

**BUDDHIST MONUMENTS IN NORTHERN TELANGANA:  
A STUDY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE**



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FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF**

***Doctor of Philosophy***

**IN  
HISTORY**

*Submitted by*

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Buddhist Monuments in Northern Telangana: A Study of Art and Architecture** is based on original research work done by me under the supervision of **Dr. T. Dayakar Rao**, *Associate Professor*, Department of History and Tourism Management, Kakatiya University, Warangal for the award of the **Doctor of Philosophy in History**. This thesis or any part of there has not been submitted to any other University for any other Degree or Fellowship previously.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

A.A.R.D.A. & M.	:	Annual Administrative Report, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Hyderabad.
A.P.G.A.S.	:	Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series.
A.P.J.A.	:	Andhra Pradesh Journal of Archaeology.
A.R.A.S.I.	:	Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India.
A.R.A & M.	:	Annual Reports of Archaeology and Museums.
A.S.S.I.	:	Archaeological Survey of South India.
E.A.	:	Epigraphia Andhrica.
I.A.	:	Indian Antiquary (Volumes).
I.A.R.	:	Indian Archaeology – A Review.
J.A.H.R.S.	:	Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society.
J.E.S.I.	:	Journal of Epigraphical Society of India.
J.I.A.B.S.	:	Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies.
J.H.A.S.	:	Journal of Hyderabad Archaeological Society.
M.A.S.I.	:	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.
P.A.P.H.C.	:	Proceedings of Andhra Pradesh History Congress.
P.A.P.O.C.	:	Proceedings of the Andhra Pradesh Oriental Conference.
P.S.I.H.C.	:	Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress.
S.I.I.	:	South Indian Inscriptions.
S.S.S.	:	Souvenir of Satavahana Seminar.



## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Telugu country occupies a place of pride in the history of Buddhism especially its philosophy and the art. The Telugu people were one of the earliest people who extended enthusiastic welcome to Buddhism and both the Theravada (Hinayana) and the Mahasanghika (Mahayana) systems enjoyed their liberal patronage. The wide popularity of Buddhism in Telangana is attested by the scores of Buddhist sites spotted so far by the spade of archaeologist.

The glorious era of Buddhism was a time, when the creed of Gautama Buddha had very stronghold on the minds of people of Telangana during the three centuries preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ. This phase witnessed an unprecedented growth of Buddhist institutions and their art and architecture as witnessed from various Buddhist remains. These centers must have influenced the religious and social life of people.

The recent excavations revealed that the building activity began though in humble way by the local Buddhists during pre-Asokan or atleast Asokan times. It reached its zenith during Satavahana and Ikshvaku times in Telugu country. The fact that it continued to flourish for another four hundred years (i.e. up to 700 A.D.) meant that the wharf and woof of culture of this region was largely Buddhist. The art and architecture began and developed in the region mainly under the Buddhist auspices.

The exploration of the Buddhist monuments initiated about the middle of the eighteenth century in Telugu country resulted in locating more than one hundred Buddhist sites and some of them were excavated by archaeologists. But recently during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fifteen Buddhist sites of early centuries were brought to light in the

Telangana region. The excavated sites have brought out the grandeur and magnificence of *stupas*, *viharas*, *caityagrihas* and temples both rock-cut and brick built adorned with beautiful sculptures of stone and metal. Few of the label inscriptions and copper plates were also unearthed from these sites.

There was a phenomenal rise of Buddhist institutions situated on the banks of rivers or administrative head-quarters which were connected with highway trade routes starting from Kotilingala in Jagtiyal district, Sthambhampalli, Pashigaon and Dhulikatta in Peddapalli district; Kondapur in Medak district; Tirumalagiri, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda in Suryapet district, Vardhamanakota, Yeleswaram in Nalgonda district; Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda and Karukonda in Khammam district. They were centers of attraction in the hayday of Satavahana and Ikshvaku rule. Some of them continued to flourish up to Vishnukundin period.

These archaeological discoveries throw a flood of light on the historical background of Buddhism and its socio-economic base in the Telangana region. There were certain new socio-economic forces which strongly helped the rise and expansion of Buddhism and its establishments.

Inspite of the Satavahana and Ikshvaku kings themselves were believers in Brahmanism, they were tolerant towards Buddhism the religion of the people in large. As there are no direct evidences of their patronage of Buddhism in Telangana, their leanings towards Buddhism is firmly established on the basis of the evidences found in the caves at Nasik, Bhaja, Karle and Kanheri in Western Deccan, at Allur, Gummadidurru, Ghantasala, Bhattiprolu, Jaggayyapet, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the eastern Deccan. The earliest caves of Ajanta and the Southern gate of Sanchi were their masterpieces. The present Telangana region formed part of Andhradesa which was ruled by

Satavahanas and Ikshvakus. They were very catholic in their outlook and gave maximum encouragement to the religion of the masses of the day.

It is significant that the patronage of the art and architecture of the Buddhist establishments did not come from Kings of either the Satavahana or the Ikshvaku dynasties. The patronage was in fact a continuous process which had its roots in the common masses like craftsmen, artisans, wealthy merchants, officers, ministers, noblemen and ladies of all ranks who encouraged it for the fulfillment of their religious, spiritual, social and aesthetic predilections and aspirations.

The *stupas* and other structures, sculptures and label inscriptions on slabs, potsherds inscriptions on boulders and copper plates indicate the flourishing state of Buddhism. The Buddhist centers inspired the people of the day to dedicate themselves in the propagation of the creed. Each unit of Buddhist establishments like the *stupas*, *chaityas* etc., might have come into existence with the munificence of devotees and they were patronised especially by the Gahapati, Setti and guilds of Artisan and Craftsmen, who formed the bulk of population. Monks, nuns and lay people like *upasakas* and *upasikas* and ladies of royal harem also contributed to it. In course of time the establishments became well developed with kind and cash as self-sufficient centers. Buddhist centers in Telangana consisted mainly *stupas*, *viharas* and *chaityagrihas*. They are mostly of brick built except the rock-cut centre located at Karukonda village in Khammam district. The history of the earliest Buddhist architecture in Telangana goes back to the time of Mauryas.

The Theravada and the Mahasanghika schools, and their sects and sub-sects like *Sailas* and *Chaityakas*, flourished in the Talangana region and had their *Viharas* to suit their religious needs and requirements.

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in Telangana an attempt is made in the present study to sketch the micro level study

on the *Budhist Monuments in Northern Telangana: A Study of Art and Architecture*. These monuments require detailed study therefore this work will be found filling the gap for the proper study of Buddhist art and architecture in northern Telangana.

### **I. Scope of the Study:**

The present study confined Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana districts i.e. Adilabad, Aasifabad Khumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, Peddapalli, Jagtial, Karimnagar, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Khammam and Bhadradi Kothagudem. The districts has historical evidence from Paleolithic time in Stone Age civilization. This districts ruled through the ages from Mouryans to Asaf Jahis. This study mainly focuses on northern Telangana districts. In these districts from Stone Age, onwards historical evidences came to lime light through the excavations conducted by Department of Archaeology, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The main purpose of this study is to analyse the available data, interpret in chronological order of *Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana, and focus on art and architecture*.

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in the Northern Telangana region an attempt is made in the present study to sketch the comprehensive picture on the *History of Buddhism in Telangana*, along with *Buddhist Art and Architecture*. After tracing the historical background and socio-economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhism, an attempt has been made to highlight the art and architecture of the Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana.

The life story and legends of Buddha and his gospel has been illustrated by the architects and artists with great enthusiasm. The Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana attest the patronage of the people of this land to the Buddhist institutions. The people of Telangana area might have actively welcomed and enriched the Buddhism and its establishments.

Buddhist sites from Telangana region have been brought to light within the last 25 years. But recently fifteen sites were excavated. Their results have been published in brief in the annual reports of the state and central departments of archaeology, but the detailed reports of the excavations still await publication. All these Buddhist sites in northern Telangana requires a detailed study. No connected accounts of Buddhist remains in Telangana has hitherto been written and therefore this work will be found filling the gap for the proper study of Buddhist art and architecture in northern Telangana.

The present study is to expose the historical and cultural background of Telangana region and also to throw light on the contemporary socio-economic conditions of the people of Telangana area from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which acted as base for the rise and growth of Buddhist institutions. The recent archaeological excavations have thrown much light on the socio-economic aspects which were congenial and contributed for the rise and maintenance of Buddhist establishments. Buddhism won the confidence of different classes, especially *Gahapati*, *Setti* and *Kamara* who formed the bulk of population.

The flourishing state of Buddhism was due to the strong support it received from the prosperous communities i.e. *Setti* (traders, merchants) *Gahapati* (agriculturists) and *Kamara* (artisan and craftsmen) which emerged as back bone of Buddhism and its institutions. This was a result of the favourable and helpful Buddhist attitude towards the

contemporary conditions of socio-economic life of the above said people.

Another objective of this work is to study the Buddhist establishments covering Buddhist architecture such as *Stupa*, *Vihara*, *Chaityagriha* and Temple and also focus the salient features of Buddhist art of the northern Telangana region.

## **II. Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana region an attempt made in the present study following aims and objectives:

1. To analyze the physical background and historical background of the northern Telangana.
2. To sketch the comprehensive picture on the history of Buddhism in northern Telangana.
3. To trace the socio-economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions of this region.
4. To bring into light the identified and unidentified Buddhist monuments in this region.
5. To study the, an attempt has been made to highlight the architecture of the Buddhist monuments.
6. To study the, an attempt has been made to highlight the art of the Buddhist monuments.
7. To examine and analyze about architectural features and sculptural art of the Buddhist monuments in this region. Such as Stupa, Vihara, Chaityagriha and temple and also focus the salient features.

### **III. Sources of the Study:**

There are different types of source material available for the topic of the present study i.e., *Buddhist Monuments in Northern Telangana: A Study of Art and Architecture*. The Archaeological remains form as the main source. The coins found in large quantity throw light on political, religious and economic history. The valuable epigraphs on stone and copper plates discovered from the Buddhist sites are another important source material of the study.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra*<sup>1</sup> gives an account of the economic conditions and trade routes leading to the Dakshinapatha from north to south. *Gathasaptasati* of Hala<sup>2</sup> an early Satavahana king, speaks of agricultural operations during the period of early Satavahanas. It refers to various kinds of crops, agricultural seasons, irrigation etc. and also the life of rich ladies and wives of traders and caravan leaders.<sup>3</sup>

#### **1. Buddhist Literature:**

Buddhist Literature provides the source material for the study of the antiquity rise and growth of Buddhism and its sects in Andhra region. They also throw light on geographical and political conditions of Telangana region during the period of the Janapadas and Mauryans age. Several Jataka stories contain references to the Janapadas like *Vidarbha*, *Assika*, *Mulaka*, *Rishika*, *Kalinga* etc. They frequently mention the Asmaka as Andhra Janapada and its services to Buddhism in Telangana region, since the advent of Buddhism in the Asmaka Janapada. The Bhimasena Jataka<sup>4</sup> refers to the visit of Bodhisattva to Andhrapura. The Indriya and Sarabhaiya Jatakas refers to Bodhisattava Jotipala who established a colony for the monks on the banks of Godavari near Kavtavana and spread Buddhism in all directions.<sup>5</sup>

According to *Suttanipata*<sup>6</sup> Assaka was situated on the bank of Godavari. It also gives us the account of Bavari and it is believed that

Buddhism entered Telangana region (Asmaka-Mulaka) during the life time of Buddha himself. In *Cullakalinga Jataka*,<sup>7</sup> it is stated that when Kalinga was reigning over the city of Dantapura in Kalinga country, Assaka was the king of Potali or Potana or Paudanya the capital of Asmaka. *Suttanipata* places Potana town on the river Godavari in Nizamabad district. Paudanya has been identified with Bodhan.<sup>8</sup> It also refers about *Janapadas, Mulaka, Assaka, Asmaka. Kathavatthu*<sup>9</sup> mentioned about the *Andhakas* (Andhra Buddhists) who played a leading role in the Third Buddhist Council. *Mahavagga* refers to Andhakavana and Andhakavinda at Sravasti and Rajagriha respectively. These monasteries were intended for the stay of Buddhist monks from Andhradesa. According to *Mahavamsa*<sup>10</sup> during the time of Asoka, Moggaliputta sent Mahadeva to Mahishamandala, which is identified in the region of Godavari-Krishna basin.<sup>11</sup> Other Buddhist works like *Paramarthadipan*<sup>12</sup> and *Kathavatthu*<sup>13</sup> supports the evidences of Suttanipata. Archaeological discoveries endorse almost all the literary references. The large number of published works, journals and others utilized for this study, which have given in bibliography.

## **2. Foreign or Classical Sources:**

The accounts of the classical writers mention about thirty towns of Andhras, some of which are substantiated by archaeological discoveries. Megasthenese<sup>14</sup> a Greek writer of the fourth century B.C, described, the Andhras possessing thirty walled towns and an army consisting of 2000 elephants, 3000 horses and 1,00,000 infantry. Some of them may be the early sites brought to light in the excavation in the upper and lower basins of the Godavari and the Krishna. He locates the Andhra people contiguous to the Kalingas. This description suits the Telugu districts on either side of the Ghats. The recent archaeological excavations in Andhradesa which substantiated classical accounts by bringing to light the ruins of Mauryan and Satavahana townships at places like



Dhulikatta, Peddabankur, Kotilingala, Kondapur, Satanikota, Dtyanyakataka, Vardamanakota, Bhattiprolu etc.<sup>15</sup> The evidences suggest that Andhradesa experienced urbanisation as early as the fourth century B.C. which led to an early state formation. The walled towns were head quarters of tribal republics. Arrian noted that the Andhras were divided into a number of tribal Kingdoms.<sup>16</sup> Pliny also quoted about Andhras having thirty walled cities.<sup>17</sup> He also mentioned the drain of Roman gold and silver coins to India during the early centuries of Christian Era.<sup>18</sup>

The **foreign accounts** of Ptolemy, Pliny, and Marcopolo informs number of seaport-towns and give their account of purely commercial nature. The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* of anonymous Greek Sailor notes the conflict between the Sakas and the Satavahanas for the possession of the west-coast ports of Bharukachcha and Kalyan etc., and describes the vigorous maritime trade carried on by the Deccan.<sup>19</sup> From the accounts of the Periplus it implies that a commercial highway was at operation right across the peninsula stretching from Barukachcha, Pratihthana, Tagara (Ter) and Dhanyakataka. Pratihthana was an important emporium of Roman goods and Roman potteries have been unearthed from here. The Periplus also refers about the commercial centres at Surparaka, Kalyan<sup>20</sup> and Nasik which were connected with Paithan by trade routes. From Pratihthana the road went down to Tagara. The latter was a commercial nucleus to which all sorts of merchandise goods according to the Periplus, were brought from the eastern coast i.e., from Andhradesa. Hence there was a long distance highway from Tagara which passed through all the important towns in the Telangana region and reached Dhanyakataka and from there it went up to the sea port at Maisolia.<sup>21</sup> Apart from land-routes there were a number of sea-routes of foreign trade and river routes to boost the internal trade as well as promote social contacts. The river routes of Krishna and its tributaries touched the hinterland towns and the

Buddhist centres like Jaggaiahpetta, Gummadidurru and Yeleswaram were very close to Telangana Buddhist centres located in Khammam and Nalgonda districts. Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and such other places assumed prominence and became centres of commercial and cultural activities.

In his geographical accounts Ptolemy mentions the sea ports around the peninsula of which coastal Andhra had harbours and inland cities of Maisolia region.<sup>22</sup> Maisolia was connected with a number of towns either by river route or by land route via Telangana region through Ter to the west. Ptolemy in his geography states that Chastana and Pulumavi of Paithan are contemporaries. He clearly states that Baithana (Pratishthana) was the capital of Siripolomavi while Ozene (Ujjain) was the capital of Tiastense (Chastana), Ptolemy mentioned market town namely Nelcynda as an important trading centre during first-second centuries A.D.

V.V. Krishna Sastry identified Nelcynda as the present Nelakondapalli, where the famous Buddhist establishment flourished. He also attests by referring Pliny, Ptolemy and Periplus that lead and iron ore was exported from Telangana region to Roman empire through the western ports.<sup>23</sup> Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim visited several Buddhist centres such as Dhanyakataka, Vengi etc. The Archaeological finds support the version that he had reached the famous Buddhist shrines of Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati from central India crossing the river Wardha, Pranahita and Godavari and probably travel through Buddhist centres like Kotilingala, Dhulikatta, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda, Tirumalagiri, Vardhamanakota, and Nelakondapalli in Telangana region.<sup>24</sup>

### **3. Archaeological Sources:**

Archaeological remains and artifacts found from Buddhist sites and

other urban sites of early historical period give a more authentic picture of Buddhist establishments and their socio-economic base. They are available in the form of monuments, sculptures, epigraphs, coins, seals, terracottas, beads and pottery. Through them we are able to study the Buddhist remains in Telangana region since Pre-Satavahanas to Vishnukundin period (3rd Century B.C. to the 5th Century A.D.). These are primary sources and constitute a major and more reliable evidence for the present study. By utilising all these available sources at the Buddhist sites, it has been possible to throw light on the art and architecture of Buddhist establishments and their social and economic base in Telangana region. The archaeological sources can be classified as below:

- a. Monuments and remnants of antiquities obtained from many Satavahana sites, civil buildings and forts. Seals, Terracottas, beads, pottery, ornaments, tools of household, carpentry and implements of agriculture discovered at various historical sites located at Buddhist centers.
- b. Idols and Sculptures of stones and metals.
- c. Inscriptions.
- d. Coins.

These archaeological sources presents sufficiently a broad spectrum fo the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the region.

**a) Monuments:**

The monuments like stupas, chaityagrihas, viharas, pillars and cave temples etc. areliving witnesses of the engineering and artistic skills of architects and testify its wealth and grandeur achieved during the period of Satavahana and Ikshvaku rulers. Many contemporary forts brought to light at various Buddhist sites i.e. Dhulikatta, Kondapur,

Kotilingala, Vardhamanakota and Nelakondapalli etc., testify the existence of thirty walled cities of Andhras.

**b) Sculptures:**

The innumerable sculptures that decorated the stupas in the Telangana region present before us the panoramic view of the social and religious life of the people and the role of Buddhism during the Satavahana, Ikshvakus, and Vishnukundin ages. The excavations yielded many Buddha images, sculptural reliefs, cave temples with patches of paintings testifying vividly to the artistic attainments and religious devotion of the people. They help us in knowing their similar of characteristic features of sculptures and their relation with famous schools of Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati and enable us to establish the religious history of Buddhism in Telangana region.

At Nelakondapally a sculptor's colony (workshop) was brought to light where they used to manufacture the Buddhist figures and export its products to other places. Its workmanship indicates the mature of the professional skill of the sculptor. With the help of the sculptures we can understand the pattern of dress, ornaments, styles of headgear etc., of the people of that age.

**c) Inscriptions:**

Inscriptions of the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus and Vishnukundins reported from the Telangana region throw light on socio-economic, religious and political conditions of the contemporary times. There are few label inscriptions from the region which help in the reconstruction of the cultural history. They are engraved on rocks and potsherds. Other inscriptions from a Nagarjunakonda and also from western and eastern-Andhradesa throw much light on the history of Buddhism. Nasik prasasti of Gautami Balasri states that the empire of Goutamiputra Satakami included die regions of *Assaka* (Nizamabad) with Paudanya (modern

Bodhan) as its capital,<sup>25</sup> and *Asika*, *Rishika* (between the rivers Godavari and Krishna) and *Mulaka* (the region around Paithan) etc. Her son Satakarani and grandson Pulomavi also granted some villages for the support of the Bhadrayaniya monks, a Buddhist sect. The Asokan edicts, particularly the Thirteenth Rock Edict<sup>26</sup> records that the Andhras were within the Raja Visaya and already following Dharma, evidently the law of the Buddha.<sup>27</sup> Andhra formed as a part of the Asokan Empire as indicated in the edicts found at places like Maski, Gavimath, Palikigundu, Erragudi (Ananthapur district) Rajulamandagiri (Kumool district)<sup>28</sup> and Dhanyakataka.<sup>29</sup>

At Kotilingala<sup>30</sup> several undeciphered labels in Brahmi (Mauryan characters) are found. One kilometre away from fort at Kotilingala a label inscription reads as *Nagagopinikaya* which indicates agricultural oriented group. At Dhulikatta stupa<sup>31</sup> one of the slabs carved with a Brahmi inscription reads as *Gahapatino Pathalasa Mathuya Samaya Danam*. On another slab the inscription reads as *Gahapatino Pathalasa Mathari Puthasa Ayago Danam*. Another label inscription reading *Pitha Nandi Puthasa Duhuthuya Sayonija Danam*. They reveal about the gifts made by the gahapatis to Buddhist stupas. One ivory seal from Dhulikatta inscribed in Brahmi script datable to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. reads as *AjaniSiriya Game Kumariya*. It may be assumed that the glory of Dhulikatta began to decline after the Satavahanas and during the post-Satavahana period, it might have transformed from town to a village. It is presumed that People began to worship Goddess Kumari, God Kumara, this evidence confirmed by the decline of Buddhism and Roman trade after 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. at Dhulikatta. One label inscription inscribed in Brahmi is collected from Phanigiri during my field work, it reveals about one person presenting a gift to the Buddhist stupa. Nagarjunakonda inscriptions<sup>32</sup> describe about Vasistiputra Sri Chamtamula gifting thousands of ploughs, cattle and gold coins. These gifts suggest the encouragement by Chamtamula who gave inspiration to agriculture.

Another Nagaijunakonda inscription<sup>33</sup> describes that the ladies of the harem patronised the Buddhist institutions. At Nelakondapalli a pot sherd engraved in early Brahmi script reads as *Sramana* (a Buddhist mendicant).<sup>34</sup> A few letters are seen carved on lime stone slab of stupa located at Nelakondapally it reads as *Skhanda Bhadrasa*<sup>35</sup> who donated the small lime stone votive (model) stupa. Two copper plate charters of Vishnukundin collected from Tummalagudem<sup>36</sup> refers to the Paramabhattacharika mahadevi vihara built by Govindavarma at Indrapura. He was builder of many stupas and viharas.

Chaitanyapuri Prakrit inscription of Govinda Vihara<sup>37</sup> incised on a big boulder on the right bank of Musi river. It reveals that a stone cell has been setup for those who carry water for the Bhikshus (monks) of Govindaraja Vihara. On paleographical grounds it can be assigned to the contemporary period of Govindarajavarma, the founder of Vishnukundin dynasty. This record takes back the antiquity of modern Hyderabad to the early centuries of the Christian Era as a Buddhist site of Pindapatika sect of Hinayana school.

#### **d) Coins:**

Hoardings of gold, silver, lead and copper coins of indigenous and foreign sources especially Roman gold and silver dinaries have been discovered in different parts of the Telangana region<sup>37</sup> which provide us valuable information regarding the history of this region. The coins of pre-Satavahana, early Satavahanas particularly Srimukha, the founder of Satavahana kingdom, were found at Kotilingala<sup>38</sup> which is also a Buddhist site and very close to other Buddhist sites namely Pashigaon and Sthambhampalli. At Kondapur a coin of king Satavahana, who is identified as the founder and first member of the dynasty has come to light. It shows that this was home-land of Satavahanas and from there only the king rose to power and extended his territory. Some coins with horse and tree in railing and svastika are also found. At Nelakondapally

many coins right from the Satavahanas to Vishnukundins have been found. Number of lead coins of Ikshvaku dynasty containing elephant with a raised trunk and Ujjain symbol were found at Nelakondapalli. They closely resemble the Ikshvaku coins noticed at Nagarjunakonda. One lead coin with *Ujjaini* symbol on the reverse and an elephant on the obverse with legend, *Santhamula* was found.<sup>40</sup>

Roman coins are discovered at Nagarjunakonda and also at another village Madhira which is also a mandal head quarter in Khammam district. Roman gold coins of the emperor *Septimius Severus* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. are collected from Nalgonda district. A hoard of forty seven silver coins, thirty nine Roman dinaries and eight punch-marked coins were found from Nusthulapur<sup>41</sup> at a distance of 10 km. from Dhulikatta in Peddapalli district. Out of the 39 Roman coins 13 are of *Pontiff Augustus Caius Julius Octaviaus* (27 B.C. to 14 A.D) and 26 belong to Tiberius Claudius Nero (14 to 37 A.D.). The Peddabankur site yielded<sup>42</sup> two hoards of silver punch-marked coins and five Roman coins. No coin of the post *Tiberius* period was found in this region suggests that the contacts between Rome and this region must have disturbed by that time (i.e., after 37 A.D.). But even during the later period, the Andhra country had a brisk trade relations with Rome and its coins were following in. One of the coin of Septimus Severus (193-211 A.D) found at Yeleswaram.<sup>43</sup>

According to P.L. Gupta<sup>44</sup> Roman coins found at Nusthalpur, Yeleswaram (Karimnagar Dist) and Akkannepalli in Nalgonda district also indicate the association of the Buddhists with these sites. All most all the Satavahana sites like Peddabankur (which is very close to Dhulikatta), Kotilingala,<sup>45</sup> Kondapur and other Buddhist sites yielded the Roman coins.<sup>46</sup> This indicates the brisk Indo-Roman trade which resulted in the surplus economy and enabled them to support the Buddhist settlements. It has been recognised that the flourishing state of Buddhism in

Telangana and Andhra region was due to the existence of active and prosperous support of Indo-Roman trade the during early historical period.

The source material relating to the present study is collected through the field study, inscriptions and published works, journals and others.

#### **IV. Hypothesis of the Study:**

1. Studying the Buddhist monuments of northern Telangana districts.
2. Understanding the role of the Buddhist monuments as centre in the form of socio-economic, religious and cultural aspect.
3. Considering the historic importance of Buddhist monuments in the form of architectural features.
4. Considering the historic importance of Buddhist monuments in the form of art features.
5. Enlightenment of sculptural art of the *Stupas, Viharas, Chaityagrihas* and temples.

#### **V. A Brief Review of Literature:**

Research so far conducted revealed that few scholars worked on Buddhist and other monuments in India with regard to Andhra Pradesh. Some of the eminent scholars worked on Buddhist monuments. The review of works so far completed on historical monuments more particularly on Buddhist monuments of Telangana region will review.

B. Subramaniaym in his book on ***Buddhist Monuments in Andhra Pradesh*** discussed on Buddhist monuments in Andhra Pradesh, which were explored and excavated from 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. He briefly reviewed the Buddhist monuments in different parts of Andhra Pradesh.



He also mentioned Dulikatta Buddhist *Stupa*. But not studied in detail about Stupa which is unique in South India.

V.V. Krishna Sastri, worked on ***The Proto and Early Historical Cultures of Andhra Pradesh*** and ***Excavations at Dhulikatta***, he presents a brief account of few Buddhist sites and townships of Sathavahana period unearthed in Telangana region. He provides information on the early historical sites almost in every alternate village have been situated in this Karimnagar district. J. Ramanaiah, worked on ***History and Culture of Karimnagar District (A.P.)***, has given importance to Karimnagar district history and culture. He provides information on the early historical monuments in Kotilingala, Paddabankur, Pashigon and Dulikatta authored by him.

M. Radha Krishna Sharma, in his book ***Temples of Telangana*** and B. Rajendra Prasad in his book on ***Art of South India – Andhra Pradesh*** given importance to Hindu temples of this district but not discussed, Buddhist monuments and their architectural features. E. Shiva Nagi Reddy and R. Subramanyam in their book on ***Buddhist Archaeology in Andhra Pradesh*** reviewed entire work more particularly explorations and excavations of Archaeology Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh from 18<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. They mentioned the importance of Buddhist monuments at Dhulikatta and Nelakondapally. But not discussed in detail about the unique architecture of this Buddhist sites.

From about the closing years of eighteenth century several British government officers started excavating Buddhist sites. Robert Sewell, Sir Waitair Elliot, Col. Mackenzie, James Burgess, Alexander Rea are some of the eminent archaeologists who carried out the excavation of Buddhist sites in Andhra. Their reports are of fundamental value which throw light on the neglected conditions of the monuments. James Burgess did a monumental work on the ***Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and***

**Jaggayyapeta.**<sup>47</sup> Alexander Rea, who excavated several sites including Bhattiprolu, Gudiwada, Ghantasala and Sankaram, produced a nearly comprehensive work entitled **South Indian Buddhist Antiquities.**<sup>48</sup> Robert Sewell produced a work **The Antiquarian Remains in the Presidency of Madras.**

Later, Longhurst excavated Guntupalli, Salihundam and Nagarjunakonda and the results were published in the annual reports.<sup>49</sup> Following him both T.N. Ramachandran and R. Subrahmanyam excavated Salihundam and Nagarjunakonda. R. Subrahmanyam brought to light about fifty Buddhist sites in the Nagaijunakonda valley.<sup>50</sup> These sites throw ample light not only on the history of Buddhism but also on the development of Buddhist architecture. They also exposed how different Buddhist sects, developed different patterns of vihara architecture.

A detailed report on the excavations still awaits publication. I.K. Sanna has carried out excavations at Amaravati and Guntupalli and his discoveries are published in the journal of the epigraphical society of India.<sup>51</sup> T.V.G. Sastry of the Birla Archaeological and cultural research institute, Hyderabad excavated one of the earliest Buddhist sites on the hill of Vaddamanu.<sup>52</sup> K.R. Subramanian tried to give a comprehensive account of Buddhist remains, but it was more than five decades back and new discoveries have added to our knowledge. **The Indian Architecture-Hindu and Buddhist** by Percy Brown contains only brief information of Andhra monuments. Debala Mitra, H. Sarkar and others gave brief accounts of the **Buddhist art and architecture in Andhra.** H. Sarkar has made a very short but highly valuable study of **The Early Buddhist Architecture in India,** a chapter included in this book on the architecture of Buddhist monuments in Andhra. Debala Mitra in his monumental work **Buddhist Monuments** devoted only a small chapter on small Andhra but focused mainly the national monuments of different

countries. B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao attempted to present a comprehensive picture of the rise and spread of Buddhism and its various sects in Andhra.<sup>53</sup>

Several scholars have worked on the Andhra Buddhist sculptures, and have published works on different aspects. C. Sivaramamurti has written on the sculptures of Amaravati in the Madras Government Museum.<sup>54</sup> T.N. Ramachandran studied the sculptures from a stupa near Goli village, Guntur district. This work is published by Madras Museum.<sup>55</sup> Douglas Barret's work deal with the ***Amaravati Sculptures in the British Museum***, O.C. Gangooly (***Andhra Sculpture***) and M.L. Nigam (***The Sculptural Art of Andhra***) also have attempted to study the Buddhist art in Andhra. Amita Ray has attempted to study the Buddhist art of Andhra in the socio-economic context of the period.<sup>56</sup> K. Ramachandra Rao tried to give the characteristics of Nagarjunakonda sculptures where as K. Krishna Murthy presents the material culture of the Nagarjunakonda art.<sup>57</sup> B. Rajendra Prasad in his work ***Art of South India - Andhra Pradesh***, presents a brief account of the characteristic features of Buddhist art and architecture of Andhra. However, none of these scholars has attempted to study the Buddhist art and architecture of the Telangana region.

V.V. Krishna Sastry presents a brief account of few Buddhist sites and townships of Satavahana period unearthed in Telangana region. P. Srinivasa Chary excavated Kondapur and published a booklet on it. Kwaja Md. Ahmed excavated Phanigiri and published ***Phanigiri Bouddharama Sidhilalu*** in Telugu. The Andhra Pradesh State Department of Archaeology and Museums has excavated several early historical sites in Telangana. These excavations have brought to light several Buddhist remains apart from fortified towns of the Satavahana and post-Satavahana times. The findings of these excavations in Telangana are reported briefly in the annual reports of the Department.

Amita Ray made a valuable contribution, by following the methodological frame work of 'Niharanjan Ray', (***Mauryan and Post Mauryan Art***) on the Early Art of Andhra in her book entitled ***Life and Art of Early Andhradesa***. She has tried to establish a close relationship between the prosperous socio-economic conditions which provided a base for the rise and growth of the Buddhist institutions and art. She also refers to some of the Buddhist sites from Telangana region.

In her work Amita Ray studied the socio-economic base of the Buddhist establishments with the help of archaeological sources including art. She devoted her work from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. in Andhradesa. She studied the whole Buddhist settlement and its surrounding locations for proper understanding of the socio-economic support to Buddhist establishments.

