with Nidadavole. Such little histories are often forgotten in the larger fabric of Vishnu/Shiva worship in India. But our villages have kept their goddesses and their stories alive, well into the 21st century.

Before I forget, the point of Vishnu being their brother appears to be a strong connotation that these goddesses are treated as avatars of Goddess Parvati/Shakti.
You rarely find a Lakshmi temple on its own around here, and never a temple without Vishnu as her consort.

So next time you are around this part of India, certainly make a trip to visit Kota Satthema. She who has spent a millenium beneath the earth before returning to bless us. Nidadavole is a train station on the Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada line.

End of thread. ■