In the present study the Buddhist sites are viewed in the wider socio-economic background, establishing their relation with urban and rural centers nearby. Various monasteries were not growers of food and essential commodities. Naturally their subsistence depended on agricultural production. They required a wider social organisation with sufficient strong economic base to get support. Buddhist establishments were able to acquire wide and deep social base in the form of pilgrims, donors, bankers, traders, merchants, caravan leaders etc. The rearing up and the maintenance of large and small Buddhist establishments could not have been possible without the backing of the gold and silver currency. Roman gold coins are discovered at Dhulikatta, Peddabankur (Peddapalli district), Kondapur (Medak district), Yeleswaram (Nalgonda district), and at many other places in Khammam and Suryapet districts, where there are number of Buddhist sites witnessed.

The dominant faith amongst the aryanised upper and middle strata of the people, seems to have been Buddhism, and the epigraphic records,

sculpture and architecture, that have come down to us, are mostly Buddhist in affiliation and content. It is significant that the Buddhist *sanghas* that reared up the art did not come from the kings of either dynasty, namely, the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus. All that they had contributed towards its furtherance was their liberal and catholic outlook. It is equally significant at least in the case of the Nagarjunakonda establishments, that while the kings and probably also the nobles and ministers were Brahmanists, the queens and ladies of the royalty and nobility were ardent supporters of Buddhism and of the Buddhist *Sangha* if not actually Buddhists by themselves.

## **VI. Methodology of the Study:**

As cited elsewhere, since re-reading and re interpretation is needed in this regard. Gathering material for this work is by Primary and Secondary sources. Historical method, empirical research method is adopted in dealing with the subject.

**1. Primary Sources:** The primary sources using for this work is the excavation reports of the department of Archaeology, Government of Andhra Pradesh. These reports available as first hand source from 1976 to 1994 and 2008. In these reports the year wise excavations, and explored material like *stupa*, *vihara* complex, halls, votive *stupas*, sculptured panels mentioned. Buddha idols, Bronze Icons and Satavahana coins, inscriptions and early historic pottery will be used as primary source. Personal visit of Buddhist sites and comparative study of available reports will be studied and confirmed.

**2. Secondary Sources:** As cited above in review of literature all above books useful for this study as secondary sources. Besides official records of northern Telangana districts, archaeological reports, Gazetteers, revenue records which are preserved collectorate. The periodical journals, magazines, articles, newspapers etc., also utilized as secondary data.

**3. Field Work:** As a part of field work I have frequently visited the archaeological sites at Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Khammam and Warangal districts and gathered data pertaining to the present study. To make the study more comprehensive I have also visited the places of historical importance in the adjoining areas of Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar and Andhra etc.

## **VII. Chapterization of the Work:**

This varied information is analysed and organised into seven chapters. The scheme of chapterization and their contents is given below.

### **Chapter-I**

**Introduction:** Apart from introducing the subject, this chapter is devoted to explain the scope of the study, aims and objectives of the study, sources of the study, hypothesis of the study, A brief study is also made to review the literature published already on the subject and the sources for the present study, methodology of the study. At the end, the scheme of chapterization is provided.

### **Chapter II:**

**Geo-Historical, Religious and Cultural Background:** This chapter focus on the geographical setting of the Telangana region and its historical, religious and cultural background. Regarding the historical background, this chapter provides an outline of the political and cultural history of the region from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. i.e., covers the rule of the Pre-Satavahanas, the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus and the Vishnukundins in the history of Telugu country. Regarding the religious and cultural background, it is a brief study of the religious life of the people of this region. An information focused on the historical development of pre-Buddhist religious concepts, advent of Buddhism, its antiquity and history.

### **Chapter III:**

**Socio-Economic Basis of Buddhist Institutions:** This chapter is devoted to trace the new socio-economic conditions which supported and encouraged the Buddhist establishments and their organisation. The emergence of the new socio-economic forces and their support to the Buddhist institutions is discussed in detail with the help of available source material.

### **Chapter IV:**

**Buddhist Monuments in Northern Telangana:** A general survey of Buddhist monuments or sites and their distribution pattern is the subject matter of this chapter. Their topography, location and antiquities of each Buddhist site are discussed in detail.

### **Chapter V:**

**Buddhist Architecture of Northern Telangana:** In this chapter, an attempt is made for the study of a detailed description of the architecture of Buddhist monuments found in all over the northern Telangana region. Each unit of the Buddhist monastic establishments has been studied under different structural heads like Stupas, Viharas, Chaityagrihas and Cave Temples. Thus, an effort has been made to bring out the architectural features of different Buddhist establishments.

### **Chapter VI:**

**Buddhist Art of Northern Telangana:** This chapter devoted for the study of the Buddhist art, which included the symbols and images of Buddha, the sculptural reliefs depicting Buddha's life, and his teachings and it also present decorative motifs, torsos, etc. found at various Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana region. After giving the description of each sculpture thematically, an analytic study of the Buddhist art of the region is made in comparison with the Buddhist art of other centers of Andhradesa and other regions.

**Chapter VII:**

**Conclusion:** This is being the concluding chapter, briefing the summary of the research worker based on the important findings.



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## **CHAPTER-II**

### **GEO-HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

#### **I. Geographical Setting**

Northern Telangana region is one of the two geo-political subdivisions of Telangana state. Northern Telangana region consists of 18 districts namely Adilabad, Aasifabad Khumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, Peddapalli, Jagtiyal, Karimnagar, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Khammam and Bhadradi Kothagudem.

Telangana is an old table land of flat-topped appearance like a plateau. For the last 50 million years, there was no significant change in the geological history of the region. It is covered with hillocks and thin forests, the rainfall being meager. Nirmal (Adilabad), Rakhee (Karimnagar), Kandikal (Warangal and Khammam) and the Balghat (Hyderabad) hills are the fringes of the western ghats. Telangana region covers an area of 1,14,863 sq. kilometer, with an average elevation of about 360 metres above the sea level.<sup>1</sup> The soil of the region is predominantly sandy, with Kankar particles with poor moisture retention capacity.

The rainfall is also very scanty. The average rainfall is 1035 millimetres (40.70), July is the month of heavy rains. The land is dry during most of the year and as irrigation technology during the period of our study did not develop but people knew the method of tank, irrigation which is even now the most important irrigation device in the interior of the Telangana. There are traces of ancient ponds and tanks which existed even before the Mauryan times and developed in succeeding period. It is proved by archaeological excavations which brought to light many Satavahana sites.<sup>2</sup> There is inscriptional evidence for digging of

wells and tanks for the benefit of the clergy residing there.<sup>3</sup>

The major rivers Godavari and Krishna flow across the plateau and wash themselves into the Bay of Bengal. The catchment area of the Godavari including its tributaries is almost larger than Krishna in the Telangana. The River Krishna divides the plateau into two administrative regions, i.e., Telangana and Rayalaseema.<sup>4</sup>

River Godavari rises in the western ghats at Triambak near Nasik in Maharashtra and enters Telangana near Baster in Adilabad district. It is flowing through Nizamabad, Nirmal, Jagtial, Macherial, Peddapalli and Jayashankar Bhupalpally districts. The river Pranahita joins Godavari in Adilabad district. Godavari takes south-eastwards and passes through Bhadrachalam in Badradri Kothagudem district. Finally, it falls into the Bay of Bengal after running across the Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The river Maner originating near the village Kalkur, traverses through the Karimnagar district and falls into the Godavari near Manthani. It stretches to a length of about 130 km. in the Karimnagar district and forms an important source of irrigation. Peddavagu and Chinnavagu are the other minor rivers in the Karimnagar region.

River Manjira originating from Maharashtra, joins Godavari near Kandukurti in Bodhan taluq of Nizamabad district. The rivers Tungabhadra and Krishna enter into Telangana at Narayanapet district, and join together at Sangameswar down the Alampur and then flows eastward across the deep gorges of Nallamalai ranges forming southern boundary line to Telangana region particularly to the districts of Jogulamba Gadwal, Wanaparti, Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda. Finally Krishna enters the plains of Guntur and Krishna districts and falls into the Bay of Bengal. Many tributaries such as Muner, Plair, Bikkkeru, Alervagu, Musi, Dindi, Dundubhi, Pedavagu, Ahalya etc., join the River

Krishna. Many settlements of different cultures have grown up in Telangana region from times immemorial all along the rivers. It appears that the rivers and their basins formed as the chief source of agriculture. In the rainy season they are navigable and people might have covered the distance by boat as the journey by water was safer than by roadways. Telangana region with its mineral and agricultural wealth added by internal trade, has become the political nucleus during the period of Satavahana times.

### **1. Mineral Resources:**

In ancient times, mining activity for collecting iron ore and the raw material is noticed at several places in Telangana particularly in Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Medak and Warangal districts. Roman and Persian traders used to visit Telangana for the steal.<sup>5</sup> In Telangana the finds of implements and articles of iron, copper, gold, lead, bell metal and glass prove the existence of rich and advanced metal industry during the period.<sup>6</sup> Iron smelting and forging techniques, casting were known in the Satavahana age.<sup>7</sup> Soap-stone and lime-stone are available in Karimnagar district.

### **2. Forests:**

The forests have been classified into two types in this region, 1. Tropical mixed deciduous and 2. Dry teak and several other types. Babul forests, hard wikia forests, dry deciduous scrub forests, and secondary dry deciduous scrub forests are also found scattered in this region.<sup>8</sup> Forest area starts from Mahadevpur and spreads all along the bank of river Godavari which can be classed as the best for teak quality of trees obtaining with a dominant height of 18 m to 24 m and a girth of 1.5 m. The most important and the best teak producing area of the state of Telangana is in the Karimnagar region.

### **3. Fauna:**

The fauna of Karimnagar district is rich and varied. The ecological distribution is uniform and also much variant and consistent with quality and density of the forest. In the Manthani area, game animals like deer and other homed varieties are noticed. The blackbuck, four homed antelope, tiger and panther were abundant in the past, but their number is decreasing in the recent years as a result of deforestation and ecological changes. The black-buck and great Indian bison were very abundant in the past, while blue-buck, spotted deer, porcupine, rabbit and hare, chita, wild-sheep, sambar are quite common now. The carnivora, tigers and panthers are noticed in the Tadicherla, Mahadevapur and Singaram blocks.

### **4. Game Birds:**

The important game birds in the region are the green pigeon, the common pigeon, peacock, peafowl, water duck, wood duck, partridge, sand-goose, snipe, red-jungle-fowl, king-fisher, bulbul, dove, crow, mynah, oriole, parakeet and woodpecker. In the winter season many birds which migrate from North India and Himalayan regions visit this area. Intensive explorations revealed many early historical sites in Telangana region, particularly in the districts of Karimnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad, Medak, Ranga Reddy, Khammam and Nalgonda which were thickly inhabited during the Satavahana period.

### **5. Location of Telangana:**

Location of Telangana is of great significance. Interposed between Aryavarta and Dravidadesa and occupying the central portion of Deccan, Andhradesa became a melting pot of cultural influence from the north, south and west. The region was actually traversed by ancient trade routes (Sardhavaha Patha), one leading from north to south connecting Buddhist establishments, and the other from east to west connecting



Dhulikatta, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda, Tirumalagiri, Nelakondapalli, Nagarjunakonda and Dhanyakataka. From Pauni (Paunar) in Vidharbha region the Buddhist pilgrims might have travelled over forest roads or by boat on river Wainganga, which falls into the Pranahita, a tributary to the Godavari. The pilgrims possibly crossed the Godavari at the point of confluence of the Pranahita and the Godavari in the neighbourhood of the Kaleswaram in Mahadevpur taluq in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district. From Mahadevpur they would reach Dhulikatta, the only Buddhist establishment in north-western Telangana. The caravan routes towards the west passed through Tagara (Ter), Pratishtana (Paithan) on the banks of the Godavari and Sopara through Ellora and Nasikya (Nasik).

Buddhist centers were situated on the trade routes, or at least close to places of political and commercial intercourse.<sup>9</sup> This rich and busy internal trade appears to have been responsible for the rise of urban and religious centres like Dhulikatta, Peddabankur, Kotilingala, Kondapur, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda and NelakondapaUi in Telangana region. The Godavari and Krishna rivers served as highways of internal trade and passenger traffic throughout the historical times.<sup>10</sup> Some of them grew along the caravan routes. One such trade route passed through Jaggaiahpetta, Nelakondapalli, Gajulabanda, Phanigiri, Tirumalagiri, Thummalagudem, and to north-west Kondapur to Tagara. Another caravan route touched Dhulikatta, Pashigaon, Bodhan to Vidisa or Ujjaini. Buddhist centers were commercial junctions and camps (night halts) for traders or Sarthavahakas who had patronized Buddhism. Second century B.C. was the formative period of the growth of towns after the disappearance of the Mauryan rule over Andhradesa. In society trading communities enjoyed popularity and prosperity. Roman coins which were discovered here indicate the foreign trade. The finds of various coins indicate the nature of commercial prosperity of this region and its relations with western Deccan and Coastal Andhra and even with

Western countries like Rome.

The Karimnagar region was traversed by highways from the North to the South and from the East to the West. The caravans travelled from Vidharbha region to Andhra, from there to Dhanyakataka towards south-east and to Govardhana country (Nasik region) towards west. The northern routes from Akara, Avanti (Ujjaini), after crossing Narmada and proceeding to the ancient town of Bahai (district east Khandesh) from where the caravan either went south to Prathishthanapura (The Karimnagar region) or west to Nasik. When Hiuen-Tsang<sup>11</sup> travelled from Kalinga to Kosala, which is about 1800 miles the country was surrounded by mountains and a succession of woods and marshes. The route through the Karimnagar region to Paithan was covered with thick jungle, infested with savage beasts. The carts were used near each end of the journey. Much of the goods must have been carried by caravan of pack animals. The phenomenal rise of Buddhist art activity in the Andhradesa witnessed due to the more growth of trade and industry and due to the well-knit guild activity. Early trade routes that traversed east to west and north to south in Andhradesa were<sup>12</sup> one from Machilipatnam (Maisolia), Ghantasala (Kantakasaila), Dhanyakataka, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda, Kondapur, Paithan, Nasik and Tagara. Another route touching Vengi-Guntupalli must have passed through Alluru, Nelakondapalli, Peddabankur, Dhulikatta used finally reaching Pauni.

The Buddhist sites grew by the side of fortified towns, trade centres and ports and along trade routes. One route touched Dhulikatta, Bodhan and proceeded to Vidisha.<sup>13</sup> During the Mauryan times there appears to have been a trade route from Magadha across Kosala and Kalinga to the mouths of the river Krishna.<sup>14</sup> The western ports were connected with the heart of Deccan via Paithan which is believed to be the early capital of the Satavahanas.

## II. Historical Background of Telangana

### 1. Period of Mahajanapadas:

Literary evidence gives the names of some rulers of these early states. The Assaka Janapada figures prominently in Buddhist literature.<sup>15</sup> The commentary of Mahavastu mentions that the King of Assaka was converted into Buddhism by Mahakatyayana, one of the principal disciples of Buddha.<sup>16</sup> The Chullakalinga-Jataka describes a war between the kings of Assaka and Kalinga.<sup>17</sup> The Buddhist literature refers to an Andhra *Janapada* named Asmaka, which was among sixteen *Mahajanapadas*. The Asmaka country comprised the region of north-west Telangana.<sup>18</sup> Asmaka and Mulaka *Janapadas* were contemporary to Kalinga *Janapada*. The Bhimasena Jataka mentions that a Bodhisattva crossed the river Telivaha and went to Andhrapura. Most probably Andhrapura was located in the mid-Godavari region. Indriya and Sarabhiya Jatakas mention the *Kavithavana*, a colony of monks on the banks of mid-Godavari region. Elakatoor village near Kotilingala is identified as Kavithavana.<sup>19</sup>

### 2. Pre-Satavahana Period:

Buddhism commanded a large following during the period of pre-Satavahanas. It gained a footing in this region long before Asoka. Pliny, quoted from Megasthenes, states that the Andhras possessed thirty walled cities and a mighty army.<sup>20</sup>

The recent archaeological excavations in Telangana substantiated classical accounts by bringing to light the ruins of Mauryan, pre-Satavahana and Satavahana townships at places like Dhulikatta, Peddabankur, Kotilingala, Pashigaon, Kondapur etc. These extensive remains suggest the emergence of urban centers as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>21</sup> These were the head quarters of tribal kingdoms of pre-Satavahana age. The Tamil work Ahanaur or Mamulnar<sup>22</sup> describes how

a Vadugar (The Tamil name for Telugu) army of archers formed the vanguard of the army of Vomba Moriyar, evidently Chandragupta Maurya, in his march against the South.

This account partly supports the evidence of Megasthenese that the Andhras possessed a mighty army. According to the *Mahavamsa*, after the third Buddhist council, Asoka sent Mahadeva to Mahisa mandala<sup>23</sup> and built 84,000 stupas all over India. In Andhradesa his edicts are found at Yerragudi,<sup>24</sup> Rajulamandagiri<sup>25</sup> and a pillar at Dhanyakataka.<sup>26</sup> A big red-stone pillar discovered at Sthambampalli a Buddhist site adjacent to Kotilingala of Jagtial district, is similar to the Asokan pillars in height and width. The Andhra country was brought under the Mauryan political and economic control. The thirteenth rock edict of Asoka refers to the Andhras in the list of subordinate people who lived in his dominion. A fragment of a pillar found at Amaravati contains an inscription of Asoka.<sup>27</sup> The inclusion of the Telangana region within the Mauryan empire brought die former into intimate economic and cultural contacts with the Mauryan imperial system which might have accelerated the process of political integration and the result was the rise of the Satavahanas to imperial dignity. In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. 418 punch marked silver coins and coins of post Mauryan were discovered from an unrecorded place in erstwhile Karimnagar district, which are now exhibited in the State Museum of Hyderabad. Srinivasan classified these coins and assigned them to the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan periods.<sup>28</sup>

In the recent archaeological excavations in the north-western Telangana, many Pre-Satavahana, Satavahana towns were brought to light. The townships at places like Dhulikatta, Peddabankur,<sup>29</sup> Kotilingala, Kondapur<sup>30</sup> suggest that in the Telangana region, many urban centers had emerged in die fourth century B.C. The walled cities mentioned by Megasthenese might have been the headquarters of tribal

republics.<sup>31</sup> The Andhras might have divided into a number of small kingdoms including several tribes. The Mulakas, Assakas, Kalingas, Sebakas, Mahisakas and Savaras are known from the literature, epigraphy and coins.<sup>32</sup> At Kotilingala village on the right bank of Godavari in Jagtial district, the Punch marked coins and coins of Simuka, Satavahana, Satakami, Rano Gobhadra, Samagopa, Narana, Kamvaya Siri, Talvara were found.<sup>33</sup> P.V. Parabrahma Sastry identified Gobhadra and Samagopa with Surya kings of Vidisa branch who wielded authority over the Andhra country also. The early Satavahanas being their subordinates, the *Aitareya Brahmana* and the Puranas called them as Andhrabrityas.<sup>34</sup> They enjoyed perhaps subordinate status during the Maurya, Sunga and Kanva periods. But according to Thakur Rajaram Singh, pre-Satavahanas or early Satavahanas were called as Andhra gopa dynasty. Earlier Mirashi discovered a coin and read the legend on it as "*Rano Sebaka*" which indicates that Sebakas mentioned along with the Andhras in the *Aitareya Brahmana* also established a kingdom, probably by the side of the Andhra gopas.<sup>35</sup> At Vaddamanu a local prince by the name Somaka was mentioned in an inscription engraved in Asokan Brahmi.<sup>36</sup> The Bhattiprolu casket inscription mentions king Kuberika, son of Savara<sup>37</sup> and Dhanyakataka inscriptions record one Rajakumara Samalia.<sup>38</sup> These might have been the rulers of some of the tribal kingdoms of the pre-Satavahana age, who probably belonged to the third century B.C. After the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, they became the local chieftains or petty kings who assumed power in many parts of Andhra desa. The coins of Simuka, Narana, Kamvayasri and Sama Gopa etc. were found in the Telangana region which was the part of Asmaka Janapada of ancient Deccan. All the coins of pre-Satavahana rulers discovered in Andhradesa particularly in Telangana region containing the symbols, which were in close association with the *Buddhist symbols*, such as the figures are of Chaitya, eight spoked Wheel, Tree in railing, Bull turning its face to right side, a Bow and Arrow, Srivasta, Svastika, Lotus, Fish, Horse, Lion, Elephant<sup>39</sup> etc. Thus

these coins substantiate that all the pre-Satavahana tribal chiefs are known to have patronised Buddhism and have adopted symbols and its institutions which pulled down the tribal barriers and united all the tribes into one race and finally resulted in the emergence of Telugu people.

### **3. Satavahana Period:**

The Satavahanas appear to be one of the many totemistic groups of the Andhra race. It is suggested that the words Satavahana and Satakarni mean 'Son of Horse'. This hypothesis becomes meaningful if one assumes that the Satavahanas were identical with the 'Asvakas' of epics or a branch of that tribe. The Asvaka-Mulaka region in which the Satavahanas rose to power lends support to the above view and from the very beginning of their rule the horse symbol figures prominently on their coins. By the third century B.C. they seem to have been thoroughly Aryanised. The *Nanaghat* and *Nasik* inscriptions reveal the anxiety of their family for winning the first position in the social order.

After the disintegration of the Mauryan empire, the Satavahanas became independent in the Deccan. During the recent years the coins of *Srimuka* or *Chimuka* were noticed at Kotilingala in Jagtial district. Srimuka (Simuka or Chimuka) according to many Puranas was a founder member of the Satavahana dynasty. In the light of the above finds, a hypothesis is propounded that the Satavahanas, under the leadership of Chimuka, declared independence after the demise of Kanva prince and established their capital around erstwhile Karimnagar region in Telangana. This hypothesis is not established altogether without basis. Kotilingala in the Karimnagar region stands on the high way route linking North and South and the recent explorations and excavations have revealed a large number of Satavahana sites, including Buddhist stupas. Srimuka the founder of Satavahana dynasty successfully rallied all his kinsmen round his banner and proclaimed himself as king on the

demise of Asoka.<sup>40</sup> Recent discovery of Simuka's coins in stratified deposits of Kotilingala is a clear indication of the nucleus of the Satavahana power in North-western Andhra.<sup>41</sup>

According to Puranic lists there were 30-40 kings ruled for about 400-500 years, but hardly nine kings deserves to be mentioned. They are king Satavahana, Srimuka, his brother Kanva (Krishna), Satakami-II, Pulumavi-I, Hala (the author of Gathasaptasati), Gautamiputra Satakami, Vasisthiputra Pulumavi-II and Goutamiputra-Yajna-Sri-Satakami. Their empire at the height of their power included the Telangana region besides other parts of the Deccan. In spite of their personal faith in Vedic religion and Brahmanism, they were tolerant towards Buddhism, which was patronised by their mothers and wives. Out of 30-40 Satavahana kings, there are instances that four to five kings known to have patronized the Buddhism.

**Satavahana Kings Associated with Buddhism:** According to Puranas Srimuka (230 B.C.) was the founder of Satavahana dynasty. He issued coins bearing the legend of Satavahana. This was out of gratitude he called his dynasty after his father as Satavahana.<sup>42</sup> He was greatly influenced by the growing popularity of Buddhism in the first part of his life time and he exhibited great favour to Buddhism.

**King Kanha (Krishna) (208-198 B.C.):**

Buddhism received favourable treatment from the king *Kanha* (Krishna) who bestowed his patronage for its propagation in his kingdom.<sup>43</sup> It is evident from an inscription that Kanha appointed a *mahamatra* at Nasik to look after the comforts of the Buddhist monks.

**King Hala's Saptasati** refers to the role played by guilds, how they invested large sums of money and the annual interest on which to be used for the purpose of buying clothes for the monks and nuns. Hala's *Saptasati* refers to the worship of the feet of Buddha (Buddha Pada).<sup>44</sup>

Buddhist monks and nuns were very numerous everywhere in the land. People, not necessarily Buddhists, listened to their sermons and attended to their physical wants. These lay helpers at first improvised rock-cut caves and *Chaityagrihas* for the residence of the monks and later built viharas 'with brick and timber.<sup>45</sup>

**Gautamiputra Satakarni** and his successor **Pulomavi** were the Satavahana kings who were known from inscriptions as to have made some gifts to the Buddhists in the Nasik region.<sup>46</sup> Nasik prasasti indicates that at the time of Gautamiputra Satakarni's accession, the Satavahana kingdom was limited to the region, east of Paithan i.e., up to the Telangana region. Later he extended his empire to the whole of South India. According to an inscription of Nasik cave No. 3, he made money grant in favour of certain Buddhist monks dwelling in the caves of mount Tiranhu and to the monks of Tekirasi hill a field of 200 nivartanas,<sup>47</sup> *Pulomavi* II made a gift of a village for the support of the Mahasanghika monks living in the caves of Valuraka (Karie). King *Pulomavi* and mother *Gautami Balasri* presented donations to monks of the *Bhadrayaniya* sect. She also gifted a cave known as Gautamiputra cave to the Buddhist monks of the same region.<sup>48</sup>

*Ushabhadatta* excavated caves and gave agricultural land for the maintenance of all monks without distinction of sect. Besides this he made endowments of money to meet the needs of the monks such as clothes etc. This amount was invested in two weavers guilds. The records of the period show that similar gifts in favour of the Buddhists were made by men and women of all ranks and denominations.<sup>49</sup>

Many inscriptions of this period refer to the gifts made by kings, chiefs and common folk (women and men). Many guilds invested their profits on the Buddhist monuments like Nasik, Karle, Kanheri, Junnar, Kuda, Mahad, Koi, Bhaja, Bedsa, Ajanta in Western Deccan. Almost all the Buddhist centers in the Telangana region like Kondapur, Dhulikatta,



Pashigaon, Stambhampalli, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda, Tirumalagiri, Vardhamanakota and other Buddhist establishments were in a flourishing state during the Satavahana period. Many Stupas, Chaityas and Viharas were added and the older ones renovated at these Buddhist centers during the period. The Buddhist remains at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Jaggaiahpetta, Bhattiprolu and Ghantasala, etc. prove the popularity of the Buddhist religion in the Eastern Deccan. Most of the Buddhist monuments of the post-Asokan period were built of mudbricks, bamboo canes, and other kinds of wood.<sup>50</sup>

**Yajnasri Satakarni** (152-181 A.D.) was another important Satavahana ruler whose empire included Western and Eastern Deccan. From his inscriptions found at Nasik, Kanheri, Chinna-Ganjam and from the descriptions of Bana and the writings of Hiuentzang, it is evident that Buddhism enjoyed a prominent position through-out his kingdom including Telangana. But the name of the king itself reveals his attachment with Brahmanism and performance of Yajnas. But there is a strong tradition that Acharya Nagarjuna succeeded in persuading Yajnasri not only to be tolerant of Buddhism but also to patronize it.<sup>51</sup>

One of the last king of Satavahana dynasty **Vijaya Satakarni** visited Nagarjunakonda (Sri Parveeta) on '*Vaisakha Purnima*', an auspicious day for Buddhists. As the record ends abruptly, its purpose is not known. After Vijaya Satakarni and **Pulamavi-IV**, the Satavahana kingdom declined and disappeared. In the Eastern Deccan their subordinates i.e., Ikshvakus emerged as independent rulers and established a powerful dynasty with Vijayapuri as their capital.<sup>52</sup>

In the Telangana region Buddhism commanded a large following during the Satavahana rule. Archaeological discoveries brought to light many Buddhist remains of this region. Inscriptions in Brahmi script which may be assigned to the third century B.C. have been discovered at the Stupas of Dhulikatta and Kotilingala. An inscription from

Vardhamanakota on an architectural member of lime stone datable to 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. records “*Upasikaya Buddha Rakshita danam*”.<sup>53</sup> The recently discovered Buddhist sites reveal the predominant position enjoyed by Buddhism in this region throughout the Satavahana period. It is to be noted that during the rule of the Satavahanas, Buddhism not only flourished to a great extent but it reached its zenith of its popularity. During the Satavahanas rule, Buddhism was quite popular in the Deccan (about 225 B.C. to 225 A.D.) witnessed the rise and growth of Buddhist institutions, along with its development of beautiful art and architectural features. The Stupas, Chaityas, Viharas and Temples were constructed during this period at many places, particularly at Dhulikatta, Kotilingala, Sthambhampalli, Pashigaon, Phanigiri, Tirumalagiri, Gajulabanda and Vardhamanakota. Though Satavahanas were followers of the Brahminical religion, they actively supported Buddhism and gave their full co-operation and patronage to its progress. This is evident from the inscriptions and number of Buddhist remains brought to light in the recent excavations. Establishments of several Buddhist buildings were brought up and patronised by the Satavahana kings, their feudatories and officials. But it sounds paradoxical that the age of Satavahanas in Andhradesa was a period of vigorous Brahmanical ritualism. After the death of Asoka and the establishment of Sunga dynasty in North and Satavahanas in South appears to have synchronised a vigorous movement of the revival of Vedic rituals and performed sacrifices like Aswamedha, Rajasuya, Agnistoma, Vajapeya and others. They took high dignified, titles as *Agamanilaya*, *Ekabrahmana*, *Vinivartitcaturvarna-Sankara* and so on. According to Nasik inscription of Gautami Balasri, Nanaghat cave inscription of Naganika and others during this period, theological literature was produced as an authority on the emerging Neo-Brahmanism. Even the secular work *Gathasaptasati* ridiculed the Buddhist monks by comparing them to the fallen *kimsuka* flowers.<sup>54</sup> But it also mentioned the existence of Buddhism among the people.

In spite of such vigorous ritualistic activity indulged in by the kings of the age, it is often said and written that Buddhism enjoyed royal patronage under the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus and that even when the kings were champions of Brahmanism, they were tolerant enough to allow their royal ladies to bestow liberal patronage on the Buddhist institutions.<sup>55</sup> After close examination of the source material, we may conclude that Buddhism in Telangana region to a large extent progressed independent of royal patronage. Very rarely we come across donations by kings to the Buddhist monasteries and rarely enjoyed the patronage of kings and of their queens. Almost all the Buddhist monuments were the result of pious private munificence and there are few instances of donations made by the royal ladies.

#### **4. Ikshvakus Period:**

The political unity conferred in the Deccan by the Satavahanas disappeared with their fall. Many independent kingdoms emerged on its ruins. Their home province fell into the hands of the Ikshvakus. The puranas mention them as Sri Parvatiyas i.e., rulers of Sri parvata as Andhra Bhrityas.

The Ikshvakus succeeded the Satavahanas in the Krishna valley.<sup>56</sup> Later they ruled over Prakasam, Nellore, Cudapah, Kunool, Krishna, Guntur districts in Andhra and Khammam, Nalgonda districts in Telangana. Their coins are found recently at Nelakondapalli and Yeleswaram. The Nagarjunakonda inscription mention four important rulers of the Ikshvaku family. After the fall of the Satavahanas, they declared independence under the leadership of Sri Chantamula who was the founder of this dynasty. They too appear to have hailed from a local tribe.<sup>57</sup> It is likely that through Buddhism they too entered the main stream of Andhra political life and called themselves Ikshvakus as the Buddha is known to have belonged to the Ikshvaku family.<sup>58</sup>

Vijayapuri, situated in the Nagarjunakonda valley and now submerged in the waters of Nagarjunasagar dam was the capital of this dynasty.

**Chantamula (225-235 A.D.):**

He performed many Vedic sacrifices and patronized Brahmins. He donated thousands of ploughs, cattle and gold coins.<sup>59</sup> These acts reveal the great Vaidiki in Chantamula. Though there is no room to suspect any partial leaning in him to the religion of the Buddha. Like most of the other kings even this Vaidiki must have respected all the religions then existed. The members of his family contributed much to the Buddhist buildings. His sisters Hammasirika and Santisri granted much to Buddhist church.

**Virapurushadatta (236-260 A.D.):**

Virapurushadatta, son of Chantamula, has been immortalized in the splendid benefactions at Nagarjunakonda by the members of his family to the Buddhist community residing there. The reign of Virapurushadatta formed an important phase in the annals of Andhra Buddhism<sup>60</sup> as royal patronage of Buddhism was not found in such large measure in the subsequent period. The Buddhist antiquities at Jaggaiahpet, Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda, Chinaganjam and Nagarjunakonda belong to his reign. Sriparvata became a prominent political and religious centre and also a centre of art and learning.

Under the patronage of the Ikshvaku rulers Nagajunakonda and Nelakondapalli became great centers of Mahayana Buddhism. The former was a popular pilgrimage centre of Buddhists, who came from far and near and Buddhist culture flowed along the Krishna to the wider world. Buddhist monks travelled as missionaries to Kashmira, Gandhara, China Aparantha, Vanga, Vanavasi, Tambapanni etc.<sup>61</sup> During the period of Virapurushadatta, many Buddhist constructions took place at many

places in Andhradesa. Chantisri, the sister of Chantamula and wife of Mahatalavara Skandasri of Pukiya family, was a great patron of Buddhism. She was primarily responsible for constructing Buddhist structures. An inscription (in Prakrit) mentions that Chantisri kept relics of Buddha in the form of bones, gold and silver flowers in the silver casket. All the important stupas of Nagarjunakonda yielded reliquaries, variously of gold, silver, copper and glazed pottery.<sup>62</sup> The two queens of Virapurushadatta namely Bapisri and Rudradhara Bhattarika built number of Chaityas and Viharas. A royal princess by name *Bodhisri* is said to have dedicated a temple to the fraternities of Ceylonese monks. Many other Ikshvaku princesses were either Buddhists or had leanings towards Buddhism.<sup>63</sup>

#### **Vasishstiputra Ehuvala Camtamula II (Bahubala) - (261-286 A.D.):**

He was the son of Virapurushadatta. Royal ladies like Vanavasi and Konda-Balasri built a number of Buddhist Viharas. Buddhism received great impetus, for all the monastic establishments that bore the best sculptural representations were the products of this period.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Rudrapurushadatta (286-300 A.D.):**

He was the fourth king of this dynasty. After him his successor Sri Virapurushadatta II continued to rule over Andhradesa, till he was displaced by the Salankayanas from one side and Kadambas and Vakataka expansion from other side. Finally, Ikshvakus were over thrown by Vishnukundins in the Telangana region.

After Ikshvakus all the rulers of the later dynasties were stout champions of Brahmanism and caused incalculable damage not only to Vijayapuri but also to the Buddhist institutions of Andhradesa. Buddhism started to languish and the Buddhist building activity came almost to a standstill. Simultaneously, Andhradesa witnessed a serious economic revolution. Trade with Rome declined which had hit hard the local industries. Even during the Ikshvaku period as revealed by the

excavations, there was no prominent industries in Telangana or Andhra and around Vijayapuri. The economic developments impoverished the artisan and merchant classes who had been the chief patrons of the Buddhist institutions. After A.D. 300, we rarely notice gifts to the Buddhist institutions by these classes and the ladies. Construction and the work of renovation of Buddhist monuments had practically decreased in the land.

### **Religious Policy of Ikshvakus:**

The advent of the Ikshvakus on the political scene of early Andhradesa is significant for their religious policy of reviving the Vedic and Brahmanical religion and at the same time, they are known for their catholic outlook and maintained religious harmony by patronizing Buddhism too. Buddhism in Andhra reached the climax of its glory in the Ikshvaku period. The reign of Virapurushadatta considered as a heyday and a great land-mark not only in the cultural history of Andhradesa but also in the annals of Buddhist art and architecture. Several inscriptions and relics discovered at Jaggaiahpetta and Nagarjunakonda and including coins belonged to the reign of Virapurushadatta. Recently at Nelakondapalli his coins were found at the spot of Buddhist stupa. The inscriptions referring to private donations of pious men, women to some Buddhist establishments at above said places are also recovered. The remains and these inscriptions are adequate testimonies to the flourishing state of Buddhism during the reign of king Mathariputra Virapurushadatta.<sup>65</sup> Most of the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions refer to the benefactions made by some female members of the royal family of the Ikshvaku dynasty, probably these ladies were Buddhists.<sup>66</sup> But it is strange that with a sense of pride these very ladies describe their ancestor and founder of the dynasty Sri Chantamula as a performer of Asvamedha, Agnistoma and Vajapeya.<sup>67</sup>

It should be noted here that the inscriptions of this reign were not his official documents but they were private records made by pious men,

women and female members of the royal family in favour of the Buddhist establishments. Not even a single record of them registers any gift of the Ikshvaku kings to the Buddhist Church. The kings claim of having belonged to the same family as the Lord Buddha and several donations to the Buddhist establishments made by certain ladies of the royal family are clear indications that not only the king was an ardent follower of Buddhism but he also gave his permission to the female members of the royal family to do something for the progress -of Buddhism. Without his patronage it would not have been possible for the religion and art to attain such an exalted position and popularity during his reign. Probably, the king's leanings towards Buddhism had helped it to reach the height of its glory. More interesting is that most of these gifts are crowded in the sixth regal year of Virapurushadatta.<sup>68</sup> There may be some reason for this sudden rush of royal ladies to the temples of Buddha with gifts. These records seem to provide the clue to this patronage.<sup>69</sup>

The inscriptions record gifts, invoking the mercy of Buddha for the victory, health and longevity of king Virapurushadatta,<sup>70</sup> thus suggesting that during his sixth regal year, Virapurushadatta either fell seriously ill or his authority was seriously threatened by some external or internal danger. About the same time at Sriparvata, Buddha was transformed into a Bhagavan bestowing good and happiness in the world and the concept of the transfer of the merit of one's pious deeds to others was also developed. In such circumstances and in their anxiety for the safety and security of the life and authority of Virapurushadatta his near and dear among the royal ladies rushed to Bhagavan Buddha invoking his mercy on the king Virapurushadatta.<sup>71</sup> Some scholars are inclined to the view that Virapurushadatta became a Buddhist in view of the great Buddhist activity in his reign, some even identify a piece of sculpture of a king crushing under his feet a five-headed serpent as that of Virapurushadatta suppressing Brahmanism.<sup>72</sup> However, this sculpture represents Mandhata's conquest of Nagaloka.<sup>73</sup> During the reigns of

Virapurushadatta and Ehuvala Chantamula many of the Buddhist monuments at Nelakondapalli, Jaggaiahpetta and Nagarjunakonda were renovated, enlarged, decorated and richly endowed with.

Among the royal ladies who made gifts to Mahacaitya mention may be made of Mahatalvari Chantisiri, the sister of Vasistha-putra, Chantamula and wife of Skanda-Siri of Pukiya family, Mahadevi Bapisirinika, the wife of king Virapurushadatta, the Mahatalvari Adavi Chantisiri, the daughter of Chantamula, Mahadevi Rudra Bhattarika, Maharaja's daughter from Ujjaini, Mahadevi Chantisiri, the wife of Virapurushadatta, Mahatalvari Mahakandasiri, the mother of Mahasenapati, a devotee Bodhisiri of Govagama, the queen Bhattidevi, the mother of Chantamula I, Kodabalasiri the sister of Ehuvala, Chula Chantisirinika, a daughter of family of Kulahkas and the wife of Mahasenapathi, Ratavasa, the daughter of a banker, Mahadevi Bhatridevi, the wife of Virapurushadatta, lay worshipper-upasika Chandra Sri Kodabalisiri, the daughter of Virapurushadatta and the wife of Vanavasaka, great commander and princess Eli-Ehuvala dasamanka, a banker Kumaranandin etc.

##### **5. Buddhism during the Satavahana - Ikshvaku Period, a Review:**

In spite of indifference of Brahmanical kings, Andhradesa became a flourishing land of Buddhism and a place of pilgrimage for the Buddhist world. Buddhism had spread rapidly as a popular movement in Andhradesa and held sway nearly for one thousand years from the time of its advent into Andhra (circa 300 B.C.). It received the enthusiastic support of the peasantry, local merchants and artisan classes who were the mainstay of Buddhism. During the Satavahana and Ikshvaku period, Buddhism was the religion of the masses and became popular among all sections of wealth producing, the tax-paying people, husbands men (gahapati), artisans (craftsmen), guilds of traders, mariners and town folk headed by merchant leader, upasikas and upasakas, etc.



Scholars may reasonably doubt whether the masses could understand and appreciate the philosophical intricacies of Buddhism. But the people left the hair splitting religious discussions to the saints, just in the right spirit which the Buddha urged them to develop. They grasped at the golden mean, they found in Buddhism the simple and unostentatious eight-fold path for salvation. More than that, they discovered in it a blue print of new social order without racial and communal distinctions and with the secrets of Nirvana opened to all. Thus all these classes of people, who were dissatisfied with Brahmanism, women, peasants, artisans, merchants and common people embraced Buddhism and patronized its institutions. The bronze image of the Buddha, recovered from Nelakondapalli, establishes the fact that the making of metal images for the purpose of worship by the “vast population of Buddhist monks and devotees of the place”, was known. Majority of the people, the poor and rich peasants, artisans, craftsmen and merchant communities were the backbone of state economy in that period and it would be improper to hurt the feelings of the people for any ruler to antagonize them by not giving financial assistance. Such overwhelming popularity which Buddhism enjoyed with them should have impelled the Brahmanical Satavahana, Ikshvaku and Vishnukundin kings to adopt wise policy of toleration towards Buddhism in their territories. The entire Andhradesa was throbbing with the Buddhist philosophy and art during the Satavahana and Ikshvaku period. Buddhism became the most strong hold and popular religion of the masses.

The royal benevolence and general support of the people at large had resulted in creating a hub of religious and artistic activity at various Buddhist centers of Andhradesa. However, it need not be misunderstood that the religion and art flourished at the Buddhist centers in Telangana region as in Andhra owing to liberal attitude of kings and queens alone. It was the general upsurge and the people at large welcomed the doctrine of

Buddha. The business and trade community, who had local and distant contacts, on account of their flourishing trade and commerce and rich prosperous agricultural peasantry class of rich soils and the skilled artisan and craftsmen contributed generously. Even the poorest and lowest looked towards Buddhism as their own religion and made donations their little share to its progress.

Institutions generally flourish close to the source of their patronage and therefore the general view that the Buddhist Viharas and stupas were far removed from crowded and busy cities were not supported by known facts. The great Buddhist centers of the Telangana region such as Kotilingala, Kondapur, Dhulikatta, Phanigiri, Karukonda, Nelakondapalli and Yeleswaram were either besides imperial capitals or in the vicinity of great centers of industry and trade or were on the highways of trade. If the Buddhist centers of Andhradesa from Dhulikatta (Jagtial district) to Adapur (Cuddapah district) and from Sankaram, Bavikonda (Visakhapatnam district), Salihundam (Srikakulam district) to Ramatirtham (Vijayanagaram district) are connected it is likely that we get a fairly good idea of the *early trade routes of Andhradesa*. The development of communications between the various regins stimulated the economic activity and they enriched the *gahapati* (peasant), *kamara* (artisan), and *setti* (merchant) classes, who were the chief patrons and promoters of the Buddhism.

A.H. Longhurst who excavated Nagarjunakonda remarked that “The Buddhists were largely recruited from the commercial classes and it was their wealth which helped to raise monuments of such magnificence as those at Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati.” Most of the inscriptions of Amaravati record the gifts by merchants, artisan, town folk headed by important individual members.

## **6. Vishnukundin Period:**

The liberal policy of Vishnu kundins towards Buddhism has come

to be known through the copper plates discovered at Thummalagudem of Ramannapet Taluk in Nalgonda district. The coins of Vishnukundins are discovered at Yeleswaram in Nalgonda district and at Nelakondapalli in Khammam district. The coins have the figures of squatting lion with spiraled tail on the obverse and on the reverse a *puṇnaghata* flanked by two lamp-stands all enclosed in rayed circle. Vishnukundins were the political successors of the Ikshvakus in the Telangana region.

Amarapura or Indrapalanagara, Dendulur and Keesaragutta were their important towns. Few Scholars believed that after the fall of Satavahana's authority the Vishnukundins started their rule from Telangana region and later extended to the whole of coastal Andhra during the time of Madhava Varma-II, the illustrious son of Govinda Varma- I. The Vishnukundins may be taken to have ruled the Andhra country in the interval between the Salankayanas and the Eastern Chalukyas that was between A.D. 420-620. Their kingdom included the present day Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Kurool, Karimnagar, Khammam, Nalgonda, Rangareddy and Hyderabad districts. They rose to power in the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. They formed matrimonial alliances with powerful dynasties like Vakatakas, Kadambas and Guptas.

The Vishnukundins, like the Ananda Gotrins, Salankayanas, Bruhatphalayanans contributed of their might in the revival of Brahmanical religion. It is interesting to note that recently discovered stone inscription of Govinda Raja Vihara from Chaitanyapuri and two copper plates of Govinda Varma and Vikramendra Bhattaraka Varma II from Tummalagudem in Nalgonda district opened new vistas in the history of Vishnukundins.<sup>74</sup> The first copper plate was issued in the 37<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Govinda Varma and the second was issued in the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Vikramendra Bhattarakavarma-II corresponding to 566 AD.

At the Chaitanyapuri in the eastern outskirts of Hyderabad city of

Telangana, on the right bank of Musi river, a Prakrit inscription has brought to light recently. It is incised on a big boulder. On paleo-graphic grounds, the *Chaitanyapuri* record is assigned to the later half of the fourth century A.D.<sup>75</sup> According to it, a stone cell was established for Bhikshus of Govindaraja Vihara by Bhadanta Sanghavadeva, a disciple of Brahmadeva Thevira. From this it is assumed that a Vihara of the Theravadins affiliated to the Mahavira of Rajagiri, flourished in the vicinity of modern Hyderabad. The two copper plate grants recently discovered at Tummalagudem village reveal the identity of Govindaraja as Vishnukundin ruler.<sup>76</sup>

Few rulers of Vishnukundin dynasty bestowed liberal grants on Buddhist Viharas namely Parama-Bhattaraka-Mahadevi-Vihara. There are two inscriptions called as Tummalagudem plates of Indrapalanagara plates. The first copper plate of Thummalagudem reveals that Govinda Varma donated two villages on the full moon day namely Eramandala and Penkapura for the maintenance of the community of Buddhists living in the Mahavihara constructed at Indrapura by his chief queen Parama Bhattarika<sup>77</sup>. Indrapura, in all probability was situated at the foot of Thummalagudem hill in Ramannapet Tq. Nalgonda district, where there are witnessed at present many Kakatiyan temples and an incomplete fort of Vijayanagara period.

Thummalagudem issued by certain *Mularaja*, chief of the Kshatrapas, probably a commander of the armies of *Vikramendra Indra Bhattaraka Varma*, and the father of Paramabhatarika records the gift of another village namely *Irunderu* to the *Parama Bhattarika Mahadevi Vihara* of the same queen. This charter described **Vikramendra Varma I** as '*Parama Saugati*'<sup>n</sup> (follower of Buddhism). These two inscriptions show how slender the distinction was between Buddhism and Brahmanism in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. All the Vishnukundins with the exception of Govinda Varma I his queen Paramabhatarika Mahadevi and Vikramendra Bhattaraka I were Saivites and staunch followers of Vedic

Dharma. Govinda Varma's queen was the daughter of *Pruthvimula* (Mularaja) a Kshatrapa chief. Govinda Varma Parama Bhattarika Mahadevi and Mularaja appear to be staunch devotees of the Buddha. The name of Parama Bhattarika bears striking resemblances to Rudradhara Bhattarika a Saka princess of Ujjain and as observed above, showed great enthusiasm in making gifts to the Buddhist institutions at Sriparvata. Parama Bhattarika was also a Saka (Kshatrapa) princess and under her influence, Govinda Varma showed preference to Buddhism.

Though the stupas and viharas were still being built in reverence to the Buddhist cult by the ladies of the royal family, several of the kings and their officials followed the Brahmanical Hindu Dharma. Some of their records are in fact Buddhist in nature and stand as witnesses to their liberal policy of religious-tolerance. Before the advent of the Vishnukundins, Andhradesa had several Buddhistic establishments at places like Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda etc. Vakatakas maintained matrimonial and political relations with Vishnukundins which also influenced each of them and their officials to patronize Buddhism.<sup>79</sup> Hiuen Tsang who visited the country soon after the disappearance of the Vishnukundins informs us of the existence of some twenty Buddhist monasteries with more than 3000 brethren in the area. There were 1000 monks brethren belonged to Mahasanghika Sect.<sup>80</sup> Like Vakatakas, Vishnukundins built cave temples, stupas and Viharas and patronized them. The rock-cut temples at Karukonda (Khammam district), Sankaram (near Anakapalli town, Visakhapatnam district) were influenced to a great extent by the trends prevailing at Ajanta and the close contacts with the artists of Vakataka territory. The Vishnukundins maintained the institutions and perhaps nurtured further development of Buddhism. After the Vishnukundins, Buddhism continued to lose ground steadily until it became practically extinct during the rule of Chalukyas.

Kakatiya inscriptions of Bekkallu<sup>81</sup> (Janagaon district) and Naganoor inscription of the Gangadhara<sup>82</sup> (Karimnagar district) record

that the chiefs of Kakatiya rulers patronized Buddhism along with the other four religions, they built temples and the idols of Buddha installed. In later course, Hinduism acknowledged and adopted lord Buddha as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Buddha became one of the ten *avatar as* of Vishnu is found in the sculptural representations of *Dasavatara* panels at various places like Alampur (Jogulamaba Gadwal district), Mallaram (Karimnagar district)<sup>83</sup> and Rajaram (Adilabad district).<sup>84</sup> A head part of a Bodhisattva figure of Vajrayana sect was discovered at Kolanpaka, (Nalgonda district) and now kept in the museum at the same place indicating the existence of Vajrayana Buddhism in Telangana.

### **III. Religious and Cultural Background**

Pre-Buddhist religious and cultural history of Andhradesa including the Telangana region can be traced from Neolithic times. In Andhradesa the totemistic tribes, who were also the animists, believed that the superpower exists in the entire world. The Nagas, Yakshas, Mahishakas, Asvakas as their names reveal were the totemistic tribes. The primitive people from Neolithic period worshiped nagas, animals and trees and even the Moon and the Sun.<sup>85</sup>

The totems of these tribes appear to have gradually become their official banners.<sup>86</sup> Those religious beliefs still centered round the local primitive forms of worship and rituals. Some of the evidences available at Budigapalli (Karimnagar district), Madumala and few places in Kurnool district reveal that the Neolithic people worshiped the cave God. They offered sacrifices as the indication of gratitude to God who gave shelter and protection to them. The cave-God seems to have been the prototype of the zoomorphic God Narasimha,<sup>87</sup> whom the Chenchus, one of the aboriginal tribes of Andhra, consider their own God.

#### **1. Mother Goddess:**

When the pre-historic society gave up its nomadic character and

started settled habitations, there was beginning of agriculture and cattle rearing. During the same period the emergence of the Mother Goddess cult is noticed. The Primitive man conceived that the Mother Goddess was responsible for creation and sustenance. Hence that society developed the worship of Mother Goddess as their own mother to keep care and protect them and their belongings.<sup>88</sup> Many nude female figures of terracotta with one or more children on their arms or laps found in most of the Satavahana-Ikshvaku sites reveal the wide prevalence of fertility cult in early Andhradesa.<sup>89</sup> Mother Goddess figures are found at Nagarjunakonda,<sup>90</sup> Yeleswaram<sup>91</sup> in Nalgonda district,, Kondapur<sup>92</sup> in Medak district, Dhulikatta and Peddabankur<sup>93</sup> in Peddapalli district, Nelakondapalli in Khammam district and several other places. At Dhulikatta, one bronze figurine representing mother-and-child (Amkadhatri) with a baby on her left hand is discovered. This figure may be dated to circa 2nd century B.C.<sup>94</sup>

## **2. Naga Cult:**

The worship of Nagas or the naga cult was also popular since very ancient times. The Naga cult was widely prevalent in all parts of Andhradesa.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, it is said that the Nagas were one of the many tribes, who formed part of Andhra race. The popularity of Naga cult and its association with Buddhist art point out the absorption of folk art which is also note-worthy. Serpents are represented in the sculptures of Buddhist stupas at Dhulikatta, Nagagunakonda and Amaravati. One Iron figure of a snake is found in Peddabankur excavation.<sup>96</sup>

## **3. Yaksha and Tree Worship:**

The *Chaityas* and *Ayatanas* were built where Yakshas were worshiped. The worship of ancestors was prevalent among the Yaksha tribe. The belief in the life after death and ancestor-worship led to the cult of Yakshas among the Andhras. The Yakshas are known to be one of

the several tribes that made the Andhra race.<sup>97</sup> The belief that the Yakshas dwell in trees is suggested by one of the early Amaravati inscriptions.<sup>98</sup> Which reads “*Yaksha Candramukho Vakulnivasi*” which means “Yaksha by name Candramukha who dwells in the Vakula tree”. It is assumed that the spirits of the deceased in the form of Yakshas made trees as their abodes and hence people started worshiping the trees. Due to the same reason Yakshas built “*Vriksha Caityas*”.<sup>99</sup> The Buddhist literature depicts the Yakshinis as very cruel and the Buddha made efforts to bring them to the civilized ways of living.<sup>100</sup> They ultimately became ardent followers of his noble gospel. The Buddhist literature describes them as efficient builders. Many Yaksha and Yakshini figures have been found at Buddhist sites such as Dhulikatta, Kondapoor, Yeleswaram, Nagaijunakonda and Amaravati. They became the followers of Buddhism.

#### **4. Ancestor Worship - Building of Megalithic Burials (Tombs):**

In Andhra<sup>101</sup> and Telangana numerous megalithic burials have been found.<sup>102</sup> The significance of megalithic worship by erecting tombs over the dead or the remains of the dead indicate the belief in life after death and ancestor worship. Megalithic burials are built of huge stones. They found in the circles of 10 to 20 stones at Singapur in Huzurabad mandal of Karimnagar district.<sup>103</sup> Inside the circle, stone slabs were arranged in the shape of a Svastika, another with rectangular shape found at Budigapalli.<sup>104</sup> These builders were the predecessors of the historic people and they laid the foundations of culture of ethics, values and religious beliefs and practices. The megalithic builders welcomed the Buddhism and it absorbed their religious practices. At Yeleswaram peculiar burial was unearthed in which a male and a female probably a couple was buried side by side.<sup>105</sup> It reveals the earliest instance of sati or of a case of punishment for adultery. Any how it suggest the code of social ethics, which developed even during the megalithic period. These



people left the tribal character and improved agricultural economy with iron tools and domesticated the animals.<sup>106</sup> The Iron implements and gold ornaments<sup>107</sup> in megalithic tombs are a testimony to the developed economic life of the age.

### **5. Horse Cult:**

Megalithic burials have yielded the bones of horses.<sup>108</sup> One cannot be sure that live horses were actually buried along with their deceased owners, but the fact remains that archaeological sites scattered all over the Andhra regions but more prominently of Kondapur, Yeleswaram, Peddabankur and Nagarjunakonda have yielded a large number of terracottas representing horses. The Periplus recorded that horse constituted an important item of import in the coastal parts of both western and eastern Deccan<sup>109</sup>. Horses were in demand for the use of war and transport purposes. The reliefs of Buddhist sites carved with representations of horses were rare while the sites yielded terracotta horses enormously. *Asvakas* who lived in mid-Godavari during Mauryan period, seems to have had worshiped horse as their animistic symbol. *Asvakas* too are known to be one of the several tribes that made Andhra race. Horse namely *Kantaka* became prominent in the legend of Buddha. Few of the coins of pre-Andhra Satavahanas and Satavahanas represented the horse symbol.<sup>110</sup> Such coins were found in the excavations at Kotilingala, Kondapoor and other places in the Telangana region. An inscribed terracotta seal<sup>111</sup> from Peddabankur reads as “*Mahatalavarasa Vajasamikasa seva sabha*”. In the middle of the inscribed seal is the figure of a horse. Here Mahatalavara calls himself *Vajasasrv* or the lord of horses. It reveals the importance of cavalry during the pre-Satavahana period.

## **6. Brahmanism:**

When there was such religious back-ground of primitive beliefs and practices, Vedic religion (Aryan Culture) entered the Deccan and South India. The *Aitareya Brahmana* refers the Aryan Settlements in Vidharbha around 1000 B.C. and in Andhra 600 B.C.<sup>112</sup> Buddhist literature refers to Brahman teachers that have settled down in mid-Godavari. *Suttanipata* explains a story of Bavari, the royal priest of Kosala who migrated and built an *asrama* on an island in the Godavari on the borders of Assaka and Mulaka Janapadas. The Bhimasena Jataka,<sup>113</sup> the great Sutrakaras Bauddhayana<sup>114</sup> and Apastamba are believed to have lived in Andhra during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and framed rules and regulations regarding the recitation of the Vedas and the performance of Vedic rituals.

### **IV. Advent of Buddhism in Telangana**

It seems that, there was competition among all existing religions. But gradually Buddhism has become a mass religion. The *Suttanipata*, which describes the story of Bavari, certainly makes us to believe that Buddhism entered the Telangana region even during the life time of Buddha. It is supported by other Buddhist works like *Paramarthadipam*,<sup>115</sup> *Kathavatthu*<sup>116</sup> and *Dharmapada-Attakatha*.<sup>117</sup> These narrate about Bavari, a Brahman teacher of Asmaka, who sent sixteen of his disciples from Mulaka to Rajagriha to meet the Buddha and find out his claims to arhathood.<sup>118</sup> These disciples met lord Buddha at Rajagriha and listened to his discourses. All of them became *Arhats*, one of them namely Pingiya a nephew of Bavari explained Buddha's teachings. Through him Bavari also attained arhathood. This example should have been followed by many from Andhradesa who rushed to North to have the benefit of the Noble eight-fold path by the Buddha

himself. Few jataka stories already revealed about the individual Bodhisattvas who had migrated to South and settled down in the mid-Godavari valley.

The *Bhimasena* and *Sarivanija jatakas* mentioned that a Bodhisattva crossed the river Telivaha and went to Andhrapura, most probably located in the mid-Godavari region. Other Jatakas namely the *Indriya* and the *Sarabhaiya Jatakas* refer about a Bodhisattva Jotipala also called as Sarabhaiya reached the banks of the Godavari and established a “*asrama*” (colony) near *Kavitavana* from where Buddhism spread in all directions.<sup>119</sup> Another pali work *Apadana* mentions a number of tribes including the Andhfas who came to pay homage to Thera Jatukannika in Hamsavathi.<sup>120</sup>

According to *Vimanavattu*<sup>121</sup> one of the close disciples of Lord Buddha Mahakatyayana converted the king of Asmaka into Dharma.<sup>122</sup> The Cylonese Chronicle *Mahavamsa*. referred about Pallavabhogga, which was the head-quarters of Mahadeva Bikkhu. According to Hiuen-Tsang, Buddha himself visited Andhra<sup>123</sup> probably due to that reason the artists produced the figures of preaching Buddha in Andhradesa. Helmut Hoffman, a German scholar said Buddha visited Krishna Valley and studied *Kalachakra tantra* and he says “It seems to me, there Buddha preached the Kalachakra mulatantra at the well known famous stupa of Dhanyakataka”.<sup>124</sup>

The *Vimanavatthu* and the *Mahavagga* mentions about *Andhakas* and their rest houses at Rajagriha<sup>125</sup> and their leading role in the discussion at the third Buddhist council. The *Kathavatthu* and *Abidhamma Pitaka* also ratified it. The Buddhist literature refers to a Telugu artist who enacted a drama of the life of Buddha in the presence of king Bimbisara.<sup>126</sup> The same artist also presented a performance in the presence of the ruler of the Shobhavati Nagaram.<sup>127</sup> The Thirteenth Rock Edict of Asoka says that the Andhras were within the Rajavisaya and

were already following *dharma*, evidently the law of the Buddha.<sup>128</sup> Other edicts of Asoka like Yerragudi<sup>129</sup> (Anantapur district), Rajulamandagiri<sup>130</sup> (Kurnool district) and a fragment of a pillar edict discovered at Dhanyakataka<sup>131</sup> clearly show the people of Andhradesa were in civilised conditions and followers of Buddhism. The recent finds in the excavations in Andhradesa have pushed back the advent and the antiquity of Buddhism to the pre-Asokan period. The Andhras were already the followers of law in the time of Emperor.<sup>132</sup> The discovery of punch-marked coins and Northern Black Polished ware reveal very early contacts with Gangetic Valley. *Arthashastra* of Kaoutilya mention that there were trade routes from North to South across the plateau.<sup>133</sup> Archaeological excavations at Dharanikota, Amaravati, Dhulikatta, etc., clearly demonstrate that the people who welcomed the new religious faith were the megalithic builders.<sup>134</sup> The inscriptions found at Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Sankaram, Guntupalli, Kotilingala etc., revealed the Mauryan association. Asoka installed stone-pillars and rebuilt embellished and enlarged the stupas at the famous Buddhist centres.<sup>135</sup> On the basis of paleography of the inscriptions from Kotilingala and above said places, many scholars assigned date of the entry of Buddhism into Andhradesa to pre-Asokan or Asokan period.<sup>136</sup> The region between Krishna and Godavari seems to have been a strong hold of Buddhism. The Janapadas of Andhras namely Asmaka and Mulaka emerged as powerful states and their conditions might have helped for the rise and spread of Buddhism in the Deccan.

## **V. History of Buddhism in Telangana**

During the period from 300 B.C. to A.D. 600, Buddhism underwent several changes in India in general and in Deccan in particular. The Andhras had been in the forefront of all movements which brought to popularize the Buddha-Dharma. During the above said period there were many sects two schools of Buddhism existed in Telangana region as in

Andhra. Dhulikatta was the centre of Hinayana and at Pashigaon the influence of *Cattiyakas* emerged, where they built circular *Cattiyas* and apsidal *Cattiyagrihas*. The stupa of Nelakondapalli was called as *Mahachattya*. At Nelakondapalli, beautiful idols collected testify that during the period of later Satavahanas, Ikshvakus and Vishnukundins there was predominance of Mahayana School of Buddhism. Though the Mahayana and its sects became popular during this period, the Hinayana school and its sects continued to coexist. Kondapur, Gajulabanda and Tirumalagiri appears to have been the centres of Theravadins. The recently discovered Chaitanyapuri inscription<sup>137</sup> mentions “*Pudhagiri Vihara*” and “*Govinda Raja Vihara*”. On paleographical grounds the record is assigned to the fifth century A.D. where as its contents suggest that they were the Viharas of the Theravada school. The Pudhagiri referred in the record is identical with '*Puphagiri*' found in the Nagarjunakonda record of *Bodhisri*. The Vishnukundins issued two copper plate<sup>138</sup> charters of the same kind which were discovered in the village of *Tummalagudem alias Indrapalanagara*, in Ramannapeta Taluk, Nalgonda district. It commences with a description of Buddha in Mahayana terminology. It clearly emphasizes Buddha's divine nature, that he was endowed with thirty two *Mahapurushalakshanas* and called him as *Sambuddha*, highly enlightened'. Another term referred in the record is '*Triyana*', meaning three vehicles namely, '*Sarvakayana*', '*Pratyaksha Buddhayana*' and '*Buddhayana*'. Buddhayana is identified with Mahayana. The record also refers to the terms '*dasabala*', the ten natural powers "*Astadasa avenika dharmas*" detached characteristics which distinguish the Buddha from all other beings and that he was *Chaturvaisaradya Visarada*.

The Vishnukundin charters make it very clear that Mahayana school of Buddhism was widely extended and it was highly developed by the time of the Vishnukundins. The terms used in the record prove that the local Buddhists were fully conversant with the developed form of

Buddhist literature. However, the record begins with Vaisnavite creed formula i.e., *Swasti, Jitam Bhagavata*, etc. indicating the rapprochement and co-existence between Vaisnavism and Buddhism. During the Vishnukundin period the trend of bhakti cult i.e., devotion to a personal God became the common feature of Mahayana Buddhism and Vaisnavism and they should have influenced each other.

The Buddhist centers such as Vardhamanakota in Nalgonda district, Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda and Karukonda in Khammam district were popular as Mahayana centers. Thus Telangana region had been the home of different Buddhist Schools and sects, each had its own set of religious principles and practices. The ideological differences were naturally reflected in the art and architecture of their stupas, chaityas, viharas and temples in the alignment of the different component parts of their viharas, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapters on the Buddhist art and architecture in Telangana region.

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## CHAPTER-III

### THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASE FOR THE RISE AND GROWTH OF BUDDHISM

An adequate study of the Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana region can be made with an analysis of the relevant archaeological data provided by the material remains of the Buddhist sites and their nearby urban and semi-urban sites of Telangana region during the period from third-second century B.C. to fifth-sixth century A.D. Archaeological excavations not only unearth art-facts, structures or works of art but also help in reconstructing the history of social and economic institutions of the forgotten age.

The present chapter is devoted to unravel the social and economic aspects which provide base for the rise and spread of Buddhism. The study covering the entire area as an organic whole, focusing all our attention on Buddhist *stupas* as they yield architecture and sculptural art, as well as the whole Buddhist settlement with all its surroundings which will to lead help in proper understanding of its ecological factors and its role in the early history of Telangana region.

Every Buddhist establishment needed food, money to its monks hence, all the Buddhist establishments flourished not far away from a village or township. The concentration of Buddhist sites nearer to the rivers or the capital towns or on trade routes established this fact. Evidently these Buddhist sites have to be viewed against the wider socio-economic back-ground and such study makes it imperative to establish its relationship with the urban or rural centers nearby.<sup>1</sup> Here I propose to begin the probe with *stupa* sites as the construction of monumental form of architecture requires organised skills in different domains and a social organization with sufficiently strong economic base to support. Let us assume what were the factors visible or invisible responsible for the



construction of a monastic complex. These may include money in the form of cash or kind, trained architect, sculptors, masons and other work men, technology for making bricks, mortar, stone-cutting, iron implements, transportation of raw material, apart from knowledge of land-management and setting up of monastic administration. Groups involved in such activities and the residents of various monasteries were not growers of food grains and other essential commodities. Naturally their subsistence depend on agricultural production and stock-breeding. It was the nearby rural peripheries which provided food and basic amenities to these classes of people. Thus the very existence of a monastic complex presupposes an area of surplus food production through improved cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

For the reconstruction of the socio-economic base of Buddhist establishments in Telugu country from the period of 3<sup>rd</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>3</sup> I have taken the archaeological evidences discovered at Buddhist sites such as inscribed labels, copper plates, sculptures, coins and other remnants in Telangana. Besides these, the tools of agriculture and domestic use in its surrounding village sites, which accord profuse insight into the social organization and the economic conditions of the early historical period, are also taken into account. Further, this data is added with supplementary information taken from classical and other literary sources like Chinese and Indian.<sup>4</sup> It is an admitted fact that the first two centuries of the Christian era witnessed economic prosperity in Telugu country, particularly on the river basins of Godavari, Krishna and their tributaries.<sup>5</sup> Some of the Buddhist establishments and urban sites in Telangana particularly in north-east part pre-dates to the advent of Pre-Satavahana-Andhras and Satavahanas.<sup>2</sup> The Brahmi script on label inscriptions and punch marked silver coins with times many tribes like Assakas, Asvakas, Sabaras and Mahisakas, Nagas and Yakshas lived in the territorial parts of Andhradesa.<sup>6</sup> The Assakas were probably responsible for the name

‘Assaka’ Janapada. The Mahisakas lived in the region covering Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda and Medak districts.<sup>7</sup> Buddhism pulled down all the tribal barriers and united them into a powerful Andhra race which rose to imperial power under the leadership of the Satavahanas.

### **I. Social Base for the Rise and Growth of Buddhism:**

The emergence of the Satavahanas, who provided political stability in Deccan including Telangana, brought a considerable change in the socio-economic and religious conditions of the region. It was inevitable that the momentous changes in the contemporary polity, economy and religion should have affected the social structure. By the second century B.C. the prevalent tribal society based on kingship had yielded place to a society based on the Brahmanical “Varna Vyavastha”. Henceforth the society was to be governed by the four-fold Vamashramadharma. At the top of the social hierarchy were the Brahmanas, next were Kshatriyas, the third were the Vaishyas, the Sudras were the last in the social scale. During the age of Satavahana-Ikshvakus the society in Andhradesa was divided into many castes and subcastes based on their profession along with four fold divisions like Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Vanija, (Sethi), Sudra, Gahapati (Officer), Senagopa (Commander), Rajalekhakha, Haririka (Kosagara), Pariyagariha (Supervisor on water house), Charmakara, Swamakara, Tilapisaka, Pushpakara or Mulakara, Basketmaker, Halika, Gandhika, Vadhaki, Kamara, Navakammika (Silpi), Maha Navakammika (Supervisor on Renovations) Manikara, Weaver, Potter, Architect, Mason, Maha Gopalaka, Lekhaka, Pashanika, Avesani.<sup>8</sup> Buddhism played its part in disrupting to some extent the existing social order. Most of the migrated people embraced Buddhism and donated gifts to the Buddhist establishments.

The distance between various caste groups was sought to be maintained through the use of the concepts of ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’. Buddha had realised that as a functional division the caste system was

indispensable for harmonious social existence. At the same time, he strongly condemned the notion of the 'Suddhi' that was attached to the caste system.<sup>9</sup> Buddhists never believed in the caste system. Distinction of castes on the basis of birth, colour and creed was not given any value. Buddhism advocated kindness and equality to all human kind and attached no importance to rituals and ceremonies. They believed that *nirvana* could be attained through self purification. Position of a person, either low or high, in society is determined by man's actions and conduct. It is no wonder that the merchants, other common people like artisans, craftsmen and peasants gravitated towards the Buddhism which taught social integrity, social justice by equality and fraternity of mankind. They led family life, indulged in earning and spending of money and enjoying the life on earth as before. Their devotion and dedication to the lofty ideals of Buddhism can be estimated with reference to their munificence.

Hence the view that the Buddhism was a social revolution, which have social justice and it had almost replaced the artificial barriers in society by abolishing caste distinctions and it raised the status of the lower class and provided the people with a simple way of living with their social and spiritual freedom. Their patronage to the Buddhism cannot be accounted to the oppression of such distributing professions among different social segments; but their anxiety was to have identity. The people to keep the identity of their tribal sentiments and to maintain the balance or social status of the women and foreign people who joined in the main stream of Indian culture and also several artisans and craftsmen alienated against the expanding Brahmanism, which prohibited people from pursuing trade and commerce. Brahman ideology alienated the merchants, peasants and various artisans and craftsmen and its attitude was inimical to do trade.<sup>10</sup> But Buddhism emphasised the necessity of austerity and simple living and approved the trade and commerce as right means of livelihood. This Buddhist way of life might

have prompted the people to popularise and champion the cause of the Buddhism.

To attract the traders and their role, Buddhism stressed that trade and commerce was one of the high occupations. In the Buddhist scheme of things, money lending, taking of interest on loan, eating food from prepared shops and the urban life were important. Buddhism accepted all aspects of changing conditions of socio-economic life of the contemporary times.

Brahmanism, despite royal patronage and it being the religion of many dynasties, seems to have been unable to capture the imagination of even the town folk of early Andhradesa. It was not well organised and maintained. It was content with its rituals and emphasised on individual duties according to 'Varna' and "Asrama", therefore Brahmanism continued within a limited section of people.

Buddhism on the other hand was almost a dominant religion and a popular movement which brought about great social change, as a result of which the older tribal culture became a thing of the past. Buddhism converted all the tribes and raised their social status. It was able to acquire a far, wide and deep social base in the form of pilgrims, donors, devotees, monks and nuns.<sup>11</sup> Hyderabad Prakrit inscription of Chaitanyapuri refers to a monk, 'Bhadantha Samghadeva' who built a stone cell for the use of the person in charge of incense and clothes. This was attached to Govindaraja vihara. At Nelakondapalli a votive *stupa* was donated by a 'Sramana'. At Dhulikatta the 'gahapatis' donated ayaka slabs to a *stupa*. The common people, private individuals and pious ladies who made gifts and donations to the Buddhist institutions and responsible for rearing up and sustain the Buddhist establishments must have been bankers, traders and merchants, caravan leaders, guilds of arts and crafts, rich land-owning householders along with their wives, sons, daughters and relatives and the female members of royal family.

It is interesting to note that the Buddhist monasteries or viharas were located on ancient trade routes connecting important market towns and urban cities of the region. These Buddhist monasteries, primarily meant for housing monks, generally offered food and shelter to the passerby and bona fide travellers. The resident monks looked after the guests and provided material and spiritual comforts to them. Many of these guests were pilgrims on their way to or from some pilgrimage. Nevertheless commercial travellers also made use of the facilities offered by these viharas. Mostly the services rendered were free of cost. Few viharas were also supported by the state exchequer. Moreover, grateful guests donated generously for the upkeep of viharas. Giving donation regarded as an act of piety or something akin to alms giving, many rich and well to do individuals and merchants made generous donations, periodically or on regular basis for the maintenance of Buddhist institutions.<sup>12</sup>

The trade and commerce or the mercantile economy played crucial factor in sustaining the economic as well as political base. In the early proto-historical societies the world over resulted in the breakup of kingship pattern. Trade and urbanization were thus factors of significance in changing the social structure, its organization and spread of its net-work led to sharp social stratification reinforcing the wealth and status of the elite.<sup>13</sup>

The recent excavations in the mid-Godavari and between Godavari and Krishna region (north-western) of Telangana mainly with the districts of erstwhile Karimnagar and Warangal, but also in part with districts of Nizamabad, Medak, Khammam and Nalgonda had thrown new light on the history of early Telugu country. In the ancient literary texts including *Suttanipata* refers Assaka located on the Godavari comprised of north-west Telangana region. Its capital city was the 'Potali' present Bodhan.<sup>14</sup> In turn, this was supposed to be contiguous to the region of Mulaka,

identified as the present districts of Nasik, Poona, Aurangabad, Osmanabad and Ahmednagar. Paithan was its capital. Asika that is the region between the Godavari and the Krishna<sup>15</sup> is another important geographical division. However, Asmaka and its own geo-cultural identity recognised even by the early writers. Ultimately, it was the inter link between these three geographical regions that played a crucial role after the rise of Satavahana power in these parts. The archaeological remains discovered in the mid-Godavari region indicate that this area was densely populated and flourished economically during the pre-historic and early historic times.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the pre-Satavahana and Satavahana sites in North-Western Telangana yielded evidences of fortified cities and also Buddhist establishments. Recent excavations at Kotilingala in Jagtial district, Peddabankur and Dhulikatta situated in Peddapalli district brought to light many structures revealing their urban characters as well as Buddhist association. Kondapur, situated in Medak district about 70 km. from Hyderabad also yielded good results. These were important towns which flourished during the Satavahana period. There was wholesome haven for religious and cultural activities, especially for Buddhism, given secular amity and social growth. The pattern of the communication system for this trade seems to coincide with the movement of Buddhism from one centre to another in the entire Deccan.<sup>17</sup> At the Buddhist and early historical sites of Telangana region both foreign and indigenous coins were found. The most significant of these were punch marked coins, Satavahana coins and Roman coins. At Kotilingala die Chimuka's coins were found. Chimuka has been considered as the first king of the Satavahanas.<sup>18</sup>

The mud-ramparts, palaces, secular and religious buildings are unearthed in excavations.<sup>19</sup> The existence of irrigation tanks here is important to note.<sup>20</sup> The iron objects and slags, and evidences of iron

smelting technology are also found in Karimnagar region.<sup>21</sup> The Buddhist sites at Pashigaon, Sthambhampalli, Kotilingala are distributed within a radius of few kilometers from Dhulikatta. Kotilingala and Dhulikatta were the political head quarters of early Satavahanas. Silver punch marked coins and Roman coins are noticed at Dhulikatta.<sup>22</sup> At a distance of ten kilometers from Dhulikatta there is another Satavahana site at Peddabankur with urban characters. This site yielded a big collection of punch marked silver coins, Roman gold coins and Satavahana coins.<sup>23</sup> Asokan inscriptions reveal the economic exploitation of the mineral rich areas of the Deccan and diversified economic activity in Andhradesa. It has been suggested by scholars that Peddabankur and kotilingala, as well as Kondapur must have been minting centers.<sup>24</sup>

Even after the collapse of Mauryan empire, the mercantile economy continued in these parts under the Satavahanas. In this region legend less and sometimes inscribed coins made of cheap metals such as copper, lead and potion were found. At places like Peddabankur, the silver, punch-marked coins are found in substantial quantity. The excavations of the past decade or so reveal in material terms that this region was throbbing with economic activity. The existence of varied coinage itself indicates the magnitude and nature of commercial transactions and the prosperity of the region. The Deccan witnessed the beginnings of urban life and the rise of urban centers during the post-Mauryan period. It is well known that the western Deccan and the Krishna, Godavari delta region connected through the mid-Godavari valley i.e., the Karimnagar and its adjoining districts played a crucial role in providing a link between the two. The material remains from many of the sites even the small ones, imply the existence of social groups which involved in organised craft production and affluent local merchant class must have naturally be related to the existence of an expanded agrarian economy which is clearly visible in proliferation of megalithic and historical settlements in these parts.<sup>25</sup>

On the basis of wide spread existence of microliths, it may be concluded that tribal, pastoral, nomadic communities supplemented to the new economic system i.e., on agricultural and their movements being guided by the needs of trade.<sup>26</sup>

It is also clear that the political nucleus of the whole or a part of the Deccan during the Satavahana period must have been situated in the erstwhile Karimnagar district area.<sup>27</sup> This fact obviously is corroborated by the account of Yuan-Chawing where in it is noted that he had travelled south wards from South Kosala for about 241 km. to reach Antolo or Andhra, the modern Karimnagar-Warangal region<sup>28</sup> and its capital was Ping-Ki-lo identified with modern Elegandula by Cunningham at about 8 km. from Karimnagar.<sup>29</sup> Like the coastal Andhra, this region too had prosperous overseas trade contacts. Besides Roman coins, a characteristic pottery called, rouletted ware found at Dhulikatta,<sup>30</sup> Peddabankur, Kotilingala and Kondapur<sup>31</sup> establish the fact. The trade contacts between the Telangana region and North and East stimulated the economic prosperity of the land.

### **1. Indo-Roman Trade:**

Another factor which contributed for the prosperous economy of the region was the introduction of Indo-Roman trade which resulted in growth of the inland market towns, large urban culture with urban elite, the nobility, who were mainly of Buddhist religious affiliation and donated Buddhist centers directly and indirectly through patronizing arts and crafts.

Brisk Roman trade with South India, involving the export of various items resulted in the influx of a large number of Roman silver and gold coins which have been discovered at the Buddhist sites and Satavahana urban sites belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era. The Roman coins and other objects were found at Dhulikatta, Kotilingala,



Peddabankur, Gootiparti (Tungathurti Taluk of Suryapet district), *Nusthulapur*, (Karimnagar district), and Kondapur (Medak district)<sup>32</sup> etc. A Roman jar and terracotta figures were found in large number at Yeleswaram, Nagarjunakonda, Dhulikatta, Peddabankur and Kondapur.<sup>33</sup>

Pliny referred to the huge inflow of Roman gold and silver coins into India during the early centuries of the Christian Era<sup>34</sup> (i.e., Satavahana and Ikshvaku period). The Periplus also confirms that the balance of the Indo-Roman trade was very much in India's favour. One may safely assume that a part of this riches used to flow into Telangana region. As already noted the Roman gold and silver coins and Roman articles are noticed in inland centers of Telangana region. Roman trade geared and enriched the internal trade and commerce and in turn strongly buttressed the rural agricultural economy and workshops of silver and gold smiths. There are indications that actual Roman gold coins were donated as gifts to Buddhist establishments. It is difficult to imagine that the rearing up and the maintenance of large and small Buddhist establishments could not have been possible without the backing of this gold and silver currency.<sup>35</sup>

The apparent causes of the prosperity during the period of Satavahana (first century B.C. to second century A.D.) seems to have been the Roman trade and the political stability of the Satavahanas and later their successors the Ikshvakus. As said previously Roman trade was profitable and it contributed for inland trade which connected the all inland arterial routes passed through Buddhist centers and market towns. As a result, the local people of different sections gained the economic surplus and enabled them to give active support and serve the Buddhist settlements in one form or the other. Thus it has been recognised that the flourishing state of Buddhism in Andhradesa was due to active Indo-Roman trade also. The inscriptions of the age mention

several craft guilds associated with Buddhism.<sup>36</sup>

According to Periplus, the Telangana land is considerably rich in mineral and forest wealth. The megalithic tomb and historical sites of Telangana have yielded iron implements, gold ornaments etc.<sup>37</sup> At Kondapur underground chambers were found with valuable articles, ornaments and the traces of iron smelting indicating the development of metal industries. The iron smelting and forging techniques were known in the Satavahana age as evidenced by the finds at places like Budigepalli, Nirmal, Jagityal, Kondapur, Anantagiri, Elegandula, etc. in Telangana.<sup>38</sup> A good number of carpenter tools discovered in Telangana region such as axes, adzes, chisel, scissors, drills, saw blades, etc. indicate the advanced state of carpentry.<sup>39</sup> Fine steel was cast and supplied to the production centers like Konasamudram, Elegandula etc. Most of the excavated sites of this region were centers of trade and industry. The existence of industries such as iron, steel, copper, gold, lead, bell, metal, glass, etc. prove the existence of rich and advanced metal industry during the period.<sup>40</sup> Besides, there were also the various workshops of arts and crafts i.e., bead-making with precious and semi-precious stones, pottery, textiles, beads, gem, terracotta, horns, bones and shell. It appears that there was brisk trade in gems of various kinds between the Deccan and foreign countries.<sup>41</sup>

Crafts not only continued to hold the stage but became almost the kingpin in this new edifice of a new culture. Prestige and honour was determined by high quality of workmanship. As agriculture expanded and improved, the crafts developed in the wider range of its varieties and character.<sup>42</sup> The craftsmen built different edifices for the Buddhist establishments. They created different materials using various metals, earth, wood, stone, plaster, ivory, etc.

The recent excavations at Buddhist and urban sites brought to light many antiquities connected with arts and crafts. They revealed the

flourishing crafts and arts like blacksmiths, stone cutters, sculptors, architects, masons, shell cutters and other work-men for making of bricks and transportation of new materials.<sup>43</sup>

They established their centers at the bastions of Buddhist faith and propagated the teachings of Buddha.<sup>44</sup> The archaeological evidences from all the Buddhist sites of Telangana and its nearby places like Ramireddypalli, Jaggayyapeta, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda refers to the donations made by different artists and craftsmen. The discovery of building materials like brick, lime and concrete, pottery, sculptures, iron slag, furnaces, metal casting of images, beads, terracottas, ornaments, oil mills and medicinal tools etc. at the Buddhist sites at Nelakondapalli, Dhulikatta and Kondapur bear the testimony to the existence of the respective artisans and craftsmen.

An inscription from Vardhamanakota refers to a gift by *Buddharakshita*. A label inscription found on a votive *stupa* collected from Nelakondapalli, records a word “*Sramana*” who gifted it. An inscribed pot-herd containing early Brahmi letters reading “*Sramana*” must be a Buddhist mendicant.<sup>45</sup> A massive *stupa* and the Buddha images exquisitely carved in stone and metal found at Nelakondapalli indicate the flourishing state of crafts.<sup>46</sup> The sculptures of Buddha at Vardhamanakota, Nelakondapalli and Mudigonda bear testimony to the spread of Buddhist lore among the artisan classes. Such achievements points to the existence of some agency for the spread of knowledge among the various strata of society. There might have been sculptors guilds, who prepared different forms of Buddha images and exported to other places. The discovery of oil mill stones, terracottas and different types of pottery at Nelakondapalli revealed the splendour and prosperous existence of various arts and crafts. The excavations at Kotilingala,<sup>47</sup> Dhulikatta<sup>48</sup> and Kondapur<sup>49</sup> yielded a beautifully designed gold-beaded necklace and other ornaments indicating professional skill and expertise

attained by the goldsmiths. At Kondapur the discovery of furnaces suggest that there was an industrial area with metallurgical shops.<sup>50</sup> The excavations yielded varieties of colourful painted pottery drawn with Buddhist symbols like *Triratna* and *Dharmachakra* etc.<sup>51</sup> Many crafts flourished at Kondapur<sup>52</sup> like smithy, ivory, making of beads and terracotta, stone carving, architecture, pottery, painting etc. These stand as testimony that how the Buddhism spread among the different artisan classes of people.<sup>53</sup> Ivory crafts occupied a very significant place at Kotilingala, Dhulikatta, Peddabankur and Kondapur.

The artists and craftsmen formed into guilds or associations which worked under the pattern of autonomous and democratic bodies. They used to give training and preserve their skills. In some cases they were patronised by rich people and Buddhist centers and thus created employment to the trained men.

It seems that the artisan classes such as sculptors, architects etc., associated and contributed in the enrichment of the Buddhist establishments. The local socio-economic condition of contemporary period were responsible for the emergence of the artists and craftsmen who served and enriched the local Buddhist monastic establishments.

## **II. Economic Base for the Rise of Buddhism:**

### **1. The Role of Agriculture:**

The rise and spread of Buddhism is generally attributed to the local socio-political changes rather than to the religio-philosophical cause. The development was the result of a change in the economic base. From about 7<sup>th</sup> B.C. the usage of iron plough resulted in the expansion of agriculture and surplus production. It facilitated the growth of wealthy urban centers, with brisk commercial activity and arts and crafts.

The recent excavations in Telangana region<sup>54</sup> yielded many

archaeological evidences which represent the material life of the people and Buddhist institutions during the Satavahana,<sup>55</sup> Ikshvaku and Vishnukundin period. The archaeological remains also throw light on the economic conditions, which were congenial to the rise and maintenance of magnificent Buddhist establishments in Telangana region. The label inscriptions record that the Buddhist establishments received the economic support from the people of different classes. Here a brief survey of material remains and other evidences discovered in the excavations in Telangana region establish the prevailing contemporary economic conditions of people which contributed to the rise and growth of Buddhism and its institutions in the Telangana region.

## **2. Development of Agriculture:**

The agricultural produce increased enormously due to the ushering of full-pledged iron technology during the Satavahana period. The iron plough shares introduced for deep sloughing resulted both in the expansion and growth of agriculture. Number of agricultural implements of iron in the shape of axes, hoe, sickles and saddle querns and pestles used for pounding grain were unearthed at the Buddhist sites and their neighboring sites of villages and even towns of Satavahana period. Agriculture thrived much in the lands with congenial alluvial black cotton soil. Tribal communities have out-grown from the food-gathering stage and stepped into a stage of rudimentary knowledge and practice of agriculture in which domestication of certain animals seems to have played an important part.

From the early period of the Satavahanas, there was more intensified agricultural activity, based on somewhat systematised irrigation, methods of cultivation and produced many varieties of crops. While the towns were inhabited by commercial classes, the villages were mainly occupied by agriculturists and artisans. Hala's *Gatha-Saptasati*, a book of Prakrit lyrics speaks of agricultural operations. It mentions

various kinds of paddy, pulses, various agricultural seasons, irrigation methods, etc. The discovery of agricultural implements<sup>56</sup> and granaries confirm the statement of *Saptasati*, which describes villages with jaggery mills, surrounded by fields of paddy, ginger, sugarcane and jute. Bovine cattle was used in agriculture and gift of cow was considered as a meritorious deed. The bullocks depicted in terracotta figurines and sculptural reliefs at Dhulikatta *stupa* indicate their use for the agriculture purpose.<sup>57</sup> The Buddhist principle of non-killing of agricultural cattle facilitated the development of agricultural economy. Satavahana took interest in providing irrigational facilities.<sup>58</sup> There are many tanks of ancient period witnessed at every Buddhist site. At Dhulikatta *stupa* there is a tank at Kota area called by local people as Rajulakunta or Yenugula Cheruvu (the pond of elephants). The Periplus of the Erythrean sea mentions about the export of large quantities of paddy and cotton from early Satavahana dominions.<sup>59</sup>

There are two inscriptions at the Dhulikatta *stupa*, engraved on the upper part of the sculptural slabs where five hooded Naga Muchilinda protecting Buddha. It is fixed to the drum of *stupa*. They are reading as *Gahapatino Pathalasa Mathuya Samaya Danam* and *Gahapatino Pathalasa Mathari Puthasa Ayago Danam*. Another slab bearing the five hooded Naga contains a label inscription reading-Pitha Nandi Puthasa Duhuthuya Sayonija Danam<sup>60</sup> and Buddha-Padas were carved over the coiled body of the five hooded Nagas. Both the inscriptions inscribed in early Brahmi script and datable to circa second century B.C. refer to the *gahapatis*.<sup>61</sup> The manifestation of social change towards a higher level of agricultural economy was also clear from the evidence of the Satavahana and Ikshvaku epigraphs-which refer to *gahapatis*. The *gahapatis* were rich landlorfds and big peasants wielding position of local power and prestige and holding large areas of cultivated land.<sup>62</sup> They frequently donated gifts to Buddhist establishments. The *gahapatis* were pivots of new socio-economic institutions in this region during the first three

centuries of the Christian era. Buddhism seems to have been reared up by this new agricultural economy in the Telangana region, as elsewhere in Andhradesa and entire Deccan.

The emergence of a new agricultural economy had come into being to transform the tribal way of life of the past into flourishing rural agricultural economy. One may guess that there was perhaps a technological basis for such transformation by a more widespread use of agricultural tools made of iron. Then the people of Telangana region might have possessed the knowledge of the science of agriculture and trading of agriculture products. It was the main basis of subsistence, due to the availability of plenty of arable alluvial black soils.<sup>63</sup> The Karimnagar district dotted with many village sites of Satavahana period with agriculture as the main-stay of their socio-economic life.<sup>64</sup> The people had attained a very high degree of civilization, characterised by large scale material evidences like residential places, fortified towns, palatial buildings, subterranean sewerage, well laid-out roads, good water supply and metallurgy.<sup>65</sup> In this area the megaliths yielded many objects of iron, copper and bronze.<sup>66</sup> Their economic life was a combination of agriculture, animal husbandry and crafts. Many of the towns and villages were established in the middle of the arable plains of black soil. Some of the lands on the out skirts of Kotilingala a mud fort had a fencing of some slabs.<sup>67</sup> Some of the slabs were inscribed with Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. The selection of cultivable plains by the early historical people would indicate their agriculture oriented economy. It is likely that while the towns were inhabited by the kings, feudal lords and their entourage, besides, those in commercial professions, the villages were mostly occupied by landed agricultural house-holders and husbands-men.

At Kotilingala one stone pillar now lying in a paddy field about one kilometre away from the fortress, bears a label inscription which reads as

*Naga Gopi Nikaya*. *Nikaya* means an assemblage, a group or dwelling.<sup>68</sup> It denotes the domestication of animals which indicate the importance of herds-men in the social economic life of the people. Kotilingala was once commercially and politically important town connected with high way trade route. This is a big historical mound extended for about 18 hectares. Some of the slabs are inscribed with Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.<sup>69</sup> Kotilingala situated on the bank and at the confluence of Godavari and Peddavagu in Peddapalli district and 65 km. away from Karimnagar and 2 km. away from Buddhist site of Pashigaon and Sthambhampalli. The Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh carried out excavations at Kotilingala. The excavations revealed fortified urban centre with brick and mud walls and Buddhist settlements. *Granaries* yielded few grain specimens.<sup>70</sup> A good number of iron objects such as daggers, knives, pins, nails, rivets, laddies and other miscellaneous objects of both house hold and agricultural purpose have been recovered.<sup>71</sup> Iron slag and ore are found in plenty indicating collection for extracting iron needed for manufacture of various implements and objects. Agricultural cattle rearing and hunting were common occupations. On the basis of the occurrence of huge quantities of bony remains found in almost all the levels, it appears that the people of Kotilingala were non-vegetarians.<sup>72</sup> A beautiful gold necklace is also discovered from this site. The main basis of economy of the people of this age was agriculture, besides hunting and domestication of animals. Rice formed the staple food while cattle also formed a part of their diet.<sup>73</sup>

The coins of the Chimukha, founder of the Satavahana dynasty, were found at this place. A few label inscriptions in the Brahmi characters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. are also discovered from this place.<sup>74</sup> During the Satavahana period Kotilingala was one of the strong holds<sup>75</sup> and commercially and politically important headquarters. The excavations conducted at Kotilingala brought to light black soil, granite,



morrums, brick structures, wells, pottery, iron, copper, silver, punch marked coins, Roman gold coins and pre-Satavahana and Satavahana coins.<sup>76</sup> The Terracotta seals were found at Peddabankur. On the basis of the layer in which it was found this seal can be dated to 1st century B.C. In the middle of the circular seal a figure of plough was incised with a yoke and two pegs on each side, evidently for fastening leather thongs round the neck of animals. The profession of the individual was cultivation as indicated by the plough.<sup>77</sup> There is another terracotta seal, also from Peddabankur, incised with a yoked plough in the middle and flanked by the so called Ujjain symbol and a spoked wheel on either side. The presence of yoked plough in between the two auspicious symbols may suggest that the yoke was also worshiped.<sup>78</sup> A spade and scraper for leveling the fields, a number of sickles and hoes were found in the excavations.<sup>79</sup>

The extensive use of oxen in agricultural operations for heavy traction or prolonged draught work is attested by some peculiar characteristics revealed in the osteological studies.<sup>80</sup> Many skeletons of animals like horse, cattle were found.<sup>81</sup>

Dhulikatta, a town, came into existence during in the pre-Satavahana period and continued its prosperity up to the earliest period of Satavahana age. It became the political nucleus of the whole or part of Deccan during the early Satavahana period and lost its glory after the fall of Satavahanas.<sup>82</sup> Granaries developed due to advanced method of agriculture and irrigation through wells, tanks, canals, etc. There are traces of tanks that were excavated as early as Satavahana times. An early inscription from Dhulikatta records the gift made by *gahapati*. All these evidence reflects on agriculture which was considered as the most important profession in the contemporary economy of the region.

The label inscriptions from Kotilingala which reads as *Naga Gopi Nikaya* indicating the domestication of cattle, the seals incised with

plough at Peddabankur, grain specimens and granaries, figures of oxes and horses on the seals of terracotta collected at all the above sites in Jagtial and Peddapalli districts. One can visualise that there was rich resourceful and prosperous agriculture which became one of the strong socio-economic base for Buddhist establishments and those centres were primarily fed and sustained by large scale agriculture. Archaeological evidence ratifies that from second century B.C. on wards that there was an active and very flourishing state of Buddhism and its establishments were prosperous in the Telangana along with other cognate centers.

The existence of Buddhist centers with their buildings and sculptures indicates the accumulated wealth which was the result of economic prosperity of the land due to agricultural development, growth of industries and increased trade in this region. The prosperous condition of agriculture and trade led to the economical growth of Gahapati, Kamara and Setti classes. Especially the artisan and merchant classes were the backbone of state economy<sup>83</sup> and patronised Buddhism and were mainly responsible for raising magnificent Buddhist establishments and their maintenance. The Buddhist establishments were built by the co-operative efforts of different sections of people. The Buddhist centers of post-Christian centuries which were reared up and sustained by an urban economy resting on resources drawn primarily from trade and commerce and secondly from arts and crafts as well as rich agriculture. Thus the Buddhist *stupas* had their spontaneous growth due to the interaction of various economic and social factors.

When Satavahanas lost the ports to the Sakas, the economy of their empire was shattered and their authority started declining. Shortly afterwards the Roman Empire itself was rudely shaken and the trade relations between the Deccan and Rome were snapped. Consequently, the industries in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. collapsed, the artisan and merchant guilds were disrupted and their members were impoverished.

The natural result of such a development was a tremendous rush on agriculture. From about the beginning of the third century A.D. we find on the part of the rulers in the Deccan an unprecedented interest in agriculture. In one of the inscription of Virapurushadatta, the Ikshvaku king of Vijayapuri, it was stated that his father who was the founder of Ikshvaku dynasty Chanthamula donated<sup>84</sup> thousands of ploughs in order to promote agriculture. The word 'hala' may indicate both a plough or the extent of land that could be cultivated with a single plough.<sup>85</sup>

Thus the above measures initiated by the rulers to sustain the economic conditions of their subjects resulted even in the flow of donations to Buddhist institutions, which enabled them to maintain the level of property and up keep.

The apparent cause of prosperity of the Buddhist centers during the period of Satavahana (from 1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.) was favourable due to the brisk Roman trade and also the political stability of the age of Satavahana and their successors the Ikshvakus. Both the dynasties were indirectly responsible for strengthening of economic base for the Buddhist settlements and urbanization in Telangana region and entire Deccan. All most all the archaeological sites in Telangana yielded the Roman gold and silver coins which indicates the brisk Indo-Roman trade. This profitable trade contributed to rich inland trade, connecting all inland arterial routes which pass through all the Buddhist centers and market towns. This trade and commercial conditions resulted in economic surplus for the local people of different sections of society and enabled them to lend active support to the Buddhist settlements and donate in the form of one kind or the other. It has been established that the flourishing state of Buddhism in Telugu country was due to the active Indo-Roman trade. It is significant that the contemporary Buddhist institutions were located closely to urban centers, where the occupational groups like those of the merchants, caravan leaders and craft guilds were

dominant. The epigraphs of the Satavahana and the Ikshvaku period clearly establish the fact that these Buddhist institutions were patronised and financed by members of the Buddhist Sangha. The contemporary royal and noble families, mercantile, commercial, rich agricultural communities and artisans and craftsmen owed allegiance to Buddhism or the Buddhist order of the time.

Buddhism in Telugu country was not confined to the monks and nuns. Buddhism was able to acquire a social base which was fairly wide and deep. The social super structure was constituted of those who were in control of the wealth of the society, namely the *gahapatis* or rich land-owning persons, artisans and craftsmen, bankers, caravan leaders, traders and merchants, who were all in the relatively lower grades of Brahmanical *Jati* hierarchy. Buddhism was already an established religion and made considerable inroads into people of those sections and who had already become the mainstay of Buddhist Sangha. Nagarjunakonda and the Buddhist sites of Telangana region were under one common socio-economic and political orbit during the Satavahana and Ikshvaku rule. Like the Satavahanas, the Ikshvaku rule also provided social, cultural unity and political stability in Telangana region.

Buddhist *stupas* emerged in large number with big and magnificent complexes and flourished gloriously due to wider socio-economic support of faithful lay devotees, donors, pilgrims, bankers, traders and merchants, caravan leaders and rich land lords along with their family members and relatives and the female members of the royal family. It was certainly true to facts since the *Sreshtis* and Sarthavahaka's, various artisan, craftsmen and trade guilds, *gahapatis* who were town folks or atleast physically and sociologically urban and they were from the very beginning the most active patrons of the Buddhist Sangha. They were always in a position to spend their surplus money on earning of religious merit for themselves.

There was an emergence of a new *socio-economic* forces due to the expansion of agriculture which raised surplus production, growth of wealthy urban centers, and brisk commercial activity proved by the metal coinage issued and organised by merchant guilds. Merchants emerged as the most influential section in society by virtue of their possession of wealth and began to bank on the Buddhism for suitable social identity or a prestigious social status through Buddhism, but Brahmanism had not accorded them.

Buddhism offered certain amount of opportunity as it is widely held to social mobility because of the importance that the trading communities enjoyed as a result of the rising popularity of this new faith. Buddhism also championed the cause of the hitherto neglected agriculturists, traders and artisans and craftsmen, even tribal chiefs who became the main stay of the Buddhist Sangha in this region. It was the direct result of their desire to attain social status that was commensurate with their improved economic power which was derived from stable rural agrarian economy, an active and increase of maritime and inland trade and craft-industries.

The *traders, agriculturists* and *artisans* were assigned the third and fourth position in Hindu Brahmanical social order. Before the advent of Buddhism in Telugu country the society was divided into various castes. But Buddhism was favourable towards the people who were in search of a respective social position and it laid great emphasis on equality, fraternity and toleration and opposed the caste system.

### **3. Economic Ideology of Buddhism:**

Buddhism not only preached toleration, equality, love, kindness and service, but also stressed *non-violence (ahimsa)*, extended even to animals, has been suggested as a measure to save and preserve the dwindling cattle wealth. Brahmanical sanction of beef-eating on

ceremonious occasions and the slaughter of animals, especially cows and oxen in the course of rituals, on the one hand and the non-aryans killing of the animals for eating unmindful of the consequence seemed to threaten the expanding agriculture. During the early historical period there was a need for strong agricultural economic base which required to protect and save the cattle wealth. This prompted the Buddhism to adopt the principle of non-violence and protect the cattle wealth.

Brahmanical *social ideology* was inimical to trade, commerce, agriculture, cattle rearing, money lending and sea voyage, all of which were important constituents of the contemporary economy. It has become known that the more favourable Buddhist percepts weaned the peasant, mercantile and artisan communities who were away from the unhelpful and non-cooperative Brahmanism.

Buddhism was a product of the material culture of the second urbanization in Northern India. Such Buddhism provided an ideological support to a similar rural *agrarian economy* and 'urban' culture in mid-Godavari i.e., Telangana. Buddhism permitted all the adjuncts of an urban society, namely money lending on interest, running of shops to sell food, foreign and maritime trades. Buddhism has no prejudice against the above activities. Moreover agriculture, trade and commerce and different professions of arts and crafts were the honourable professions and approved in the Buddhist scheme of things. The people of various sections of the society became more prolific donors to Buddhist religious institutions. It suggest the existence of some reciprocal connection between the emergence of new socio-economic forces and their diffusion with Buddhism.

In Telangana, Buddhism flourished during the period between 3<sup>rd</sup> B.C. to 5-6<sup>th</sup> A.D.. This is witnessed by many inscriptions, *stupas*, monasteries, cave temples and sculptures of Buddha and other findings. This was the main reason for existence of rapid growth and prosperity of

Buddhism and its institutions in this region was due to the wider socio-economic base of above communities i.e., *Gahapati*, *Setti* and all sections of *Kamara* (Artisan and Craftsmen) classes which emerged as a result of advanced agriculture, industry, arts and crafts and expanding internal and foreign, trade particularly, and stimulated by Roman trade. The Buddhist ideas were helpful and favourable, it was attracted by the contemporary new socio-economic forces and spread thickly among them and it ultimately has become popular religion of the masses. The ideology of Brahmanical-Hinduism prohibited and disappointed the trading commodities like men, liquids, perfumes, cloth, leather and food grains<sup>86</sup> and sea-voyage was condemned as a sinful practice<sup>87</sup> whereas the Buddhist texts approved the sea-voyage and trade and commerce as high occupation.

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## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **BUDDHIST MONUMENTS IN NORTHERN TELANGANA**

Previously there has been a general opinion prevalent among the scholars that Buddhism flourished only in coastal Andhra particularly in the districts of Krishna and Guntur. However, with the discovery of the new Buddhist establishments in the recent explorations and excavations conducted in Telangana region opened up new vistas in the history of the spread of Buddhism in the Telangana region. Among the fifteen Buddhist sites discovered in Telangana, eleven were excavated and the rest of them have been explored. These unearthed Buddhist monuments enable us to infer that the soil of Telangana was trodden by Buddhist monks and nuns and pilgrimages from centuries before and after Christ. The excavated Buddhist sites in the Telangana region are Dhulikatta, Kotilingala, Pashigaon, Sthambhampalli, Kondapur, Tirumalagiri, Gajulabanda, Phanigiri, Vardhamanakota, Yeleswaram, Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda, Karukonda, Chaitanyapuri and Tummalagudem. These Buddhist monuments occupies a glorious place in ancient history of Telangana since fourth and third centuries B.C. to third century A.D. and continued up to fifth-sixth centuries A.D. covering the period of pre-Satavahanas, Satavahanas, Ikshvakus and the Vishnukundins. They throw a flood of light on the history and culture in general and Buddhist art and architecture in particular in northern Telangana region. During the Satavahana period, the Telangana region was brought under single political unit since the early historical Deccan. It was also the original home of early Satavahanas.

In this chapter an attempt is made to identify the general distribution pattern of Buddhist monuments in the northern Telangana region and study their art and architectural wealth. Northern Telangana region consists of 18 districts namely Adilabad, Aasifabad Khumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, Peddapalli, Jagtiyal, Karimnagar, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Khammam and Bhadradi Kothagudem.

### **1. Dhulikatta (Peddapalli District):**

This Buddhist site is (Latitude: 30°.24 North: Longitude: 76°-48' East) situated at Dhulikatta village in Eligaied mandal of Peddapalli district, Northern Telanagana region was excavated during 1974-78 by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The large-scale excavations, concentrated inside the Satavahana fort and over the *stupa* mound have yielded a *stupa* with 37 sculptures.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the Satavahana coins, Roman coins of Augustus coins of Julius Octavious (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.) and Tiberious Clauds Nero (14 - 37 A.D.) are also found at Nusthulapuram and Peddabankur, which are located 20 km. away from Dhulikatta.<sup>6</sup> A few lable inscriptions in the Brahmi characters of second century B.C. have been discovered from the *stupa* site along with terracotta and ivory seals and Roman pottery. It was a very early *stupa* and might have occupied an important place among the Buddhist centers of North East Telangana since third century B.C. Archaeological evidences reveal that this centre was patronised by different classes of people like *Gahapatis* (local chiefs), *Setti traders*, *artisans* and *kamara* (craftsmen and artisan).

The name Dhulikatta may be a corrupt form of *Dhulikota* or *Dhulikatakam*<sup>7</sup> which literally means a mud-fort. There is a mud-fort, the

beginning of which probably goes back to the Mauryan period. The villagers point out *Rajulakunta* and *Yenugula cheruvu* and so on in the nearby areas. The ancient habitation at Dhulikatta was a pre-Satavahana town and was a nucleus of political activity during Satavahana period.

Excavation in the middle of the mud fort revealed a palace complex and the residential quarters, which have seen several phases of construction and they are enclosed by a massive brick wall of about 3 mts.height.<sup>8</sup> The structural plans are not clear as most of the bricks from the buildings were removed and carried away by the villagers for their houses. While removing the filling from a well, a beautiful ivory button-seal inscribed as “*Ajanisiriya Game Kumariya*” in Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C is recorded. Spacious halls paved with brick, granaries, wells, a soakage pit, and brick structures provided with sewage noticed here signify a period of prosperity. The habitation at this site is believed to have continued from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

Dhulikatta was probably one of the walled towns of the Andhras mentioned by Meghathanese. It was situated on a high way trade-route. Evidences indicate that it was a bastion of Hinayana school, where Buddha was represented symbolically as *Chatra*, *Padukas*, *Dharmachakra*, *Bodhitree*, *Stupa*, etc.

The *stupa* seems to have consisted of many parts like *Vedika*, *Drum*, *Anda*, *Harmika* and *Chatra*. Muchilinda Naga was exquisitely delineated which formed favourite theme of the Andhra sculptors. Its glory began to decline after the fall of Satavahanas and even though it continued to linger till about fourth century A.D. But during the time of the later Satavahanas probably Dhulikatta was changed into a village as evidenced through an ivory seal inscribed in Brahmi script, datable to second century A.D. which reads as “*Ajani Siriya Game, Kumariya*.”<sup>4</sup> At the distance of one kilometre to the Dhulikatta *stupa*, there is an historical site, 18 hectares in extent in the form of another mound



roughly 6 metres high above the plains and enclosed in a fort with mud-ramparts. The excavation conducted here which brought to light several buildings including granaries, well, a net work of sewage, ivory seal etc. which indicate the flourishing state of highly developed civilization.<sup>9</sup> The evidence of punch-marked coins, Satavahana coins besides some Roman coins of Augustus and Ceaser suggest the inland trade as well as foreign trade with Roman world.

The excavations at Dulikatta revealed a Buddhist *stupa*. The *stupa* consisted of a brick drum of 2 meters height over a single layer of rubble basement. The *anda* or the dome rises over the *garbha* to height of 5 meters crowned with a *harmika* and *chatra*. A square enclosure around the drum filled up with bricks is raised to strengthen and also it served as a *pradakshinapatha*. During the second phase of constructional activity the drum was enlarged which is 36 meters in diameter. It is built with bricks entirely. The remnants of *harmika* and *chatravali* were found in the excavations.<sup>10</sup>

The *garbha* of the *stupa* was decorated with 47 carved Ayaka slabs which were seen mostly in tact on the spot. Most of them are known to have been shifted to Karimnagar, were they are placed in the local museum. Sculptural representations on the slabs include five hooded Muchilinda Naga, Bodhi tree, Mahabhinishkramana etc.

Muchilinda Naga is believed to have sheltered Buddha for a week from a terrible storm. But nowhere else he has been so glorified as on the *stupas* of Andhradesa particularly at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.<sup>11</sup> Similar glorification of Muchilinda Naga is noticed on the ayaka slabs of Dulikatta, the figures of which are quite similar to those of Amravati and Nagarjunakonda.<sup>12</sup>

On the slabs at Dulikatta, the Muchilinda Naga, a five hooded cobra, protecting Lord Buddha, symbolically represented by his feet, is

exquisitely delineated. It contains a label brahmi inscription datable to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. which reads as “*Gahapathino Pathalasa Mathuya Danam*”.<sup>13</sup>

Another slab contains the figures of ladies standing with floral offerings. The ladies are profusely decorated with cubical ear ornaments stamped with beautiful lotus medallions, their profuse hair made into side knots. They have broad necklaces, waist belts and beaded wristlets.

As there is no anthropomorphic representation of Buddha, the *stupa* may belong to the Hinayana sect. Buddha is represented here symbolically by the *chatra*, *padukas*, *dharmachakra*, *stupa* etc. the Brahmi characters of label inscriptions suggest that this *stupa* had its origin in early 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

## **2. Kotilingala (Jagtial District):**

Kotilingala is a small village situated (18°.51'.6 latitude North; 79°.12' Longitude East) at the confluence of the Peddavagu and the Godavari in Velagatoor mandal of Jagtial district and lies on Karimnagar-Adilabad high-way at a distance of 2 km. from Pashigaon.

It appears that the Andhras might have been divided into a number of small kingdoms in Godavari valley. A good number of early historical mounds and Satavahana sites are noticed in the north-west Telangana. The Department of Archaeology and Museums of the state of Andhra Pradesh conducted large-scale excavations at Peddabankur and Dhulikatta in Peddapalli district during 1968-1974. The excavation work at Kotilingala in Jagtial district, another early historical site continued upto 1984.

The excavation at Kotilingala in Jagtial district witnessed six layers, which have thrown new light on the pre-Satavahana rulers as well as king Chimuka Satavahana the founder of the dynasty and his

successor Satakarni I. A good number of coins of King Rano Samagopa were found in all six layers, a layer below the coins of the king Satavahana. Coins of other pre-Satavahana rulers obtained from the same site are of Gobhada, Narana and Kamvayasiri apart from pre-Satavahana Talavaras. Pot shreds, terracotta objects and beads found in the sixth layer indicate a post Mauryan Palaeography i.e., first half of the second century B.C.<sup>14</sup>

Coins of king Satavahana and Satakarni I are found in layers from V to I and those of Chimuka (Simuka) Satavahana only from layers III to I. Thus the stratigraphy at Kotilingala right from post-Mauryan to Satavahana period is quite undisturbed and distinct. P.V. Parabrahma Sastry had traced the sequence and evolution of the symbols and motifs depicted on these coins that corroborate the stratigraphic and chronological sequence and point out the successive rulers of this region with its capital at Kotilingala. Satavahana and his successors continued some of the main as well as auxiliary symbols used by the pre-Satavahanas. The Ujjain symbol used first by Samagopa is found on most of the Satavahana coins. Swastika is found on all the coins.<sup>15</sup>

Samagopa appears to have been the most popular among the Pre-Satavahana rulers as his coins are found profusely in all layers. The coins of the first ruler Satavahana compare well with those of Samagopa. Thakur Rajaram Singh taking into consideration the coins of Pre-Satavahana rulers Rano Gobhada, Narana, Kamvaya and Rano Samagopa gave them the new name belonging to a dynasty called Andhra-Gopa dynasty that ruled this region earlier than the Satavahanas.<sup>16</sup>

It is generally believed that Simuka was the founder of the Satavahana dynasty. But the stratigraphy of Kotilingala excavation establishes the fact that there was definitely a king Satavahana prior to Satakarni I and Simuka and hence he should be the founder of the

Satavahana dynasty. This Satavahana as the evidence indicates was possibly a general under Samagopa the local ruler at Kontilingala from whom he appears to have acquired the throne either forcefully or peacefully at an opportune time.<sup>17</sup> The Satavahanas also known as Andhra-Bhrityas in view of the fact that Satavahana the founder of the family was in the service of Samagopa.

V.V. Krishna Sastry opines that the Peddapalli region is marked by a number of early historical sites almost in every alternate village. It is likely that the political nucleus of the whole or the part of Deccan might have been situated in this region, with Kotilingala as its centre; secondly the population during the Satavahana period must have increased manifold; thirdly it might be a commercially important region traversed by ancient trade routes; and lastly agriculture being the main occupation, they found the black soil plain congenial.<sup>18</sup>

The mounds with early historical pottery such as red polished, black and red, coarse red and large number of brick bats are noticed at Chinnabankur, Vemnur, Kachapur, Bodagutta near Kannala, Bompalli, Rachapalli, Paidichintalapalli, Khadeem, Kanagarthy and several other places in Peddapalli district. Most of the towns and villages were raised in the middle of arable lands. Peddabankur was a Satavahana village, while Dhulikatta (Peddapalli district) and Kotilingala (Jagitial) were walled towns of Andhras.

The early historical mound with a height of about 6 meters above the plains is roughly 50 hectares in extent. It is the biggest mound so far discovered. As at Dhulikatta (Peddapalli district) the mound at Kotilingala is also encompassed by a mud fort with several gates opening towards the cardinal points. Adjacent to the bank of Godavari the fort wall runs to a distance of more than 300 meters. The bricks used for the structures measured 50 to 55 cms. long most of which were ransacked by the villagers. In fact the entire village is now found built with early historical

bricks. Towards the north of the fort and adjacent to the water course of the river, the brick structures squares and rectangular in plan noticed here indicate the presence of a wharf, which is reminiscent of a once commercially and politically important town.<sup>19</sup>

On the way to Munulagutta from Kotilingala a few label inscriptions in Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. were noticed by P.V. Parabrahma Sastry. The sand stone pillar lying in the fields contains a label inscription, which reads “*Nagagopinikaya*” in bold double-lined ornamental characters of first century A.D.

The mud fort at Kotilingala was strong and safe because it was enclosed by the river Godavari on the north and Kapparraopet vagu flowing on the east and south. The fortifications are found ruined due to flooding and erosion. The bastions now appearing like high mounds are noticed at all the corners of the fortification. In view of the historical finds, it can be inferred that the site was once a stronghold of early Satavahanas.<sup>20</sup>

In fact the early historical site of Kotilingala needed large scale excavations, but that could not be done to paucity of funds and scarcity of staff. If the excavation work taken up here more than two decades ago had continued further, many more priceless historical finds and facts would have come to light changing the entire early history of Andhradesa. But unfortunately today the chances for further excavations are in doldrums as the site is likely to get submerged in the waters of the newly proposed Sripadasagar project coming up on river Godavari near Yellampalli village.<sup>21</sup>

The coins of *Samagopa* and *Gobhada* recovered from the site help us to date the beginnings of the site around third-second centuries B.C. Several undeciphered label inscriptions in Brahmi characters are found on roughly hewn stone slabs lying scattered outside the fort area. They

probably belong to a *stupa* that once existed there. A brick fortification wall, a circular brick structured *stupa*, votive *stupa*, a rubble platform, a wing of monastic cells in brick, a circular well, drainage, granaries and other structures indicate the Buddhist site by the side of township. The antiquities particularly punchmarked and lead coins of the pre-Satavahana rulers and the rouletted ware indicate the flourishing state of this urban centre right from the pre-Satavahana period to the early centuries of the Christian era.<sup>6</sup> The earliest phase of Kotilingala seems to be a village level habitation. The site developed into a township probably during the pre-Satavahana period as represented by the coins of *Rano Gobadha*, *Rano Narana*, *Siri Kamavaya Siri* and *Rano Sama Gopa*.<sup>22</sup> Kotilingala transformed itself into a major urbanised town, as evidenced by the numerous habitational floors built with bricks found in the excavations<sup>8</sup>, and semi-precious, traces of gold-bead making shops and other foundries provided with the furnaces or hearths also witnessed. The occurrence of rouletted-ware plate was found, probably that might have been brought to the site by a wealthy merchant.

The site occupied an important place as administrative centre during the period of pre-Satavahanas and the early Satavahanas. It was transformed into an industrial centre as evidenced by the manufacturing hearths, furnaces with iron slag, iron ore and workshops of black-smiths. Besides, it was also a commercial and trading centre having connection with inland and foreign lands in the Roman world and gained prosperity.

### **3. Stambhampalli (Jagtial District):**

This site is situated (Latitude 18°51'8 North; Longitude 79°9'3 East) on the outskirts of Stambhampalli village and at the confluence of a local stream Munneru with the river Godavari in Dharmapuri mandal of Jagtial district and at a distance of two kilometers from Kotilingala situated on the banks of the river Godavari. There is a big stone pillar in red sand stone located in the village which is close to the Buddhist site.<sup>23</sup>

There is a brick built *stupa* attached with a four winged vihara with 12 cells, each of which measures 18' x 13' feet and another votive *stupa* having svastika design at its top built with brick and plaster is very interesting.

#### **4. Pashigaon (Jagtial District):**

Another site with Buddhist remains is located (Latitude 18°.51.8 North; Longitude 79°.9'.3 East) on a hillock near Pashigaon village which is situated in Dharmapuri mandal of Jagtial district. There is a small hillock of 200 feet high on the right side of the national highway between Karimnagar and Adilabad. On the top of the hill there are the traces of Buddhist settlements.<sup>24</sup>

The site situated about 3kms. Away from Godavari lies on the right side of the P.W.D. Road leading from Jagtial to Lakshettipet. The glittering casing slabs on the hillock ever attracted the attention of the passengers travelling by bus from a long distance. It contained only six Ayaka standing erect one beside the other, while one of the slabs was found broken into pieces. But unfortunately this *stupa* is no more extant now, as it was ruined in December 1999. However the remnants of the *stupa* are shifted to Karimnagar, where they are given the shape of a mini *stupa*, which is erected in the back-yard of the local Archaeological Museum. The slabs of this *stupa* contain the designs of pilasters, vases and full blown lotuses.<sup>25</sup>

Pashigoan, where once the *stupa* stood before is a Satavahana site as evidenced by the visible layers of a big hall built with Satavahana bricks to the south of the *stupa*. This hall rectangular in shape might be a monastery intended for the monks. Generally the dwelling houses of the monks from an important adjunct of Buddhist establishment.<sup>26</sup>

There are three structures, a circular brick Chaitya-griha with a votive *stupa* of lime stone inside (now the outer Chaitya hall is lost), an

apsidal Chaityagriha, and a Circular *stupa*. The circular votive Chaitya-griha contain six white limestone plain slabs each with pilaster carved on one side and all arranged in a circular fashion. The pilasters on the slabs are carved in low relief with animal motifs like lion, horse, elephant and bull. The lime plastered flooring on the brick platform around the Chaitya contain a few swastika design inlayed with shells. There are three platforms, one is around a Chaitya-griha and the second one is in front of a vihara attached to the maha *stupa*, and the third around the apsidal Chaitya-griha.

### **5. The *Stupa* at Mirzampet in Peddapalli District:**

An early historical mound is noticed at Pochampalli, hamlet of Mirzampet in Srirampur Mandal of Peddapalli district. The site, lying beside the river Maner, is about 36 kms. to the east of Paddapalli. When the villager Anumandla Venkataiah started digging the construction of a well near his house, a small Buddhist stupas built in stone was unearthed in 1994.<sup>27</sup> It is astonishing that the relics of Buddha, which were not found in the *stupas* at Dulikatta and Pashigoan, are stated to have been noticed here in a casket as revealed by the native of this place Late M. Lakshminarayana, who was then working as a Technical Assistant and Guide Lecturer at Karimnagar Museum. It is interesting that this hamlet Pochampalli lies just beside Gumpula village, where a megalithic site containing about 50 burials is found.

### **6. Peddabankur (Peddapalli District):**

Peddabankur, a kilometre away from a rivulet called Hussaini vagu is a small village in Peddapalli mandal of Peddapalli district situated adjacent to Karimnagar-Peddapalli P.W.D. Road. Jasper, chalcedony, crystal and quartz stones available here were useful for making stone tools and ornaments. The excavations conducted here revealed many



brick structures, cisterns, wells and elliptical rubble structures besides pottery, iron, copper and terracotta objects including a big collection of Silver Punch-Marked, Roman and Satavahana coins. This village had no walls around. Two brick structures measuring 30x40 meters. And the third one 16.80 x 15.80 meters were exposed during the excavation. Wealthy individual families evidently occupied these. Inside these enclosures traces of houses, wells, cisterns etc came to light. The entrances were 3 meters. Broad for vehicular traffic. Some enclosures have even two or three wells, most of which were near to the walls. The used waters of the well were let out to soak pits lined with terracotta rings.<sup>28</sup>

The site excavated or explored in the district gave evidence of the temples of Brahmanical origin. A single brick cell, excavated at Peddabankur in Peddapalli district appeared like a temple without giving us any knowledge as to what deity it was dedicated to. The brick temple measured 5.30 x 4.90 meters. The evidence is, however, not clear in the absence of a deity. The religious beliefs may still have centered round the local primitive forms of worship and rituals. They early inhabitants be lived in village gods and goddesses, tree and serpent cults and probably practiced the worship of spirits. The worship of serpent (Naga cult) is attested by a figure of a snake made of iron from Peddabankur.<sup>29</sup> A Terracotta sealing of Gajalakshmi datable to around 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. is noticed in the excavations at Peddabankur. The goddess is shown standing naked in a lotus poll and being bathed by two elephants with pails in the trunks.<sup>30</sup>

The excavations have yielded several archaic terracotta female figurines of Mother Goddess. A nude goddess sitting with legs apart represents the cult of Mother Goddess of great antiquity. Such figurines are reported from Yeleshvaram, Nagarjunakonda and Kondapur. It had great popularity among the urban as well rural populace.<sup>31</sup>

The archaic Mother Goddesses of Peddabankur are handmade with protruded and pointed breasts and the hands depicted like pointed masses. One figurine is shown with out-stretched and arms lifted. The second type hold a bunch of fruits in her right hand and a parrot perching on her left arm is shown nudging the breast of Goddess with its beak. In the third type the Goddess holds her prominent breasts with her hands from below.<sup>32</sup>

### **7. Nelakondapalli (Khammam District):**

Nelakondapalli is one of the major and important Buddhist sites in Telugu country. This site is situated (Latitude 17°.6' North: Longitude 80°.3' East) in between Nelakondapalli and Mujjugudem the adjacent villages in Khammam district of Telangana. Approached via Kodada from the main Vijayawada - Hyderabad high-way at a distance of 25 miles there is another Buddhist Kshetra at Jaggayyapeta. This site open a new important chapter in the cultural history of Andhras in general and in the history of Buddhist art and architecture in particular. Recently, one big brick built *mahastupa* was brought to light. This site reveals the cultural history of many ages and dynasties starting from prehistory to early and medieval periods. It throws light on the history of Satavahanas, Ikshvakus, Vishnukundins, Chalukyas, Kakatiyas etc. The coins of Satavahanas, Ikshvakus, and Vishnukundins, vases and pots of various sizes carved with beautiful creepers, leaves, flowers and inscribed potsherds having labels inscriptions i.e., 'Sramana' and 'Santamula' are also discovered.<sup>22</sup> The important major Buddhist antiquities at Nelakondapalli are a wheel-planned *stupa* and two *viharas* with four winged cells. Other important Buddhist remains are a votive *stupa* (model *Stupa*), one Buddha's throne, few Triratna symbols and sculptures of animals. A beautiful Panchaloha metal image of standing Buddha is added to these rich findings of Nelakondapalli Buddhist site.<sup>33</sup>

## **8. Mudigonda (Khammam District):**

There is another Buddhist site at the outskirts of Mudigonda village which is also the head quarters of a Mandal in Khammam district. It is situated (Latitude 17°.10'.6 North, Longitude 80°.6' East) ten kilometres away from Khammam town. Police department preserved six important Buddhist sculptures, depicting events from the life of Buddha.<sup>34</sup> They belonged to the third century A.D.

## **9. Karukonda (Bhadradi Kothagudem District):**

Karukonda is situated (Latitude 17°.31' North: Longitude 80°.37' East) at the five km. distance from Kothagudem Railway Station in Bhadradi Kothagudem district. At the foot of the Karukonda hill, there are two monolithic *stupas* carved with Buddha sculptures in the niches at four cardinal sides. There are two rock-cut shrines on the hillock in which a figure of Buddha carved along with a Chauri-bearers. This was a centre of Mahayana school of Buddhism and flourished during the period of post-Ikshvakus and Vishnukundin times.<sup>35</sup>

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## CHAPTER V

### BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE OF NORTHERN TELANGANA

#### I. STUPA:

The *Stupa* is the most important edifice in the Buddhist Architecture. The purpose of erecting the *stupa* was purely religious and it was the monument of worship to the Buddhist acharyas, monks and devotees sanctifying it in many cases with the relics or the objects associated with the lord kept inside the edifice. In some cases the relics of the Buddhist acharyas or senior monks were also enshrined. The word '*Stupa*' is derived from 'Thupa' in Pali which means a heap of mound in round shape.<sup>1</sup> The womb of the relic originally was a tomb (sepulchrel) in nature as they contained ashes or relics or remains of the deceased. It was funerary custom. Practice of raising mounds over the corporal remains of great person like monarchs<sup>2</sup> existed since the Vedic<sup>3</sup> and pre-Buddhist times. But gradually it developed in the hands of the Buddhists as an object of veneration, worship and an architectural entity. *Stupa* occupied a prominent place in the Buddhist architecture.

The earliest *stupas* were low, circular, built of brick and plaster. Such mounds are like those at Amaravati, Vaddamanu, Bhattiprolu.<sup>4</sup> Dhulikatta and Pashigaon *stupas* are also taken to be the earliest *stupas* in Telangana which are with low hemispherical dome with large base. The later *stupas* were raised very high almost proportionately to the width of the drum i.e., diameter as seen in later *stupas* such as at Nelakondapalli. For the first time the word '*stupa*' referred in Tummalagudem second copper plate charter, issued by Vishnukundin King Vikramendra Bhattaraka varma.<sup>5</sup>

## 1. Architectural Parts of a *Stupa*:

The shape of *stupa* is a hemispherical and it consists of the following parts:

1. *Vedika* (the platform).
2. *Medhi* (the cylindrical *drum*), with circular strong base.
3. Between the drum and railings space is provided for circumambulation (*Pradakshinapatha*) which usually terminates with balustrade in which four gateways at four cardinal directions are provided.
4. The base supports a hemispherical *dome* (*Anda*).
5. The *Anda* (dome) is surmounted by a square railing called *harmika*, from the middle of which shoots up a pedestal crowned by an umbrella. At Dhulikatta an umbrella which probably surmounted the *stupa* has been unearthed. Sculptural replicas of the *stupa* on drum slabs attest the existence of such an umbrella over the *stupa*. The *harmika* in the centre is an important part of the *stupa* which enshrined the reliquary (relic casket). Sometimes an indefinite number of umbrellas represented on the *harmika* indicate the importance of the *stupa*.

The interior of the *stupa* is of compact earth and pebbles filled and enclosed by a mantle of brick. In course of time the exterior surface of the *stupa* is provided (fixed) with lavishly carved and decorated limestone slabs. The life scenes (story) of Buddha or Jataka are exquisitely carved. The sculptures are more attractive and appealing to the devotees.

## **2. Classification of Stupas:**

*Mahaparinirvana Sutta* mentions about ten types of *stupas*. But at present the Buddhist *stupas* may be classified into four broad categories namely, *Sariraka*, *Paribhogika*, *Uddesika* and *Votive Stupas*. The *stupas* which enshrine the bodily relics of the great persons are the *Sariraka stupas*. The *stupas* of Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Ghantasala, Bhavikonda and the *Mahastupa* at Nagaijunakonda belong to this first category as they yielded relics of Buddha. The *Paribhogika stupas* are those which contain objects believed to have been used by the Buddha, like begging bowl, robe etc. The pot in which the Mallas kept the relics of Buddha was taken by Drona, who constructed a *stupa* on it. So far no *paribhogika stupa* could be identified in Andhra. *Uddesika stupas* are related with life and previous life events of Buddha. *Votive stupas* are small sized structures and constructed by devotees.

## **3. Symbolism of Stupa:**

Originally *stupa* was a simple relic mound and in later course it became a sacred place of worship for the Buddhists and was identified with *Dhamma*, *Buddha*, *Sangha* and even the entire *universe*. The four *Toranas* or *Gateways* provided to the outer balustrade indicates four roads which signify the invitation to people from the four quarters of the world to follow his teachings. *Pradakshinapatha* is meant for religious practice of the Buddhists, which indicate the respect for the sacred object. The *parasol* on the top of the *stupa* is an emblem of royalty and also denotes both sovereignty and also the sacred pipal (Bodhi) tree. The parasol is surrounded by *harmika* or railing and both together call to our mind the *Vriksa Chaitya* of olden days.

The word *harmika* is derived from *harmya* which means cool or shade giving place. It is a centre of the *stupa*. *Harmika* and *parasols* cover the chamber containing the sacred relics. Thus the parasol



symbolises *Bodhivriksha* and *Enlightenment*. Buddha represented through the symbol of *Bodhi* tree in the early phase of Buddhist sculptures, appears on Dhulikatta *stupa* slabs.

In *Medhi* (drum) which is generally circular, a wheel has been incorporated with radiating spokes from the central hub. *Stupas* were constructed with spoked wheels in imitation of *Dharmachakra* which is also a symbol of universal spiritual sovereignty. The wheel stands for the First sermon or *Dharmachakra-Pravarthana*, Buddha is also represented by the wheel on a pillar on the slab of Dhulikatta *stupa*. The three major parts of *stupa* are drum (*mehdi*), dome (*anda*) and *harmika*. They also stand for *Triratnas* of Buddhism i.e., Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. In this way, the architectural parts of *stupa* symbolised the Buddha himself. The casing of the *Stupa* dome acts as the container of relics and symbolically represent *Purnakumbha* or *vase* or *purnaghata* and it also symbolises the personality of a Buddha, who is manifested with full of dharma purity and saint.

#### **4. Special Features of Stupas in Telugu Country:**

In Telugu country, Buddhists are believed to have developed the *stupas* in wheel (*dharmachakra*) and *svastika* forms which is considered as a typical feature of Andhra *stupa* architecture. The pattern of Buddhist *stupas* of Telangana region is also similar to the *stupas* of Telugu country. However, some *stupas* are quite distinctive with certain variations in plan and conception as witnessed at Dhulikatta and Gajulabanda, where the earlier phase of *stupas* have comparatively solid drum constructed on square platform and small sized dome and devoid of *ayaka vedikas*. But in the later phase of the *stupa* at Dhulikatta was added with *ayaka* platforms in the four cardinal directions. Some *stupas* were also built on *svastika* ground plan at Sthambhampalli, Peddaganjam and three *stupas* at Nagaijunakonda.<sup>6</sup> Introduction of *swastikas* in the centre of base of the *stupa* in some cases supports the

view that the Buddhists of Nagarjunakona, Sthambhampalli and Peddaganjam were anxious to create harmonious blend of religious concepts with the architecture requirements of their buildings. Svastika was symbol indicates pradakshinapatha terminated by four principal gates, Swastika was arranged in the centre of the *stupa* with bricks, below the foundations, being the base of the *stupa*, Svastika not visible from outside. Since such arrangements can not have any architectural significance, it was definitely done on ideological considerations. At Kotilingala in the northern Telangana region many coins were found with svastika and spoked wheel symbols.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent characteristic features such as the wheel plan **ayaka vedikas** in all the four cardinal directions each supporting a group of five long free standing pillars are witnessed at Amaravati,<sup>8</sup> Bhattiprolu.<sup>9</sup> Nagarjunakonda<sup>10</sup> and Nelakondapalli.<sup>11</sup>

The wheel shaped *stupas* have been exposed at Piprahwa,<sup>12</sup> Dharmarajika *stupa*<sup>13</sup> at Taxila, Mathura,<sup>1</sup> Sirikap,<sup>15</sup> Shah-Ji-Dher<sup>16</sup> and *Peshawar*. However, as wheel shaped *stupas* are rare in the north and very common feature in Andhra Pradesh, it is regarded as the characteristic feature of the *stupas* of Telugu country. The wheel shaped plan was followed to give structural stability to the *stupa*, to save the material and to introduce the *sacred wheel*, suggests the dharmachakra itself the great *symbol of Buddha and Dhamma*. It was a plan of combining material innovations and ideological concepts. It is definitely an advanced type of *stupa* architecture combining ideological significance with technical advantage. The number of spokes may also suggests Buddhist principles i.e., four spokes stand for four noble truths or four *vaisaradyas*, six spokes stand for *sat paramitas*, eight for *astangamarga* and ten for *dasabalas*. Another special feature of the *stupas* of Telugu country is *ayaka veaikas* and the *ayaka pillars (Khambhas)* at the four cardinal points of the *stupas*, projecting from medhi. During the early stages, the *stupas* had no ayaka platforms and pillars. The ayaka vedikas

were meant to receive flowers, garlands and lamps offered by the devotees.<sup>17</sup> On each ayaka platform there are a row of five ayaka pillars with a height of three to nine meters with square bases and octagonal shafts. The tops are found with bas-reliefs crowned with triratna, miniature *stupa*, pumaghata and Dharmachakra. The five pillars were dedicated to Buddha, represent the five great events in the life of the Buddha:

1. *Nativity* at Lumbini.
2. *Mahabhiniskramana* (Great Renunciation) at Kapilavastu.
3. *Sambodhi* at Gaya.
4. *Dharmachakrapravartana* (the turning of the wheel of Dharma) at Saranath.
5. *Mahaparinirvana* at Kusinagara.

These five great events in the life of Buddha were favourite subjects of the Andhra sculptures. These events of Buddha are carved on lime stone slabs discovered at Dhulikatta and Mudigonda in Northern Telangana region.

The erection of pillars at holy places was a practice of Buddhists to mark the sacred spots. One big square based and octagonal pillar near Sthambhampalli (Peddapalli district) Buddhist *stupa* seems to have been created by Buddhists. In Telugu country no toranas (gateways) have been discovered but gateways appeared in a replica of Amaravati. In Telangana both the structural and rock-cut *stupas* are witnessed.

### **1. Stupa at Dhulikatta (Peddapalli District):**

Dhulikatta is presently a small village in the Peddapalli district of Northern Telangana. The village situated on the right bank of Hussainivagu, is at about 10 km. towards west of Peddabankur another historical site. Here a treasure of more than 2000 Satavahana coins,

panch-marked, Roman Silver coins and number of brick structures belonged to both Mauryan and Satavahana periods are recovered. The Department of Archaeology and Museums of the state government of Andhra Pradesh conducted large scale excavations under the supervision of Dr. V.V. Krishna Sastiy.<sup>18</sup> The name of Dhulikatta is probably a corrupt form of 'Dhulikota' which literally means a mud fort. Dhulikatta might have been included in the thirty towns of the Andhras mentioned by Megasthenese. There is a historical site extending over 18 hectares of land and 6 meters above the plains enclosed by mud-ramparts and outside of the fort there are deep trenches.

The *stupa* of Dhulikatta is not only situated ideally at the confluence of the Hussainivagu and a nullah coming down from the north but also it located on ancient highway trade route. It is one kilometer away from the walled town of the Satavahana period. On the basis of available inscriptional evidences the beginning of Buddhist *stupa* is datable to second century B.C. However, the site shows as it emerged quite an early beginning of Buddhism in Telangana and its antiquity may be assigned to the pre-Satavahana period.<sup>19</sup>

Excavations revealed regarding the two phases of structure of the *stupa*. The *stupa* has a rubble basement. Originally a solid drum was constructed on a square platform served as a *pradakshinapatha* as like as in the case of Bhattiprolu *stupa*. The *stupa* had a plain *drum*, *dome* with *harmika* and surmounted by *chatravali*. In the construction mud was used as mortar, but the outer surface of the *stupa* was plastered with lime. The gaps inside the drum are filled with the brick bats. The lowest brick course of the *drum* (*medhi*) slightly projects outwards. It is two meters in height above the ground level. The *dome* portion was renovated several times to increase its height and to give it a hemispherical shape.<sup>20</sup>

The second layer of the dome was preceded by 36 cm thickness of

morrum. It rises to a height of 5 meters above the drum. The dome is crowned by a square brick cell which served as *Harmika*. Fragments of *Chatra* carved with lime stone have been recovered by the side of the *stupa*.<sup>21</sup> The *Chatra* is ribbed inside with a square hole in the centre. During the second phase of constructional activity, the drum was enlarged which is 36 meters in diameter. It is built with bricks entirely. The drum stood 2 meters high and three feet away from the outer rim the dome rises. Alternate layers of bricks and red morrum are noticed in the core of the dome. Four ayaka platforms were added on the four cardinal directions. The drum of the *stupa* was decorated with lime plaster. No images of the Buddha have been recovered from this site. Buddha was represented with symbols like *foot prints*, (*padukas*) *stupa*, *fire-pillar* and *dharmachakra*. It may be assumed that this kshetra was not influenced by Mahayana school of Buddhism. The Buddhists appear to have remained orthodox up to the end, hence the *stupa* may be ascribed to the Hinayana school.<sup>22</sup> But it seems that there was a possibility of the influence of *Chaityakas* when the ayaka platforms were added in the four cardinal directions of the *stupa*.

## **2. Stupa at Pashigaon (Jagtial District):**

The main *stupa* was built on a brick platform situated on the hillock at Pashigaon. Its rim part was built with burnt bricks. Its drum inside is filled with brick bats and mud. A few monastic cells associated with the *stupa* indicate the existence of a three winged monastery. The beginning of the *Stupa* must have taken place during the pre-Satavahana or early Satavahana period. This Buddhist *stupa* might have been built along with the intensive building activity of Buddhist took place at Dhulikatta, Kotilingala and Sthambhampalli Buddhist sites and these are located very close to this site. Here on the hillock many Buddhist vestiges are encountered together with a circular *stupa*, the remains of a Vihara, a circular Chaityagriha and an apsidal Chaityagriha.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Stupa at Kotilingala (Jagtial District):**

Excavations were carried out at Kotilingala during the 1978-80 and 1983-84 by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, State Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad. Here few brick built *Stupas* and a pillard mandapa are noticed. A few encased limestone slabs of the *stupa* are found scattered at the site and also in the village of Kotilingala which is very close within 2 km. to the *stupa*.<sup>24</sup> Bricks used in the construction of the *stupa* measure 28 cm. x 20 cm. x 6 cm. each. Due to its ruined condition the clear picture of the Buddhist site could not be made out. Many circular brick structures were brought to light which probably belonged to a *stupa* complex. Their circular form indicate their votive nature of the *stupas* as noticed in Salihundam site.<sup>25</sup>

### **4. Stupa at Sthambhampalli (Jagtial District):**

A circular based brick built Buddhist *stupa* is situated in between the villages Sthambhampalli and Pashigaon. The architects of the *stupa* took special care in providing a strong foundation of brick and stones for the protection of the *stupa* from inundation during flood season. The platform is raised up to 8 feet height on the surface of the earth. It is a circular *stupa* with hemispherical '*anda*' over which a '*svastika*' was formed with bricks in the place of '*centre of the stupa*'. This type of *stupas* may can be seen at Nagarjunakonda in site No. 20, where the superstructure is not available but the *svastika* is noticed in the ground plan at the centre.

There is a free standing monolithic pillar of red stone in the middle of the village and probably the village derived its name after this pillar as Kambhampalli or Sthambhampalli. The pillar is having square base and octagonal shaft about 6 meters total height resembling an *ayaka* pillar. It is to be taken as an *ayaka* pillar at *stupa* sites and the other remains of the *stupa* might have been buried under the ground and occupied by the

present hutments of the village. About 120 cm height of the lower portion of the pillar is square in section with 60 cm width, upper portion of the pillar is more than 4.5 meters having octagonal shape and its top portion is broken.

##### **5. Mahastupa at Nelakondapalli (Khammam District):**

A mound concealing a Buddhist *stupa* popularly known as *Virataraj Gadda* or *Erradibba* is situated 2 km. north-east of Nelakondapalli. It was excavated by the state Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>26</sup> It is located at the background of a large tank (Bala Samudram) formed by confluence of two streams. The *stupa* was constructed with burnt and unburnt bricks on the surface of the earth. It is one of the big *stupas* of South India. The diameter of the *stupa* is 57.2 meters and its present existing height is about 19 meters. But its total height might be estimated as 33.3 meters. The *anda* (drum) measuring 5.60 meters height was constructed with bricks. The *stupa* was surrounded by an enclosure wall. It has hemispherical dome. No *ayaka* pillars of *mahastupa* are found. But there are *ayaka* platforms at the four cardinal points of the *stupa*. Lime stone members of the *stupa* seem to have been pillaged by the later people when the *stupa* was in ruins as a few are found away from the site.

The *stupa* seems to have been constructed with five tiers and 24 spokes with the support of rectangular socket cells. *Adhithana* (Vedika or Medhi), *Pradakshina patha*, *Dome*, *Drum* are also seen. *Ayaka* pillars are not found at the *stupa* but one pillar is seen at Muthyalammagudi (temple of the village Goddess) at Mujjugudem village. Probably, it might have been an *ayaka pillar* of the *stupa*. The *ayaka platforms* and the plan of the *stupa* is in *Dharma Chakra* (Wheel) type which is the one of the special features of *stupas* in Andhra i.e., Amaravati Nagaijunakonda and others.

The outer face of the dome wall, the abutting drum wall, ayaka-platforms, stair case with side landing platforms, pradakshinapatha and gateway bases have been clearly exposed.

About 1.40 meters away from the circular end of the and an enclosure wall with a thickness of nearly 1.50 meters was noticed. At a depth of nearly 5.50 meters a fine brick flooring was noticed connecting both the structures.

In these structures bricks measuring 18" x 19" x 2.5" sized were used in the walls and there are regular steps in different stages, buttressing the enclosure wall leading to the foot of the *Mahastupa* mound.<sup>27</sup>

The *stupa* seems to have undergone two phases of construction. In the earliest phase this was in smaller dimensions. In the later phase this was enlarged together with all its components in the present size. This is also confirmed by the two different sizes of the bricks used (18 x 19 x 2.5 cms) and small size in different phases. Hence this *stupa* indicates two phases of construction and finally completed during the second phase i.e., Ikshvaku period.<sup>28</sup>

The Andhra Buddhists are believed to have developed what is called a typical *Andhra stupa* architecture. The most 'prominent characteristics of the architecture of Nelakondapally *stupa* is the *wheel-shaped* and the presence of *ayaka vedikas* in all the four cardinal directions, each supporting a group of five long free standing pillars. This *stupa* is wheel shaped and it is one of the largest of all *stupas* in south India. It is a *stupa* in complete shape with all its components and well preserved with all features which are common to the *stupa* architecture of Telugu country.

The *stupa* which was brought to light is one of the big and ground based with five tiered (wheeled) pattern and spoked *stupa* with the



provision of *ayaka platforms* and encircled by a *Pradakshinapatha*. The outer tier which is extent to a height of about 6.80 meters, contain as many as 80 courses of well burnt bricks. The *hub* is encircled by concentric tiers inter-connected by spokes between each of the tiers running concurrently right from their foundations. When compared in terms of diameter and the height this *stupa* appears to be much bigger than any other similar type *stupas* found in Telugu country.

The *wheel shaped* plan was followed probably to give a structural stability to the *stupa* and to save the material and to introduce the sacred wheel which is one of the great symbols of *Buddhist Dhamma*. Thus the plan is a combination of material innovations and technical advancement with an ideological concepts. This plan further facilitated the architects to execute large and stable *stupas* which could survive for centuries.<sup>29</sup>

The *stupa* appears with all its complete components like *Adhithana* (Vedika), *Pradakshinapatha*, *Drum*, *Dome*, *Ayaka platforms* and connected with *stair cases*. The *stupa* with its circular hub includes five radiating and tapering tiers in brick. Each tier is separated with a gap filled by earth and connected with running spokes appears like a brick wall.<sup>30</sup> This *stupa* has different tiers and connecting spokes from hub upto *Pradakshinapatha*. Five wedge shaped hollows in between circular tiers and each tier connected by transverse walls have come to light. The compartments in between the above tiers are filled with red-soil and paved with pinkish red-bricks on the surface. The entire arrangement resembles a wheel or *Dharmachakra* with a central hub. The arrangements of tiers and spokes appear to have synchronised with religious sentiment. A close examination of the tier system suggest that the fifth tier formed as the *dome* of *stupa*. In view of the low height maintained, the 6<sup>th</sup> circular base appears to have served as the *drum* of the *stupa*. The central hub was a solid brick structure. It is cylindrical in shape with circular cross sections right from the bottom. The lower

courses of brick are illfired and tally with the brick used in the construction of the *stupa*, where as the levels of the hub were raised with well fired brick. The same well burnt brick was used for filling the hallow portions of the *stupa*. The *harmika* is conspicuous by its absence. In the north-eastern quadrant of the *stupa* an ayaka platform attached to the drum, is noticed, besides a staircase connecting the top of the drum and the lower *Pradakshinapatha* which is in disturbed state.

The structures exposed has the following details:

<b>Sl.No.</b>	<b>Structures Exposed</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
1.	Radius of the Mahastupa up to the drum	28 meters
2.	Radius of the Mahastupa up to the drum including two levels of Pradakshinapatha	35 meters
3.	Width of Ayaka platform	1.80 meters
4.	Length of Ayaka platform	12 meters
5.	Width of the Drum wall	1.80 meters
6.	Height of the Drum wall	1.60 meters
7.	Width of the Dome wall	2.80 meters
8.	Fifth hallow between the spoke lines	1.50 meters
9.	Fourth tier width	2.00 meters
10.	Fourth hallow between the spoke lines	1.50 meters
11.	Third hallow between spoke lines	1.00 meters
12.	Third tier with	2.00 meters

13.	Second tier width	2.50 meters
14.	Second hallow between spoke lines	1.25 meters
15.	First tier width	2.25 meters
16.	First hallow between spoke lines	1.50 meters
17.	Radius of the central hub	6.25 meters
18.	Width of the Pradakshinapatha	7.00 meters
19.	Width of the stair case	5.30 meters
20.	Length of the stair case	9.00 meters

The area around the circular drum contains brick packing width of which is 24 inches. This forms as the Pradakshinapatha. It is exposed in the eastern side measuring 24 m x 6 m x 2 m.

The bricks of different sizes were used here in the construction of the *stupa*. For example they measure 48 cm x 25 cm x 8 cm, 42 cm x 22 cm x 7 cm, 20 cm x 18 cm x 7 cm and 22 cm x 10 cm x 3 cm.

## **6. Monolithic Stupas at Karukonda (Khammam District):**

There are two big boulders at this site which were modelled into *stupas* and carved with the figures of seated Buddha in the four directions.

The boulders has been carved into the shape of a *stupa* with a six inches carved border which runs all round. The Buddha figure is to be seen in full relief, seated on a lotus seat and in dhyanamudra. Lord Buddha was considered by the devotees as the supreme god and father of the world as similar to Brahma.<sup>31</sup> From the small patches of paint on the images it appears that these figures were painted in the pristine days.

To the south-west of the first boulder at a distance of about 13.3 meters, there is another boulder shaped like a *stupa*.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately now it is missing due to the damage caused due to quarrying. This *stupa* has got a niche only in the western side, which has been considerably *hollowed* out from inside. On the eastern side of the boulder a figure of the Eeddha has been carved in relief while on the southern side there is another boulder carved with small figure of the Buddha in relief who is being blessed by his mother Maya from heaven. The figure of this lady is atleast three times larger than that of the Buddha. The face of the lady, the portrayal of the contours of the body and the folds of the drapery are depicted with great aesthetic sense.

## **II. VIHARAS:**

The *vihara* was a place of Buddhist monastic establishment i.e., used as a residential place of the Buddhist monks with its own architectural features. The viharas were plain buildings with big central hall, small cells around it and a pillared *verandah* in front of it. The words *Vihara*, *Arama*, and *Sangharama* are generally used as synonyms. In the beginning, the disciples of Buddha used to stay in groves and gardens adjacent to towns and hence their residences were known as aramas. The Jetavanarama, Veluvanarama and Kukkutarama were famous in the north. Buddham in the Guntur district is the corrupt form of the Buddharama. A place where several monasteries were clustered together was called *Sangharama*.

### **1. Viharas of Telugu Country:**

In Telugu country, the Buddhists had *Viharas* from early times. Most of the Viharas in Telugu country were located on the banks of the rivers, on busy trade routes, not far away from *Janapadas* or centers of trade and industry. Sometimes these Viharas were named after the sects of monks used to live in or after the donors and their location. For

example *Simhala vihara*, *Pudhagiri vihard*<sup>33</sup> and *Chuladhammagiri Vihara* are named after their locations, *Govindaraja Vihara*<sup>34</sup> and *Paramabhattacharika vihara* are named after the donors.<sup>35</sup>

The Viharas in Telugu country may be classified into three types.

1. Rock-cut Viharas.
2. Viharas on hill tops.
3. Viharas on plains.

In Telugu country rock-cut viharas are found only at Guntupalli and Errupalem. At Sankaram the main vihara is partly rock-cut and partly structural. The Viharas at Salihundam, Ramatirtham, Sankaram, Bavikonda, Vaddamanu, Chandavaram are built on hill tops. The viharas in Andhra are more popular and larger in number. The important Buddhist establishments at Dhanyakataka, Bhattiprolu, Gudivada, Alluru, Ghantasala and Dhulikatta are located in plains.

Most of the Buddhist sites on plains are badly destroyed and encroached upon. After the decline of the Buddhism and the abandonment of the sites by the Buddhists some of the sites were occupied by other religions like Saivites and Jains. The materials of the buildings were robbed by vandals for their personal gains. Sometimes even the government officials utilised the materials for building roads, culverts and bridges. As a result at sites no vihara complex worth its name has come to light to give us an idea of its architecture. But there are copious literary and epigraphical references to the viharas at the places. However, the basements of Viharas discovered at the Buddhist sites on a careful study give us an idea of the vihara architecture as developed by the Buddhists in Telugu country.

## **2. Viharas in Northern Telangana Region:**

The present Telangana is economically one of the poor regions of the South but culturally it is rich as gleaned from literary evidences. However, not many excavations have been carried out to find out the Buddhist sites hence there are comparatively meager information when it compared with the other parts of Telugu country.

### **Vihara at Dhulikatta (Peddapalli District):**

The vihara at Dhulikatta belongs to the second phase of structural activity assigned to the Satavahana period.

On the north-west of the *stupa* and just two meters away there are a series of square monastic cells, each measuring 3.30 m x 3.50 m. The walls of the monastery consist of two alignments of single brick courses, laid separately with an intervening gap of 42 cm and filled in with a pack of waste brick bats and morrum, a method evidently adopted to the sparing use of bricks. The one meter width doors of the cells open into a verandah on the north, which is one and half meters width and runs along the length of the rooms. The flooring inside the verandah and rooms were paved with bricks and the roof must have been covered with tiles. At the rear of the rooms there are two or more walls of a single brick course, laid separately with a gap of 40 cm. The plan of building constituting these walls, is beyond comprehension due to the limited scope of excavations. The phase is marked by spacious halls with floors paved with bricks, massive structures, granaries and wells provided with sewage. Probably they were refectory and store rooms of the vihara.<sup>36</sup> The structures of the next phase are marked by the use of bricks of the earlier buildings and belong to late Satavahana age.

### **Vihara at Pashigaon (Jagtial District):**

Around the Buddhist buildings like Chaityagriha and *stupa* there is

a brick built vihara. Here the vihara is a four winged one. These Buddhist structures were constructed on a well packed platform around which boxed buttresses were provided for the strong foundations.

#### **Vihara at Stambhampalli (Jagtial District)::**

Around the *stupa*, there is a four winged vihara of 12 cells each of which measures 6x4 meters. The *stupa* was built with bricks in circular shape having 18 meters diameter. Here too, like in Pashigaon the method of the boxed buttress was adopted and the upper platform was raised with mud and brick bats. The extension of upper platform with cells measures 25.3 x 22.6 meters. Extending 14' wide on all the four sides of which only two adjacent sides are available which on the other two sides it was probably washed off.

#### **Vihara at Kotilingala (Jagtial District): :**

The existence of rubble platforms in the lower levels at a depth of 80 cm from surface structure measuring 1.65 m x 0.90 m with an intervening vacant space of about 50 cm wide lead us to infer that they could be the vihara cells build for monks.<sup>37</sup> Cells of similar shape and size are found in a rock shelter in Munulagutta lying to the south of the site at 5 kms distance.

A huge circular well on the south, built of similar bricks, indicates its contemporaneous to the cells.

#### **Remnants of Viharas at Nelakondapalli (Khammam District):**

200 yards away to the north of the *Mahastupa* and in the vicinity of Byragulagutta, there are a few brick foundations and brick pavements of two viharas. A four winged monastery with 73 monastic cells has also been exposed and cleared. Three wings have single rows of cells consisting of 15 each. The remaining fourth wing has double rows with 28 cells. In the same site at Garlagadda another monastery was brought

to light.

### **III. CHAITYAGRIHAS:**

The word '*Chaitya*' is derived from '*Chita*' (a Sanskrit term) which means pyre or sacred spot on the remains of Buddhist Acharyas.<sup>38</sup> It is called in Pali as '*dagoba*' (datugarbha). The term *chaityagriha* is generally applied to a shrine with chaitya or *stupa* as the article of worship or veneration. The words chaitya and *stupa* are generally used as synonyms. The *ManjusriMidukalpa* says 'Sri Dhana kataka Chaitya' where as the inscription of Nagarjunakonda *stupa* contain the term Sriparvata Mahachaitya.<sup>39</sup> But gradually the word *chaitya* came to be limited to Chaityalayas (temple or Chaitya), *Chaityagriha* (house of Chaitya) or *Grihastupa* and *Chaityavriksha*. As devotion and worship began to characterise the religious life of the Buddhists, the concept of Chaityalaya began from Ramayana and Mahabharata<sup>40</sup> period but gained importance. The Chaityalayas were built as auxiliaries to the *mahastupas*, probably for the congregational worship and prayer.

The Chaityagrihas or grihastupas may be classified into three types. 1. Apsidal, 2. Circular and 3. Quadrilateral.

#### **1. Apsidal Chaityagriha:**

The nomadic tribes like *Chenchus* and *Boyas* in Andhra are still using apsidal huts, covered by mats and supported inside by twisted bamboo rakes. One Telugu speaking aboriginal tribe in Orissa also uses similar huts to this day. Most probably this may be an evidence of the survival of the ancient building tradition with apsidal ground plan through the centuries.<sup>41</sup> The gradual development of apsidal chaityagrihas in Telugu country may be analysed with the help of the surviving examples from the sites like Guntupalli, Ramatirtham, Sankaram, Pashigaon and Nagagunakonda. There is no single example of apsidal rock-cut chaityagriha of Buddhists in Telugu country. However,



the structural examples are available, about thirteen from Nagagunakonda about six from Ramatirtham, two from Sankaram and one from Guntupalli, three Bavikonda and two Chandavaram.

## **2. Circular Chaityagriha:**

Chaityas are built in open spaces. They are intended for circumambulation and for paying homage to the *Tathagata* or some venerated teacher. As an element of devotion entered in Buddhism, they felt the need for a place of prayer and worship in a secluded and protected place. The result was the evolution of Chaityagriha, the house of a Chaitya or *Stupa* that is a temple enshrining a *stupa* as an article of worship where a group of monks could congregate and offer prayers without any disturbance. The apsidal plan is very popular in Telugu country and one interesting point is that under the influence of the Mahayanism the *apsidal - stupa chapel* has been transformed into an image shrine. A good number of such apsidal image shrines are found at Nagarjunakonda.<sup>42</sup>

## **3. Chaityagrihas in Telangana:**

1. Circular Chaityagrihas (circular shrines) came into use quite early in the history of Buddhist architecture in Telugu country.
2. Apsidal *Stupa* Chaityagrihas.

### **Chaityagriha at Pashigaon (Jagtial District):**

At Pashigaon there are two types of Chaityas namely Circular and Apsidal.

#### **1. Circular Chaityagriha:**

At Pashigaon, a circular Chaityagriha is situated on the hillock facing east. At present the circular form can be seen only at the base level. Inside Chaityagriha a limestone votive *stupa* with six white lime

stone slabs is seen arranged in a circular order. Building of circular *stupas* was an important feature of the Satavahana period.<sup>43</sup>

The diameter of votive *stupa* is 2.10 m. Each slab stands up to a height of 1.14 to 1.18 m with a thickness of 17 to 22 cm width of 1.07 meters.

#### **a. Relief Carvings on Circular Chaitya Slabs at Pashigoon:**

The exterior parts of these slabs are polished and bear sculptural designs of pilasters. The pilasters in their vertical axis consist of a *Purnakumbha* at the base surmounted by *ghata* form as capital. On the top of the abacus there are different animal motifs stood in addorsed form such as *lion*, *horse*, *elephant* and *bull*. Each slab is moulded together with carving of a pilaster from outside and they resemble to the similar designs of pilasters seen at Dhulikatta.<sup>44</sup>

#### **b. Flooring of Circular Chaityagriha:**

Around the slabs at the bottom, there is a lime flooring mixed with small rubbles. The thickness of the lime floor measures 0.5 cm. Here the shells and pearl pieces are arranged on the lime floor, in the shape of a *Svastika* which is one of the auspicious symbols of Buddhism. The lime floor was laid over the brick-paved floor. The Chaitya itself was worshiped as an article within the circular shrine.

#### **c. Brick Platform of Circular Chaityagriha:**

This entire Chaityagriha was built on a square brick platform measuring 6.6 m x 6.6 m. The diameter of the circular *stupa* is 6 m.

### **2. Apsidal Stupa-Chaityagriha:**

Towards the south of the above marble circular chaityagriha,

within a distance of 8 mts, there is a *stupa* Chaitya in a apsidal plan i.e., “U” shaped entrance in the east. Except the brick foundation on apsidal plan, nothing has survived. Its measurements are 11.65 meters length in the long east west and 5.30 m width in the south-north. The thickness of the wall is one meter. It is built with burnt brick and lime plaster. The bricks are of two kinds measuring 8" x 4" x 2 "and 6" x 4" x 2".

#### **IV. ROCK-CUT CAVE TEMPLES:**

The Buddhists introduced new architectural methods in shaping their *temples* i.e., circular, apsidal and square. These methods were experimented both in rock-cut and structural forms. The temple *devalaya* is an important item of Buddhist architecture. Its origin may be traced from the Chaityagriha. The *Chaityagriha* served the same purpose as the temple. The Buddhists adopted this later gradually more popular, for reasons not very clear. It may be surmised that the Chaityagriha being mostly a part of the vihara complex, it was mainly intended for the inmates or the Bhikkus, where as the temple was intended more for the upsakas. Further, the temple was to serve the growing requirements of complicated rituals followed by the Buddhists. The religious architecture in India evolved a large extent through Buddhism only.<sup>45</sup>

The sculptural representations of well developed temples going back to second century B.C. or atleast to the existence of shrines in Telugu country. They are from Amaravati, Jaggayyapeta, Ghantasala and Nagarjunakonda. It is not unreasonable to assume that the Buddhists had such shrines though so far not discovered by the spade of archaeologist. At Sankaram and Karukonda, there are a number of cave temples and at a few other places some other brick built temples are traced out and they are identified as shrines.

##### **1. Cave Temples at Karukonda (Khammam District):**

The monolithic rock-hewn temples emerged in western Deccan by

the Hinayana Buddhists in early days. The Mahayana Buddhists also took interest and adopted the tradition of rock-cut temples. In the gradual course, icon, statues and sculptures of Buddha introduced in the cave temples by Mahayana Buddhists. Such examples are seen at Ajanta, Ellora (in Maharashtra) and Sankaram, Guntupalli and Karukonda in Telugu country. Karukonda is the only one place where rock cut temples are traced out and probably first of its kind in Telangana region.<sup>46</sup>

#### **a. First Cave Temple:**

At a distance of about thirty five meters from the monolithic *stupas* there are two halls facing to the west which have been deeply cut into rooms. The northern cell is rectangular in plan and measures nine feet north-south and six feet east-west, the roof being enhanced about six and a half i.e., longer than floor. There are no pillars in the cells. The walls are decorated with sculptures, which have been very much damaged. The rock being hard stone, the figures are abraded (scraped away) and now we are not in a position to trace them properly. The eastern wall bears the figures of the Buddha with a chauri bearer on each side; they appear with gracious pose, ornamentation and beautiful dressing. The northern and southern sides of the cell bear the life-sized figures of *dwarapalas* carved in the conventional form. But the ravages of time and the weathering of the rock have deprived them of their original charm.

#### **b. Second Cave Temple:**

Immediately after fifteen feet to the south of the first cell there is the second cell. It is similar in plan as the first cell but have smaller dimensions, measuring six feet north-south and five feet to east to west, the height being only five and half feet. The depiction of the sculptures are also nearly the same as in the first cell.

At Karukonda, The rock was chiselled into a cell and used it a

shrine for worship by the devotees. The sculptures of Buddha with *Dhyanamudra* pose was very popular at Karukonda and Sankaram. The rock cut temple with Buddha sculptures are treated as the most reverend places of worship. The sculptures are remained as an inseparable part of rock architecture. The hard texture of the rock must certainly have necessitated the sculptures to practice the new technique of cutting the rock surface in bold relief and producing very beautiful figures and forms. The cave temples of the Gupta's, the Vakataka's and the Vishnukundin's periods are lavishly adorned with general sculptures and created a prominent place to the Buddha sculptures. By that time Lord Buddha considered as the Supreme God and included as one of the *dasavatara* of Vishnu.

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## **CHAPTER-VI**

### **BUDDHIST ART OF NORTHERN TELANGANA**

The artists of Telugu country in Pre-Christian period followed the Bharhut art tradition in depicting the Buddhist art in the form of symbols. But after 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. with the emergence of Mahayanism Buddha was represented in an anthropomorphic form and even symbols continued simultaneously. The life story and message of Buddha was focused through the sculptures and paintings.

#### **I. REPRESENTATION OF BUDDHA THROUGH SYMBOLS**

In the early phase of Buddhism, Buddha's presence was indicated by symbols which narrate the incidents connected with the life of Buddha. Buddha was represented in symbolic form like Lotus, Feet, Throne, Pillar, Horse with *Chatra* and *Chamara*, Wheel (*JDharmachakra*), *Bodhi Tree*, *Stupa*, *Triratna*, *Srivatsa*, *Svastika*, etc.

##### **1. Umbrella at Dhulikatta Stupa:**

'*Mahabiniskramana*' scene is represented by Horse with Parasol (Umbrella) and Chamara on its back. This scene is also depicted at Amaravati. It represents the act of renunciation by the prince Siddhartha, as he is said to have departed from his palace on the horse back. While on its return the horse is shown without the royal paraphernalia indicating that Siddhartha was left alone as an ordinary mendicant in the forest. The caparisoned horse, Chatra and Chamara symbolically indicate the 'great departure' (renunciation) of prince Siddhartha from Kapilavastu to the forests. The umbrella par-excellence the white one was held over the king in whose presence no one else dared to hold parasol. They were thus signs of royalty and they denote the rank of the possessor. The fly-whisks were always used, whether the king was within the palace or riding out. The umbrella has also its religious significance when used in the performance of Vajapaya sacrifices,

presented by the king himself. Umbrella has always been held over deities in procession and placed on the tops of temples and temple cars. Kautilya says that Caityas, Vrksa Caityas or Devakulas were adorned with umbrellas on new and full moon days.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly umbrellas were placed on the top of *stupas* to honour the sacred object enshrined in them like the deity in the temple. When Buddha descended from the Trayastrimsa (Tasvimsa) heaven at Sankasya attended by Mahabrahma and Sakra, one of these deities held the parasol and the other waved the fly whisk on either side of him. In such instances the umbrella has religious significance and does represent temporal power also.

## **2. Chatras from Dhulikatta and Kotilingala Sites:**

At Dhulikatta to the north side of the *stupa* some fragments of a *Chatra* are discovered. At Kotilingala another *Chatra* fragment of two feet in diameter with a design of Padma in the middle has also been found. These *Chatras* (umbrellas) are carved with double or triple layered lime stone with a single shaft. A number of umbrellas arranged together over the *stupas* were no doubt intended to indicate the superiority of spiritual power over temporal power. These umbrellas over the *stupa* grew rapidly into an amazing number sometimes arranged one above another. *Stupas* all over the land came to be surmounted by a cone derived from umbrellas arranged in such formal style.<sup>2</sup> Festoons and garlands adorned many of the early umbrellas at Dhulikatta, which were gem decked and beautifully fashioned.

## **3. Worship of Buddha-Padas (Feet of Buddha) by Nagas at Dhulikatta:**

There are numerous sculptural slabs of Nagas worshipping Buddhapada or in the symbolic form of the feet delineated in the Buddhist sculptures of the early Andhra. Nagas played an important role in the Buddha's fold and they paid great reverence to the Master. At

Dhulikatta, there are two sculptures of Muchilinda Naga carved on limestone slabs in low relief. In the first one Muichilinda Naga, a five hooded serpent, was depicted under the shadow of Bodhi tree protecting Lord Buddha and holding parasol. Lord Buddha is represented symbolically in the form of feet (padas) placed on a foot rest. The feet under the Bodhi tree with twigs and leaves, suggest the scene of 'Enlightenment' after the great *meditation*. It was the early stage just before the *Dharma Chakra Pravartana* at Saranat at Bodhitre. Interestingly a plaque with a Naga sculpture prefaced by a huge pipal tree was found at Dhulikatta. This is identified as a scene from the story of Erapatra Naga Muchilinda. A labeled inscription found on the Naga Sculpture in early Brahmi characters is datable to second century B.C. It reads as *Gahapathino Pathalasa Mathuya Samaya Danam*.

The second sculpture at Dhulikatta represents the Buddha in the symbolic form of padas on the coils of Naga Muchilinda with a chatra and a pipal tree in low relief. Here lord Buddha is represented symbolically in the form of Buddapadas and the Lord is protected by Naga Muchilinda. Naga Muchilinda is adorned with an ornament resembling Triratna on his neck part. It also has a labeled inscription in similar characters of the second sculpture of Jaga inscribed on the upper part of the slab. It reads *Pitha Nandi Puthasa Duharthuya Ayonija Danam*.

#### **4. The Story of Erapatra Naga Muchilinda:**

At Dhulikatta another sculpture on a lime stone slab depicts the story of *Erapatra Jaga Muchilinda* which appears to have been a favourite theme of the early Andhra sculptors. According to the Buddhist literature the story is briefed in the following lines. After attaining upreme enlightenment, the Buddha spent seven weeks at Urvela near Bodhgaya. During he sixth week, there was a heavy rainfall with cold winds. Then the mighty king of serpents, *Erapatra Naga Muchilinda* came up from his underground abode and enveloped the body) of the Blessed one by

spreading its five great hoods above Lord Buddha. As a background to this the story tells that during the time of Kasyapa Buddha, this serpent king Erapatra Naga Muchilinda was condemned to lose the power of assuming him the human form until the next Buddha should appear in the world. Thus Erapatra Muchilinda Naga required to be born as a human being to work out his salvation. Accordingly, when he heard of Sakyamuni attaining Buddha-hood he came to the Buddha and by protecting him from the terrible storm for over a week, Naga earned great merit by which he regained the power of appearing in human form.

### **5. Pillar Surmounted by Dharma Chakra:**

The first sermon of Buddha indicated through a wheel placed on a pedestal or a pillar. The Master is said to have turned the 'wheel of law' (Dharma Chakra Pravartana) in the deer park (Mrugadavana).<sup>3</sup> There are numerous representations of the worship of Dharma Chakra mounted on pillars in various sizes. Three slabs at Dhulikatta are intact carved with Dharma Chakra. On a slab Dharma Chakra was depicted beautifully placed on a pillar, flanked by one couple of Naga votaries. It shows that how Lord Buddha was being adored by Naga worshipers on either side<sup>4</sup>. Buddha is represented here symbolically in the form of Dharma Chakra on a pillar carved on the slab. One of the devotees holds her hands in anjali presenting herself frontally. The other is holding a bunch of flowers.

At Dhulikatta there are two slabs of Dharma Chakras one is having 32 spokes and another is with 24 spokes radiating from a central hub. The Dharma Chakras are installed on pillars and flanked at the base and upper part by lions, the noble and powerful animals associated with Buddhism. He was called as 'Sakyasimha' indicating his dominance over all devas including Sakra and Maha Brahma, Garudas and Nagas who worship him. This wheel stands for the dynamism of Dharma. The idea of moving the wheel by Purushothama (Buddha), pre-eminent among

purushas, as the protector of the universe was held in high esteem. The concept of wheel was associated with the mightiest monarch. As symbol of the greatest of sovereignty to Cakravartin, this wheel of Chakravartin was associated with Buddha whose spiritual dominance over princes and peasants alike was symbolically represented in his turning of the wheel of law though not of sovereignty. So this Chakra was associated with the spiritual ruler of the world. It symbolically represents Buddha preaching his Dharma or Law. This symbol has been illustrated at the different sites of early Buddhist school of art. Usually wheels are placed on the 'empty throne' surrounded by worshippers, Gods, men, animal prominently two or more gazelle suggesting the place of the deer park at Varanasi.

But at Dhulikatta the Chakra is placed on a pillar by showing two lions at base and two lions at capital. The lions also indicate the dynamic energy of Buddha who moved wheel of dharma tirelessly. Sakya Simha is known to be lion of dharma running ceaselessly to uphold his Dharma.

## **6. The Miracle of Sravasti:**

At Dhulikatta some pilasters of the *stupa* drum slabs are decorated with reliefs which present few pillars depicted with flames and water. It is known as the *Sravasti miracle*. At Sravasti to convert the six brahmanical teachers, Buddha emitted simultaneously flames and water from his body. In this sculpture the miracle of Buddha is depicted in the symbolic form of a pillar generating flames and water and another symbol represented that Lord Buddha rises towards the sky. It is represented by a large horizontally placed rock (Shilapatha). This was a remarkable feature of Buddhist sculptures of the period at Dhulikatta, where and when the Buddha was still not yet depicted in anthropomorphic form. The pillar of flames and water contains a suggestion of Buddha's superiority over not only the Hindu trinity, but also over Agni and Surya (Agniskanda motif).<sup>4</sup>

## 7. The Story of Ramagrama Stupa:

At Dhulikatta one of the northern ayaka slabs contains the sculpture of the replica of typical *stupa* of Ramagrama. The depiction of the replicas of the *stupa* entwined and guarded by Nagas as at Ramagrama appears to be a favourite theme of the sculptors of Dhulikatta, Amaravati and Chandavaram. Presently the sculptures from the above places are reserved in the Karimnagar, Madras and Hyderabad archaeological museums, respectively, the *stupa* is encircled by Nagas each have three hoods. This is obviously appears that the agas zealously guarding the Ramagrama *stupa*. After the funeral ceremony of Buddha, his lics were divided by a Brahamana Dona into eight portions among the eight claimants, ley were Ajatasattu of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vaisali, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, the llis of Allakappa,<sup>5</sup> the Koliyas of Ramagrama, the Mallas of Pava, and the Brahmanas of Vethadipa. Dona kept the receptacle for himself over which he built a *stupa*. The Mauryas of Pippalivana asked for a share of the remains too late and had to content themselves with the embers (ashes).<sup>6</sup> *Stupas* were raised over these as well as over each of the eight portions of the actual relics.<sup>7</sup>

The Nagas got their own share of Buddha relics from the Koliyas and their king built a *stupa* at Ramagrama. Nagas protected this from King Ashoka forever. According to the '*Divyavadana* the '*Sumangala Vilasini*' of Buddhaghosa and Fahien's records, Ashoka opened seven *stupas* and distributed the Buddha's relics among 84,000 *stupas* built by him.<sup>8</sup> He could not open the Ramagrama *stupa* as the Nagas who protected it refused permission. At last Ashoka went away without extracting the relics from the *stupa*.<sup>9</sup> This incident is depicted on a *stupa* entwined by many Nagas, each having three hoods<sup>10</sup> and even five hoods.<sup>11</sup> Alexander Cunningham narrates a legend based on the *Manjusrimulatantra* which suggest that the relics of the Buddha enshrined in the Ramagrama *stupa* near Kapilavastu, were removed to

Dharanikota in the “Majerika” country of the Nagas. They were placed in a beautiful and costly *stupa* which was none other than that of Dhanyakataka.<sup>12</sup>

### **8. The Deification of the *Stupa* at Dhulikatta Many Slabs Carved with the *Stupa* Reliefs:**

The worship of *stupa* indicates the symbolic form of Lord Buddha . The replicas of *stupas*, consists of die parts of base, drum, railings, dome, topped with harmika surmounted by decorated by Chatras (umbrellas) one or two or three or more.

### **9. Votive *Stupa* at Nelakondapalli:**

This type of votive *stupa* is a very rare finding in the history of Buddhist Art. It was used for the purpose of worship by the householders at their residential places. It was found near Byragulagutta of Nelakondapalli site. It has been made of white lime stone. Its measurements were approximately one feet and 6 inches in height and 1 feet in diameter. It has all parts of *stupa* i.e., base, drum, dome and at the top a square harmika. This might have been a replica of Mahacaitya (Maha *Stupa*) of Nelakondapalli. A label inscription inscribed on it reads as “*Skanda Bhadrasa*”.<sup>13</sup> The votive *stupa* may be assigned to the period of first or second century A.D.

### **10. The Importance of Votive *Stupas*:**

Votive *Stupas* of various types like the small monuments encased with neatly carved marble slabs as at Amaravati in the vicinity of the great *stupa*, or miniature votive *stupas* offering like these in metal of later date found in Nagapattanam, may also be styled as Uddesika *stupas*. Such *stupas* were also greatly revered, and they served as eloquent testimony of what individual piety could achieve with only a moderate *pursue* to pay for the monument. They are mostly erected by pilgrims



when they visited the sacred centres. Such votive *stupas* of varying dates and dimensions are found in *Katmandu (Nepal)* near the Swayambhunath temple around which they cluster.<sup>14</sup>

What great respect these small 'Uddesika' and 'votive' *stupas* were shown and how they were treasured is evidenced by the attitude of a widow during the reign of king Sankaradeva (12<sup>th</sup> century) who, according to the Nepalese Chronicle 'Vamsavali', on the occasion of a fire in a village, fled to Patna, taking nothing with her except a small model of a Chaitya, a manuscript of the *Prajna Paramitq* and her little son.<sup>15</sup>

### **11. Diamond throne of Lord Buddha from Nelakondapalli:**

After six years of asceticism and penance Siddhartha sat upon the Diamond throne in meditation under the Bodhi tree at Gaya, repulsing the seductions of demons (Maras) and finally attained enlightenment i.e., supreme knowledge and insight. Later Siddhartha was called as Buddha. This is the important life event of Buddha and termed as the stage of *Sambodhi*. Buddha is represented in a symbolic form of throne.

This throne represents of Lord Buddha is a very rare and significant find of Nelakondapalli Buddhist site, which was carved out of sand stone. This throne has four legs and beneath it there was a Sirivaccha (Srivatsa) symbol along with gem Kausthubha. It is flanked by lotus buds ready to bloom. Its dimensions are one feet 6 inches height and 1 feet width approximately. It was an important object of worship for Buddhist devotees. The sooth sayers (astrologers) as is well known that they predicted two things for Siddhartha supreme sovereignty if he were a householder and Buddghahood if he became a monk. The thought of his sovereignty was always present in the minds of his followers who gave Buddha all marks of a sovereign including *wheel, throne* and *umbrella*.<sup>16</sup>

The *lion-throne* is one of the very ancient symbols. On this king's seat Buddha is often seen in the sculptures. The empty throne is the

symbolic representation of Buddha himself. It is commonly associated with the *padapitha* (foot-stool) and so significant in the royal court as the object to be touched by the forehead of the servants.

In Buddhist art the throne was exhibited as empty throne or lion throne (*Simhasana*). But the throne from Nelakondapalli is an extraordinary and rare example due to its sanctity. It is decorated with lotuses, creepers and *Srivatsa* crowned on Kausthubha gem, which together represent a broad religious symbolism. Lotus is the most auspicious of flowers. Lotus represents creation and it is further known for its purity and infinite bliss. The lotus creepers are beautifully carved and they are initial form of Goddesses. *Srivatsa* is a symbol of *Sri* and which is an auspicious symbol of Hindus, Jains and Buddhists alike. It is together with the gem Kausthubha arose from milky ocean. *Srivatsa* is not only one of the auspicious symbol of Buddhists but also it is the symbolic form of Buddha himself.

*Srivatsa* means derivation, that which is dear to *Sri*. She can stay in pure and pleasant spot. She is also stationed on the lotus, holds lotuses in her hand. So this throne (seat) might be a symbolic form of Buddha along with *Sri* i.e., in the Buddhist words Buddha along with '*Sirimadevata*' Triratna symbol was also indicated on throne through the three lotus petals shown on either side of the *Srivatsa* symbol.

The throne of Buddha is an oft-sculptured theme. In all sculptural scenes monks and lay disciples are shown prostrating themselves before the throne of Buddha. The throne was held in such a great reverence that every disciple and monk in a monastery was required to prepare seat for Buddha before taking a seat for himself. The seat that Buddha occupied under the tree at Bodhgaya was chosen only after great deliberations and it is even today an object of veneration. General Cunningham in describing it says that "The Vajrasana or Diamond Throne of Sakyamuni still exists under the pipal tree at Bodhgaya".<sup>17</sup>

## **II. REPRESENTATION OF BUDDHA IN ANTHROPOMORPHIC FORM**

The image of the Buddha is believed to have first appeared at Mathura, Gandhara and Amaravati. With the introduction of the Buddha image, the sculptural art underwent a great change. The different types of Buddha images with various poses were produced and installed at Buddhist centres. After the discovery of several Buddhist sites, the Telangana region also has occupied an important place in the glorious history of Buddhist Heritage and culture of Andhra Pradesh. Particularly from Khammam and Nalgonda districts of Telangana region dotted with many Buddhist antiquities which have recently come to light. They yielded many antiquities in the form of beautiful reliefs and round sculptures of Buddha and others assigned to the different periods starting from second to fifth centuries A.D. which covers the history of the Satavahanas, Ikshvakus and Vishnukundins times. In the early phase of Buddhism at Dhulikatta, we do not come across the representations of Buddha in anthropomorphic form. But in the later phase changes took place in the carvings after the second century A.D. (i.e., in a transitional phase from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism) even both the symbolic and anthropomorphic representations of Buddha appeared simultaneously. The symbolic representation of Buddha was continued as an object of worship and an act of ritual. It was treated as reverence to higher person and the next step was to substitute a sensitive portrayal of the super-human being for the severity of an obstruction and thus Buddha image was introduced in Telangana region by the Buddhist monks.

At Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda Buddha was exhibited by artists in round form and also in reliefs as the central and principal figure along with other figures. The Buddhist sculptures from Telangana region generally appeared in round form made out of various material like limestone, Khondalite stone, panchaloha metals, and also carved in low

and high reliefs. They are carved in different postures like *sthanaka* (standing), *asana* (seated) and *sayana* (recumbent or reclining). Among these postures the *sayana* posture (reclining pose) was however exclusively used to represent the *Mahaparinirvana* or the Great Decease of Lord Buddha.<sup>18</sup>

The art was intended to convey to the people regarding the Buddhist principles and main events of the life of Buddha. We find in the Telangana region numerous representations of various themes including the five important events in the life of Buddha in low reliefs and with different gestures and mudras in the form of round figures and few also appearing with frontal view.

Here, these sculptures are finely executed and representing a matured stage of a Buddhist school art. This trend of art activities indicates the expertness achieved artist. It was peak stage of Buddhist art when the artist already had some set of formulas before him. The advanced technical skill of the artists enabled them to shift even from sensuous art to an elegant (graceful) and subtle plane. The sculptures depict different human emotions like love, compassion, meditation mood, grief, piety, etc. Buddhism became the favourite religion of the common masses. Buddha became personal God and popular among all the sections of people due to the emergence of Bhakti cult Mahayana school of Buddhism. There was maximum requirement of Buddhist sculptures. The peace and prosperity of the state also encouraged the progress of Buddhist art as a hand maid of religion.

### **1. Buddha Figures from Nelakondapalli:**

During the excavations, Nelakondapalli has yielded a large number of lime stone images of Buddha. It might have been a centre or a workshop where Buddha images were produced and exported to other places.<sup>19</sup>

Nine images are collected from single spot to the site during the excavations. These nine Buddha figures are more refined and sensitive in form with a regal sublimity in its human feature. Each figure indicates Buddha as a *Dharmika Chakravartiri* in the dress of a preaching monk who was a benevolent and great spiritual teacher. These round sculptures are standing in frontal pose. The long robes falls gently with its folds on both sides, modelled according to its body and leaving the right shoulder bare. Just above the ankle of the feet the *sanghati* is drawn to the left in a heavy swag. The folds appear over the body in 'U' shaped drapes and hence it is thick at the left side. The standing figures from Nelakondapalli are depicted frequently in *abhaya* and *vyakhyana mudras*. The Buddha imparting protection i.e., 'abhaya' to the devotees protecting them from the fear of evil with raising the right hand was a favourite feature.<sup>20</sup>

There are many similarities between the sculptures of Buddha from Telangana i.e., Nelakondapalli, and Vardhamanakota and famous schools of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. It appears that the Buddhist sculptures of Nelakondapalli, Vardhamanakota, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda might have produced under emerged from a common denominator. There might have been a regular cultural link between the Buddhist centres of Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and Nelakondapalli. It is established that the matured style, form and idiom of sculptures of Telangana are similar character to those of Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati school of art. The figures are carved with the physical features of *Mahapurusha Lakshanas*. They are sculptured with certain fixed positions of hands (mudras) and legs (asanas). At Nelakondapalli the sculptural art reached its zenith during the second half of second century and first half of third century A.D. The earliest Buddha figures from the depicted in Telangana are in *abhaya* posture, granting protection from the worldly evils and sordid desires. Probably the art centres of Nelakondapalli and Vardhamanakota might have worked as branches of

Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools during the Satavahana and the Ikshvaku periods. The right hands of the Buddhist figures are frequently mutilated but the figures in reliefs indicating as they are in *vnakyana mudra*, where the *Master* is shown as preaching message of his Dharma for the salvation of the devotees.

Few of the physical features and postures of the Buddha figures are in the form of Mathura and Gandhara school of art. But the artists did not totally imitate the Mathura and Gandhara styles but they modified, again improved perfectly and gave them a new form and life to the figures according to suit their regional needs and transmitted them to other regions. They are alive and nearer to the spirit of the Master. The drapery with well regulated folds, the drooping eyes, the round face with parted lips and curly hair of Buddha figures from Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda and Vardhamanakota reveal close affinity with Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati school of art. They might have influenced the stone images of Anuradhapura and bronze images of Medawachchiya of Ceylon in fourth century A.D. They also might have influenced some important places of our country like Ajanta (Cave No. xix) and some other countries of South East Asia.

## **2. Head of Buddha Image from Nelakondapalli:**

The head of a Buddha image from Nelakondapalli is a rare finding. It is more beautiful than the Saranath Buddha of the Gupta period, even though the Nelakondapalli figure was earlier to the Samath's figures. The head of Buddha indicates that the sculpture was modelled as in *dhyana mudra*. This is a human concept in deep meditation transcending into the world of the spirit to liberate himself. The facial expressions of seated Buddha convey the feelings of divineness, serenity, calm and graciousness. The facial features of Buddha are represented with round chin, nose with clear nostrils, arrow type eye brows and half opened eyes indicating Karuna and sympathy. His eyes are carved like lotus buds

which express love and compassion towards the human beings. The tendered ears are large and elongated and adorned with ear lobes. The *urna* on forehead is very impressive head covered with the snail-shelled short curly hairs and protuberance on fore-head is one of the physical features of *Mahapurusha* and or signs of the great-man reflected in every image of Nelakondapalli and other sites of Telangana.<sup>21</sup>

The representations of the standing Buddha in *abhaya*, *vyakhyana*, *dhyana* and *vardamudra* gestures were quite popular and became the most remarkable products of the Nelakondapalli artist. They reflect all the noble characteristics of the blooming phase of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda school of art. These features have influenced the art centers at Ajanta and Srilanka during third and fourth century A.D. respectively. The seated Buddha figure in meditation, which is the one of the superb and matured workmanship of the artist from at Nelakondapalli, suggests it is an expression of serenity, purity of mind and divine bliss of Buddha and indicates a stage after the extinction of all worldly wishes in the fire of penance and he supreme knowledge.<sup>22</sup> It is stage of one of the major event in the life of Gautama when he became Buddha or enlightened one.

### **3. A Bronze Image of Buddha from Nelakondapalli:**

Around 4<sup>th</sup> centuiy A.D. few Buddhist centres in northern Telangana excelled in casting of Buddha images in various metals and different forms. It was a great land-mark in the history of religious art. The bronze image of Buddha from Nelakondapalli, though small in size, it is elegant and trim, clad in diaphanous robes clinging to the body. It was prepared with a combination of panchalohas, an amalgam of five metals. These metals were used to indicate the significance of the cosmic relationship of the image.

The bronze image is one of the important findings from Nelakondapalli Buddhist site which indicates an advanced achievement of technological skill in the metal craft.<sup>22</sup> Its height is 60 cm. and breadth 21 cm. Its weight is 10 kg. This image is graceful, attractive and simple without any ornamentation and bare footed. The facial expressions of this Buddha image are benign and youthful with tender looks. The right hand of the Buddha is kept stretching down in *varadahasta* pose, while his left hand is clasping the left corner of diaphanous sanghati and its edge corner of them is clasped with his fingers of left hand appears as a lotus. Its clear opened eyes are focusing sympathy on devotees. The head is covered with well regulated, beautiful curly hairs turning from left to right, Forehead is carved with usnisa with protuberance and flanked with elongated ears. The image is the outcome of synthesis of the external form and inner spirit and considered as a perfect example of a typical religious art of the later phase of the Ikshvaku period. It's one of the characteristic feature is that it deserves to be mentioned that it has happened at Nagarjunakonda and Mudigonda but perhaps for the first time we find the Buddha figures of Nelakondapalli appears instead of wearing of the upper and lower garments, it is being treated diaphanously. This feature does not seem to have happened at Amaravati.<sup>23</sup>

The image appears to belong to the late phase of the Ikshvaku period i.e., third and fourth century A.D. Nelakondapalli was a centre of Buddhist art and contemporaneous to the late phase of Nagarjunakonda school of art.

#### **4. Buddha Sculptures at Karukonda:**

The Karukonda is known for its Buddhist caves and rock hewn sculptures, decorated with paintings. It is a unique Buddhist site in north Telangana region. The artists assigned a prominent place to the Buddha sculptures and invariably images carved on the four sides of the



two *stupas* modelled out of two natural boulders and in the cave temples. One rare relief carved on a other granite boulder representing Buddha as a boy who is being blessed by a lady supposed to be his mother Maya. He is dressed in royal garments.

The two monolithic *stupas* have been chiseled niches on their four sides. All of these niches have been presented by sculptures of Buddha inside of hollow. The each Buddha sculpture is carved in bold relief, seated in meditation on a full blown lotus. At Karukonda the sculptures of Buddha are shown in seated position (Padmasana or cross legged) in perfect meditation pose i.e., Dhyanamudra. His both hands are resting on the lap and placed one above the other with palms facing upwards. Each sculpture have a halo around their head. The hairs are topped by *usnisa*. The ears of Buddha arc decorated with ear lobes. The edge of the upper Sanghati is shown across the body from left shoulder to right. In each of these niches at the right and left top comers, there are small sized demigods coming from the sky to see Buddha. It appears that originally those sculptures were painted. At Karukonda the images of Buddha seated on lotuses and surrounded by *demigods* and *dwarapalas*. In this sculptures, the artists appears to have attempted to give fullness to the idea of Adi Buddha.<sup>24</sup>

In the two caves temples which are shown out of the sand stones, carved with the Buddha figure and flanked by either side with typical figures of *dwarapalas*. Here Buddha is shown in seated pose as Satvaparyankasana (seated with cross legs) i.e., dhyana-mudra. He is seated on a lotus pedestal. Both of his hands rests on his lap keeping the palms one above the other. A large halo is represented around his face. It represents spiritual strength of the Buddha. His head is decorated with short curly hairs and *Usnisa* which appears like a spiral knot. He is elongated ears are adorned with ear lobes. The figure of Buddha is represented with broad chest, long arms and a narrow waist. The lotus

pedestal is very popular among the Andhra artists, as witnessed at Nagarjunakonda and Sankaram. Regarding the date of rock-cut temples, it may be established basing on the presence of dhyana Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the presence of Adi Buddha on lotus pedestal indicates the predominance of Mahayana Buddhist element which is not reflected in the art of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools suggests the post Iskhvaku period. Hence, these may be dated to the 4th-5th centuries A.D. That age also may be considered as a peak and transition period in Mahayana Buddhism school of art when and where Lord Buddha treated as Brahma i.e., super god. According to *Kathavatthu* Buddha called as *Lokkottara and Purushottama*. According to Lalithavisthara Buddha identified as *Bhagatata and Narayana*.

#### **5. Buddha Image at Mudigonda:**

It is a fine representation of standing figures of Buddha. Its facial expression are very kind, compassionate, love and leaves a deep and chastening impact on the onlooker. This image of Buddha appears to the visitors as “*Karunamaya and Thathagatha*” with typical benign features like serenity, gentleness, profound love, wisdom and youthful. This image is in standing position. Its right hand, now missing was probably held in *abhayamudra*, where as his left hand holds the hem of the robe near his chest. He is shown wearing *sanghati* covering his body with heavy and thick folds running over the left shoulder and under the right arm. The head is decorated with *Usnisa* and curly hair. He has elongated ears indicating the *mahapurushalakshanas*. His round face is featured with half opened merciful eyes, tender lips and beautiful chin.

It has common characteristic features of Nagarjunakonda school of art with slight variation in drapery folds. The Buddha figure is carved with a new model of *sanghati* having with thick and heavy folds at the right part and draped with the “U” shaped folds of ten (which indicate Buddha’s ten characters i.e., dasabald) and the hem falling down at left

side with three folds (which indicates *three ratnas*) in *ziz zag*.

Majority of the standing Buddha images discovered at Nelakondapalli, Vardhamanakota, Mudigonda, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. They are carved with the *sanghati* running over through the left shoulder and proceeds under the right arm, thus leaving the right shoulder bare.

## **6. Four Major Life Events of Buddha at Mudigonda:**

In addition to the standing Buddha figure, four Buddhist sculptural panels were discovered from Mudigonda. On basing on, a comparative study with the sculptures of similar poses discovered at Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati, the period of sculptures of Mudigonda may be established to the second and third century A.D. These sculptural slabs were once might have decorated the body of a *stupa*. The biographical details of Buddha and especially the four major events (out of five major events) in the life of Buddha are depicted at Mudigonda. The Buddha figures appear in big size as a central figure and carved in fine mature style as at the famous Buddhist schools like Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. In the Mahayana Buddhist Art Buddha was represented in anthropomorphic form in the Andhradesa. These are the following sculptural panels are discovered at Mudigonda and made an attempt to study in detail.

### **A. Breaking of News of Siddhartha's Departure:**

Channa returns to Kapilavastu with the horse *kanthaka* and narrates in this relief about the Siddhartha's departure to his father *Suddhodana*. Siddhartha led his life in as an ascetic.

It is a unique sculpture showing *Kanthaka*, the prince Siddhartha's horse grieving over the departure of its master. It is shown paying its sorrowful obeisance before the throne of Siddhartha. His head dress and

perhaps his garments are shown on the throne. There is a figure of a dhoti-wearing man holding curved staff in his left hand. The foot-stool carrying Buddha padas kept under the throne may be seen. Kanthaka's grief over the departure of its master is one of the moving scenes in the life of Buddha and it is the scene that is depicted on the coping stone here. After the renunciation Prince Siddhartha travelled on his horse Kanthaka at night. In the morning he reached the hermitage of Bhrigu. Siddhartha patted Kanthaka saying "your work is completed" and asked Channa to return back. After giving him the ornaments, requested him to give it and his message to his father. Kanthaka is in grief and then prince Siddhartha tells him: "*Don't shed tears, Kanthaka; you have displayed the qualities of good horse. Be patient your service will soon bring-forth its fruit*". *Nidanakatha* says that "the Bodhisattva getting down from the horse's back stood on sandy beach, extending there like a sheet of silver and said to Channa, '*Good Channa, do thou go back taking my ornaments and Kanthaka. I am going to become a hermit*'. The Channa prayed that he should also be made a hermit, but the prince refused and insisted on his returning to Kapilavastu.<sup>25</sup> Prince Siddhartha then takes his jewel hilted sharp sword from Channa's hands, cuts away his crown and head dress and tossed in air. The Sakka (Sakra or Indra) received the jewel casket crown and placed it in *Tavatimsa* heaven and Gods adored it. The prince then wears a hermit's dress and leaves to commence his penances.

Channa along with horse Kanthaka returned to the city in grief taking eight days to traverse a road which they had covered in one single night earlier with their master. Channa and horse Kanthaka entered in the city of Kapilavastu with drooping bodies shedding tears. The city folk are also in tears and follow them. Kanthaka, the horse penetrates to the royal palace and tears, neighs out a loud proclaiming its sorrow and suffering at the loss of its master. There is more grief as Gautami the chief queen greives. Princes Yasodhara is beyond all solace in grief. King

Suddhodana swoons with grief and chides Kanthaka, asking it to show the hermitage to which it had taken his son. Kanthaka's grief for its master is the most pathetic and moving scene expressed by the artist even facing the problem of space and time. The sculptor's skill is best seen in the panel in which the charioteer breaks the news of Gautama's renunciation to Yasodhara. Everyone in the group seems to be broken hearted. Even the horse Kanthaka seems to be in grief and is resting its head at the feet of the inconsolable princess, who is supported by attendant maids. This pathetic, heart breaking scene is very impressive and true to the episode. The figures speak much more, revealing deeper and psychological emotions. This is the scene of great renunciation.

### **B. Adoration to Buddha by Astha-Dikpalakas & Devotees:**

Even in the seventh week, after getting the enlightenment, the Buddha was still sitting under the Bodhi tree hesitating to proclaim the contents of supreme wisdom which he acquired. The Asta-Dikpalas including Brahma assembled there and requested the lord Buddha to preach his law to the worlds. It is clearly an adoration scene of the Buddha. Buddha moved by their request and also by his pity for beings. He decided to proclaim his doctrine among the suffering people.

In the present panel Buddha is shown as he seated on the *throne of Vajrasana* in Padmasana under a Bodhi tree. His right hand is held in *Vyakhyana mudra*. His head is decorated with curly hairs and topped by Ushnisa. His larger ears decorated with lobes. The Ashta-Dikpalakas are shown in kneeling position keeping their hands clasped in *anjali mudra*. It is also a scene of adoration paying homage to Buddha by the devotees. Their heads are decorated with gemset *Kiritas* and hands with *Kankanas*. This panel is having the measures of 2.5 x 1.5 feet.

### **C. Buddha Delivering His Message to the Devotees:**

Buddha seated on a throne in the position of Pralambapadasana

(i.e., seated on throne keeping his feet resting on a padapitha) as exactly in a manner seen in Gandhara and Mathura school of art and also appears in Ajanta Cave No. XVII. Here, Buddha is shown in *preaching* pose keeping his right hand stretched in *Vuakhyana-mudra* and left hand kept at his chest. The upper cloth covers both the shoulders. In either side of Buddha, two seated ladies are prominently sculptured.

The devotees are decorated with ear lobes and hair dressed in top knot. The halos represented behind their heads indicate that they should be either divine or royal figures. Three men standing and paying their obeisance are also represented in the panel. They are depicted by keeping their hands in *anjali*.

#### **D. Mahaparinirvana:**

The life story of Buddha came to an end with this last stage at *Kusinagara* at the age of eighty in the grove of sala trees.<sup>26</sup> This *Mahaparinirvana* scene is depicted in remorseful atmosphere. This panel is having five female devotees. It is perhaps the artist's plastic retort to *Asvaghosa's* challenge to feminine beauty.<sup>27</sup> The scene describes the demise of the Buddha as he lies in deep sleep with external peace in profile on a big couch. Buddha laid down on a couch in the sala grove on turning the right side by keeping his right hand palm under his head. His head is decorated with snail shelled curls and *nsnisa*. Ears are adorned with ear lobes. The *reclining pose* is exclusively used to represent the *Mahaparinirvana*. Buddha's body is covered with many folds of thick clothes. The thick robes are covered the corpse of Master only up to his chest in coiling model. The remaining body of his chest and arms are uncovered. In Gandhara school of art the Great departure or *mahaparinirvana* scene is shown in different manner as the body of Master covered with *Togo of 'U'* shaped compositional scheme of Gandhara art. Men and Women are shown with different poses. One of the female member took the feet of Buddha and kept on her laps. This is

the only significant and rare discovery of its kind collected at Mudigonda and not found anywhere except in Gandhara school of art that too with slight difference. In Gandhara school of art, the same panel scene depicted with the body of Buddha was surrounded with men but not by women. At Ajanta the same death scene indicated by a group of fifteen men and women with small sized figures where as Buddha carved in central place and as principal figure big in size deep sleep on a big couch.<sup>28</sup>

At Mudigonda the five women seated around the Buddha and their heads are covered with thick folded turbans. They are paying their last homage to the Master. Two of them raised their hands in a folded manner while the remaining women touching the body of the Master. The artist depicted the transparent clothes to the five devotee women who sat around the corpse of the *Master* so subdued as to show simultaneously these figures are lustful, naked and without nudity. The garments and jackets are clinging to their breasts prominently shown by the artist. The women probably anxious to see the body of *Mahapurusha* (Lord Buddha) by physically touching with their hands. They have long arms as similar depicted in Nagarjunakonda school of art. Similar art panel was collected recently at Nagarjunakonda and it is now displayed in the local museum.

### **III. YAKSHA FIGURES FROM THE BUDDHIST MONUMENTS IN NORTHERN TELANGANA:**

Several yaksha figures are recovered from the Buddhists sites of northern Telangana. At Dhulikatta, there are many dwarfish Yaksha's reliefs depicted in a row. On a slab of the *stupa* drum a head of Yaksha enclosed by a lotus medallion is depicted.<sup>29</sup> The hair of Yaksha was dressed into a mode of a top knot. The Yaksha inside of a cup shaped lotus medallions probably represents the Sun god. The Yaksha heads, with the turban enclosed by lotus medallions are also found at the Buddhist site located at Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh.

## 1. Bharavahaka Yaksha at Dhulikatta:

In another panel at Dhulikatta a peculiar figure of a dwarf Yaksha is represented as supporting atlantes with his two upraised hands and growing under the heavy weight. On the top of his head there is a half-medallion. He is represented with the ears, hands and legs of an elephant. He is depicted as squatting on the ground and wore a lower garment. His ears are adorned with *Vajrakundalas* and *arm-bracelets*. The smile is expressed in his face is remarkable and interesting. In this sculpture the Yaksha may represent 'airavata' (vehicle of Indra) which is considered as the proto type of the elephant species and the supporter of the east-quarters. The slab on which the Yaksha is depicted aptly faces east side. This elephantine Yaksha is also called as Bhara-Vahaka who bears the weight of the earth. He is also considered as presiding over the east.<sup>30</sup>

In the rock-cut caves of Pitalkora two similar Yakshas are represented with their hands carrying the weight of the balustrade. Both are dwarfish and potbellied and have their foreheads wrinkled apparently due to the heavy weight. They are featured with bulging eyes, flat noses, etc. There were Yaksha figures with elephantine ears at Bodh Gaya also. Depicting of Yakshas and Yakshinis were the favourite themes in early Buddhist art. They were considered as auspicious and popularly worshiped as *semi-divine* beings in ancient India. This is quite clear from many representations of them from Bharhut and elsewhere. Thus Yaksha worship was a pre-Buddhist. Yakshas carry, heavy garlands to worship the *stupa* thus suggesting the superiority of Buddha and Yakshas became associated as *minor deities* in the Buddhist pantheon. At Dhulikatta we can see a number of fragments of Yaksha figures are in relief composition. Many Yaksha figures are carved on rail uprights in the panels of *stupas* at Bharhut, Jaggaiahpetta, Amaravati, Nasik (cave temples) and Dhulikatta. They are also considered as the *guardian deities*



of gate ways of Buddhist establishments. The Buddhist literature describes them as efficient builders.<sup>31</sup> Yakshas have possessed the great might and wealth. They have been adopted as the attendants to the pontiffs in Jainism and Buddhism.<sup>32</sup>

## **2. Kubera Yaksha at Dhulikatta:**

At Dhulikatta, the art is quantitatively less but qualitatively possess high traditions. White lime stone is used as the material for making sculptures.

On a lime stone a figure of dwarf Yaksha (probably *Kubera*) with a belly is represented in low relief. He is decorated with chakra-kundalas, a round tarque, (Tape-shaped), broad wristlets and a turban with a middle knot. He is holding a long staff in his left hand. Its artistic features and styles are comparable to South-Indian characters. His smiling facial expressions and the movements of limbs are suitable to the space and time. The ear lobes and other ornaments are carefully depicted.<sup>33</sup>

## **3. Yakshini at Dhulikatta:**

A female figure is carved on a lime stone from Dhulikatta identified as Yakshini. She holds a flower in her upraised right hand and her left hand is in akimbo over the left hip. Her flowing hairs are made into the knot. She wore the cubical ear-ornaments stamped with rosettes, a broad neck-lace consisting of several haras, armlets, series of bangles (enclosed by ringed bracelets) and a beaded mekhala. The lower part of ringed anklets are depicted as a series of the spiraled wire ornaments. She stands in a graceful feminine gait with her upper part of the body. The body is slightly bending forward. Her left leg is firmly placed on the ground while her right one is resting on the toes. At Dhulikatta a Yakshini, carved on another lime stone is discovered at *stupa* site is in the standing position. She is holding a lotus in her right hand. Holding a rose or lotus is common to Yakshas and Yakshinis.<sup>34</sup> Her left hand is

resting on her hip. The upper portion of her body i.e., from head to hips only is available at present and the remaining lower part of the body is missing.

Her body is covered with a transparent cloth and the waist part elaborately worked out. The figure of Yakshini appears to be nude despite of her transparent clothings. A strip of cloth worked with costly material and used as a boundary line between the hairs of head and the forehead, droops along the ears and processed on either side of the plaited or braid locks which encircles. Her well maintained hair is plaited into knot falling to the left side. The necklets are decorated by her are arranged with flat jewelled strips of beads or gems or pearls.

This female figure of Yakshini is carved with a specific modelled of hair dressing and ornaments on forehead. The jewels like cubic ear lobes, necklets, handful bangles, armlets, bracelets and the style and form of figure seems to be common features among a particular dignitaries belonging to certain higher classes.

The artist took much care in the execution of this female figure than others at Dhulikatta. Artist tried to expose in her face somewhat extraordinary charming aspects and moods. However, a certain primitiveness is obvious in the face and grace and in the form. The face does not indicate any feeling of intimacy and looks are sharp but not aggressive.

This Yakshini is characteristically of Indian origin and it is called *Salabhanjika*. These are found even in the Gandhara sculptures. At Dhulikatta it is in pure Indian form. Yakshini occurs at Bharhut representing a posture of pure Indian which is found in representations of all great folk.<sup>35</sup> At Mathura this is produced in matured form<sup>36</sup> Yakshi figures from Dhulikatta follows the traditions of Bharhut,<sup>37</sup> Sanchi, Mathura<sup>38</sup> and the early phase of Amaravati. The original meaning of

Salabhanjika is a lady gathering sala flowers, but later a statue in a pose holding the Sala's bough or something similar. The earliest textual references to such motifs are in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Mahabhasya and Raghuvamsa. Semi-divine beings like Yakshinis under trees in the Mahabharata, the *Pushpabanjikas* (women plucking flowers from trees) in Mahabhasya and the female statues adoring the pillars of the deserted mansions of Ayodhya are all creations of one common fancy. This was a favourite theme in the early Indian art. Standing in graceful posture and holding a lotus with perpetual youth always their pastimes attending to their toilet and arranging ornaments were the features of Yakshis. *Yakshi is regarded as goddess of beauty, wealth (Sri), auspicious and also Mother Goddess.*

At Peddabankur and Dhulikatta early Mother goddess in terracotta is shown with a bunch of fruits in her right hand. Wearing necklets, they have prominent breasts. The people of lower strata of society followed the worship of Yakshas, Yakshinis, Devatas and Nagas which were very popular among the common masses but were generally looked down upon by the intellectuals of that period. Buddhists incorporated such existing popular minor deities as subordinate Gods to Buddha and won the confidence of common folk. Sri or Lakshmi the symbol of human prosperity is also represented in the early carvings of the Buddhist art.<sup>39</sup>

Numerous folk sects among Buddhists might have introduced Yakshi as subordinate deity expecting themselves of the good wishes in the execution and protection of their structures and sculptures. Without the sanction of the Buddhists, it was not possible that the crafts-men carved these against their will. Yakshinis were depicted in connection with toilet or dancing. It is religious in the very real sense in the ancient cult of Mother Goddess and fertility spirits.

## IV. MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES

### 1. The Torso of Male from Dhulikatta:

At Dhulikatta a torso of a male figure was discovered during the excavations. His left hand-palm with fingers was kept on his hip. It is in round form and its modelling reflects maturity in workmanship at the artist. Its technique and style is similar to the Nagaijunakonda school of art. The lower cloth of this male torso passed through the two legs and tucked in backside. The central band of the cloth is clearly appearing. The torso might have belonged to prince Siddhartha or Padmapani.<sup>40</sup> It is carved out of the lime stone.

### 2. Female devotees at Dhulikatta:

This is panel partly damaged and represents two female figures in the seated position. The first female devotee is shown with clasping her hands in *anjalihasta*. She is dressed with full garments. Her hands are decorated with full of bangles and hair combed to the back. She wore heavy ear kundalas. The second devotee is similar to the first one. This panel has similar features of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda school of art.

### 3. Panel of Male and Female at Dhulikatta:

At Dhulikatta, the upper part of body of a male and female is carved on a limestone. The entire face of the female is damaged and not visible except the ear and her ear-ornament. Left eye and left part of the head of the male figure is scratched. Regarding the face of male figure the lower portion of the nose, lips and chin are visible. Its ear rings are hanging downwards due to heavy weight.

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## Chapter-VII

### CONCLUSION

Basing on the literary and archaeological evidences, the above study makes it clear that the history of Buddhism, its antiquity and its establishments in Telangana goes back to the time of Pre-Asokan period. Buddhist Jataka literature and the story of Bavari in *Suttanipata* refers to the fact that the Buddhism reached Telangana region even during the life time of Buddha himself. The **Thirteenth Rock Edict** of Asoka and Kathavatthu refers to the **Andhakas**. Asoka seems to have invited the different sects among the Andhra Buddhists. Perhaps they participated in the **Third Buddhist Council** held at Pataliputra. *Mahavagga* mentions **Andhakavinda at Sravasti and Rajagriha** which were monasteries intended for Andhra Buddhists at the time of Asoka. According to *Mahavamsa*, Moggaliputta Tissa sent Mahadeva to Mahishamandala and Asoka built 84,000 stupas throughout the country.

Buddhism which was perhaps the first popular religion among Telugu country might have united all the tribes and races and formed the Andhra race. It absorbed all the existing primitive beliefs and practices into its religious art and included the local modes of primitive worship like *Yaksha, Naga, Tree, Animal, Mother Goddess and Burial* etc. The Andhras were one of the earliest people who extended enthusiastic welcome to Buddhism. It became their favourable religion and they contributed for its establishments. The popularity of Buddhism in southern Telangana region is attested by not less than fifteen Buddhist sites so far discovered. Most of them were brought to light in the recent excavations.

The Pre-Satavahana, the Satavahana, the Ikshvaku and the Vishnukundin period occupy a place of pride in the history of Buddhism



in Southern Telangana. Particularly during the period of Satavahanas and Ikshvakus, there was a rapid growth of Buddhist institutions in Andhra and Telangana. The Satavahanas, who succeeded the Mauryas, united all the tribal republics under their rule and provided some sort of centralised administration to the Deccan in general and to Telugu country in particular. The Satavahanas helped Andhra to emerge as a political unit. The political unification under the Satavahana rule helped the effective utilization of mineral and agricultural resources of Andhradesa. The development of communication between North and North and introduction of monetary economy brought the two regions into closer contact. These developments stimulated Andhra's economic relations with the southern and western regions and enabled them to establish commercial and cultural contacts. The intensified economic activity naturally enriched the **gahapati** (peasant), **kamara** (artisan) and **setti** (merchant) classes, who were the chief patrons and promoters of the Buddhist establishments. The same was maintained by their successors, the Ikshvakus.

Thus the age of Satavahanas and Ikshvakus (230 B.C. to A.D. 300) was in fact heyday in the annals of Andhra Buddhism. It became a popular movement among Andhras. The flourishing state of Buddhist establishments was due to the patronage extended by the newly emerging socio-economic classes which acted as a basis for Buddhist sangha. It was the result of advanced rural agrarian economy which raised surplus food production that resulted in a new socio-economic institution named '**gahapati**'. This class supported the Buddhist institutions by raising and patronising the splendid monuments.

Almost all the Buddhist establishments in this region are located on highway trade routes. During this period, the commercial contacts between North, West and East via Telangana region (i.e., ancient Asmaka region) were stimulated. The trade was profitable and merchants emerged

as the most influential section in the society. By virtue of their position of wealth they began to bank on the Buddhist establishments. The inland trade routes connecting the arterial routes passed through Buddhist centers and market towns. This resulted the local people of different arts and crafts to come together and enable them to give active support and serve the Buddhist settlements in the form of kind or cash. The apparent causes for the flourishing state of Buddhism in this region was the local economic prosperity on one hand and on the other the expansion of Roman trade. Ultimately, it was responsible for the strengthening of economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhist establishments and urbanisation in Telangana region and entire Deccan. Whatever the evidence of contemporary Buddhism we have in these places, is closely associated with urban centers, the occupational groups like those of the merchant's *nigama*, *gosthi caravan* leader's and craft guilds.

In such advanced stage of agriculture and flourishing economic condition of arts and crafts and expanding trade, Buddhism championed the cause of the hitherto neglected peasants, traders and artisan classes who were the back-bone and mainstay of Buddhism and its institutions in this region. It was the direct result of their desire to attain prestigious social status that was commensurate with their economic power, which was derived from a stable rural agrarian economy, an active maritime and inland trade and rich art & craft industries. The traders, agriculturists, artists and craftsmen and all the common people were assigned the third and fourth position in Hindu social order and it had not accorded them any respect. But Buddhism was favourable towards all the common people who were in search of social position and it laid great emphasis on purity, equality and fraternity of the society and opposed the caste system.

Brahmanical socio-economic ideology was inimical to trade and commerce, money lending and sea voyage all of which were important

constituents of the contemporary economy. The most favourable Buddhist precepts weaned away the peasant, mercantile and artisan communities from the unhelpful Brahmanism.

Buddhism permitted all the adjuncts of an urban society like living in towns, money lending on interest, running of shops to sell food, foreign and maritime trade, agriculture, cattle rearing, arts and crafts. Moreover, agriculture, trade and commerce and different professions of art and crafts were the honourable professions in the Buddhist scheme of things. They became more prolific donors to Buddhist cause and this suggests the existence of some connection between the emergence of socio-economic forces and diffusion and popularity of Buddhism in this region since 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

The Buddhism in Telugu country was not confined to the monks and nuns. Buddhism was able to acquire a social base which was fairly wide and deep. That social superstructure was constituted of those who were in control of the wealth of the society, namely the *gahapatis*; artists and craftsmen, bankers, caravan leaders, traders and merchants, who were all in the relatively lower grades of Brahmanical hierarchy. Buddhism was already an established and popular religion during 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and made considerable inroads into the people of those sections.

Splendid Buddhist institutions were raised on highway trade routes. They received the generous donations from different sections of people like faithful lay-devotees, pilgrims, bankers, arts and craftsmen, traders, merchants caravan leaders and rich land owning house-holders, along with their family members and relatives and the female members of the noble and royal family. They were always in a position to spend their surplus money on earning religious merit for themselves and their forefathers.

The Telangana like that of the southern Telangana region, witnessed a prolonged building activity from 3<sup>rd</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. under the patronage of the above said people of different sections and classes. Each Buddhist establishment consisted mainly *Stupas*, *Viharas* and *Chaityagrihas* and temples. They are mostly structural (brick-built) and a few of them are rock cut.

The earliest stupas at Dhulikatta and Kotilingala might have been erected in about 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. On the basis of the inscriptional evidence and the solid Stupas built with large sized bricks the date of these stupas can be assigned to Asokan or atleast to the Late Mauryan period. They are identified as the early centres of Theravada (Vibhajyavada) school of Buddhism. The earliest Buddhist stupas were small and built with earth and brick and its architectural evolution in Telangana passed through several stages. They developed specific features peculiar to the land besides broadly following the patterns that adopted at Amaravati.

The Telangana region being situated at the centre point of North India, enabled it to become a confluence of art and architectural traditions from different directions. Absorbing the various features, the creative genius of Andhra artist, reinforced by ideological convictions, developed a style of his own. This is reflected in different items of architectural parts of the stupas with wheel and *svastika* base and *ayaka-vedikas* (platforms) with pillars.

The earliest stupas are of solid variety, with brick-built structures as noticed at Bhattiprolu, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Chandavaram and Dhulikatta. Gradually this practice was given up as it was expensive and laborious. In many cases of later stupas the base is made up of a wheel plan with hub and spokes a unique feature of Andhra stupa architecture. In the stupas of larger dimensions there are wheels one within the other connected by radiating spokes walls, and the resultant

compartments were filled with tightly packed and rammed earth. It suggests the evolution of technical skill in their particular material and ideological setting. At few places and times, at the top centre of the stupas a brick svastika was inserted. The dome is believed to have been hollow generally filled with earth. It is surmounted by a *harmika* with one or two *chatras* shooting out of it.

**The wheel pattern and spoked massive stupa at Nelakondapalli** in Khammam district which is more than 40 meters in height may be considered as a typical example of the Ikshvaku times. It has a solid central circular hub of three meters diameter encircled by five more radiating walls, *ayaka* platforms, *pradakshinapatha*, a stair-case connecting the top of the drum, lower *pradakshinapatha* and *torana* bases have been clearly exposed.

The wheel based stupas are rare in outside of Telugu country. Another striking feature of the Andhra stupas is the addition of *ayaka vedikas* to the *medhi* in all the four cardinal directions, each supporting a group of five free standing pillars i.e., *ayaka stambhas*. This method is generally adopted by the Chaityakas and Saila schools. They might have given ideological importance to the wheel and to the number of spokes it contains and the *ayaka stambhas*. But the *Theravadins* had only rubble stupas without the *ayaka vedikas* and *stambhas*.

The stupa being an article of worship it was generally an important item of the *vihara* complex. On the top of the hills at Pashigaon, Sthambhampalli, the *viharas* with rows of cells give an idea of the typical *vihara* architecture developed by the Andhra Buddhist architects, especially by the Sailas. The ideological differences between the varopis schools and sects among the Buddhists also reflect in their viharas. The *vihara* of the Mahasanghika (sailas) school was a three winged monastery with a pillared *mandapa* inside, one or two *Chaityagrihas* facing each other in front and a *mahastupa* beyond. The entire complex was generally

enclosed by a wall. The Theravadins had four winged monasteries and we rarely find in them the pillared *mandapas*. Subsequently, as they were influenced by the ideology of other sects, Chaityagrihas were added to the Theravada *viharas* also. The roofs of the *viharas* were generally made of perishable materials like wooden rafters and tiles.

At Pashigaon the circular *Caityagriha* was entirely built of lime stone. *Caityagrihas* at Pashigaon are the earliest in north Telangana. In coastal Andhra, at some places like Salihundam, Ramatirtham and Bavikonda circular brick built *Chaityagrihas* are found. In the Telangana region and Krishna valley the *apsidal chaityagrihas* were popular. In the shrines which were circular, *apsidal* and rectangular, and popular among the Buddhists, they were installed either the symbols of Buddha like the throne, feet, the fire pillar, the stupas or the Buddha image itself. At Karukonda in Khammam district of north Telangana region there are two rock cut shrines and monolithic stupas with Buddha sculptures flanked by the attendants. The doorways are carved with life sized *dwarapalas*. The viharas were constructed on hill tops at Pashigaon with brick buttresses and mud mortar. At many sites stone and brick was employed in flooring and to encase the drum and dome portions.

The art and the architecture was to make Buddhism known and acceptable to the people by means of visual representation of the life story of Buddha and the Jataka stories. The artist in the early phase of Buddhism depended more on the symbols like tree and animal motifs, and the message of Buddha covered in such mystic depiction. They represented Buddha through various different symbols. The entire art activity of these early Buddhist (Hinayana) establishments were intended not so much to enhance the external beauty of an edifice but more to eulogise the *dharma* in the minds and hearts of its devotees. The motifs and symbols carved on or around the stupa were meant to convey a deeper meaning and appeal to human intellect.

Dhulikatta was an earliest (Theravada) Buddhist site in north Telangana where Buddha was represented in anionic (symbolic) form. In the first phase of Buddhist art, art the important life events of Buddha were conveyed through the symbols in low reliefs on ayaka slabs. For example the life events of Buddha are represented symbolically in the form of a *lotus*, *elephant* (the birth), *riderless horse* (the, renunciation), *foot-prints* covered by the *five hooded Naga* and *Bodhi tree* (the enlightenment), *dharmachakra* on pedestal or the *throne* (the first sermon), *flaming pillar* and *water* (miracle at Sravasti), the *stupa* (mahaprinirvana), *Lion* (Buddha's clan - as Sakya simha), and *bull* (Buddha as munipungava). *Purnaghata* (Purnakumbha or Vase), Lotus designs, *Triratna* symbols. Some of the articles collected at sites which represent Buddha symbolically are the votive stupa and throne. The sculptural members of these symbols like votive stupa and the throne recovered from Nelakondapalli are very rare in the north Telangana region. The throne is carved with lotus creepers and flowers with 'srivaccha' (Srivatsa) and Triratna symbols.

The emergence of Buddha image may be considered as a result of growth of the Bhakti cult and (Mahayana School) and development of strong sense among the devotees who wanted to have a direct vision of their 'master' before them. The peak stage of Mahayana school of Buddhism and prosperous economic condition of the land and admission of foreigners into Buddhism like Parthians, Sakas, Kshatrapas etc. contributed to the production of image of Buddha and its evolution as a piece of art.

Thus in the second phase of Buddhist art, Buddha assumed the anthropomorphic form at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda during later Satavahana period. It was the beginning of the transition period where the symbols transformed into the human form and these devices and characteristic features and styles were followed at other places of north

Telangana like Mudigonda, Nelakondapalli, Dhulikatta and Karukonda. Even after this time simultaneously Buddha represented in symbols and also anthropomorphic forms. Buddha sculptures are carved in different postures like sthanaka (standing), asana (seated) and sayana (recumbent or reclining). There are mostly standing figures of Buddha which prominently appeared at Buddhist monuments of north Telangana. They are carved in Abhaya and Vyakhyana postures. At times few seated figures of Buddha are also shown in *dhyana* or in preaching postures. The third type i.e., reclining figure of Buddha is shown at one place only representing his **Great Demise** or '*Mahaparinirvana*'. The standing figures of Buddha from Nelakondapalli and Mudigonda are mainly influenced by the Buddha images of Nagarjunakonda. The Buddhist centers in north Telangana were mostly influenced by the art traditions of famous schools of *Amaravati* and *Nagarjunakonda*. Basing on the stylistic features, Buddhist symbols from Dhulikatta and the Buddha image from Stambampalli, Nelakondapalli and Karukonda, we can say that they owe their origin from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools.

The standing Buddha figures from Telangana appear with slim, tall, calm and elegant. They are seems to be handsome and youthful. The right arm is raised in *abhaya-mudra* or *Vykhyaana Mudra* and the left hand is clasping the robe. The monastic robe is draped in 'U' shape and with sharp precise folds. The seated Buddha figures are shown in *dhyanamudra* or *preaching mudra*, and covered with full monastic garment. In a panel relief from Mudigonda .Buddha is depicted in *Satvaparyanka-asana*.

The robes of metal (panchaloha) image of Buddha, Nelakondapalli is treated diaphanously. Its right hand is presented in *Varadamudra* and left hand holds the comer of the robe.

Most of the standing and seated figures are carved with round faces having open eyes, tender lips, an urna in between the eye-brows. Its head



is covered with snail - shelled curly hairs elongated ears and is topped by *usnisas*. All these images are with a mild smile in their faces expressing eternal bliss. A constant effort has been made by the artists to achieve a harmonious combination of the physical beauty and the spiritual maturity through the facial features of Buddha image. The sculptures has been modelled in rounded contours. The lines are not rigid and frontally appear less pronounced. In relief sculptures, the artist interestingly took care to avoid crowded scenes of men and women. Their neat and subtle workmanship may well be compared with the goldsmiths or the ivory carver's crafts. Figures of men and women have been modelled in varied and difficult movements with great skill and imagination. The figures obviously indicate the influence of the stylistic features of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools. The sculptures of the period built mostly of lime stone. Buddha figures are carved with curly hairs, a halo rounded the face, and drapery with thick folds. The expression of peace, piety and calmness on the faces of Buddha images were treated as attributes of spiritual quality.

### **Reasons for Decline of Buddhism:**

The Buddhist monuments were in a flourishing state in north Telangana and other parts of Telangana and Andhra from third century B.C. to fourth - fifth century A.D. The prosperity of the Buddhist monasteries was at its zenith by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. but started their declining after fourth - fifth century A.D. as they start losing their social base due to the changes in their political, socio-economic and religious fields. However, they did not vanish from the scene all of a sudden. They must have lingered on till about 700 A.D. Whatever socio-economic forces prompted the people of different sections to establish the Buddhist institutions, caused for the down fall of the Buddhism and its institutions. Decline of the foreign trade and the net work of internal commercial activity isolated and weakened monasteries and the Buddhist

Sangha. Telugu country witnessed a serious critical economic conditions after the down fall of Ikshvakus. Trade with Rome declined which had hit hard the local industries. These poor economic condition impoverished the artisan and craftsmen and the merchant classes who had been the chief patrons and promoters of Buddhist institutions and their establishments. After A.D. 300 we rarely notice gifts made to the Buddhist institutions by these classes. Either building or renovation of Buddhist monuments did not occur after seventh century A.D. Moreover during the period of the peak stage of Mahayanism, there were emergence of many schools, sects, and sub-sects particularly Vajrayana school created many complications in the religious practices and they lost their morals and ethics. These religious developments in the *Sangha* led to its degeneration. The later dynasties such as the Pallavas, the Chalukyas, etc. who ruled over the Telugu country after the Ikshvakus, were the staunch followers of Brahmanical Hindu religion and patronised Brahmanical Hindu institutions. This gave a final death blow to the Buddhist establishments in Telugu country including southern Telangana region. The most striking feature in the religious history of Telugu country was that there was vigorous Hindu temple building activity and the Buddhist building activity almost came to a standstill and discontinued except only under the few rulers of the Vishnukundin dynasty.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### 1. Buddhist Monuments at Dhulikatta



General view of Dhulikatta Stupa



Stupa Front View (East)



Stupa Back View (West)



Votive Stupa



Stupa Side View (*Adistanam*)



Votive Stupa (*Vedika*)



Stupa North View



Vihara Complex



Buddha Bronze Image (Dhayanamudra)



Sculptured Panels





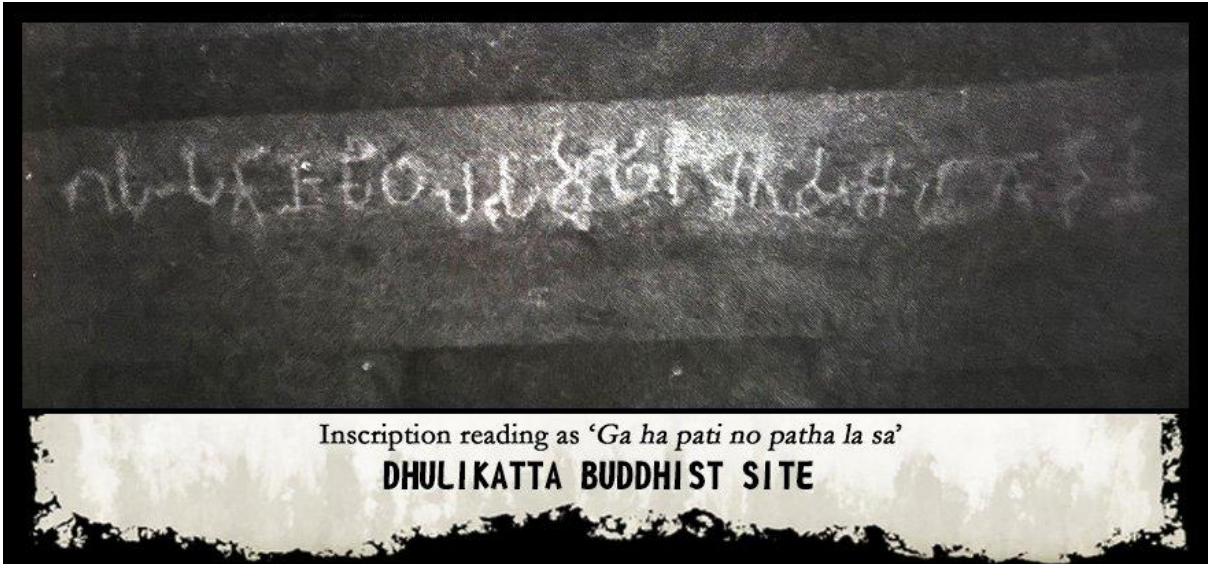
Stone railing depicted with Jataka panels



Stone railing depicted with Jataka panels



Apsidal Chaityagriha



Inscription reading as 'Ga ha pati no patha la sa'  
**DHULIKATTA BUDDHIST SITE**



Sculpture of Naga Muchilinda

## 2. Buddhist Monuments at Nelakondapalli



General front views of Mahastupa



View of Mahastupa back side



Votive Stupas with marble slabs



Remnants of Vihara

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**BUDDHIST MONUMENTS IN NORTHERN TELANGANA:  
A STUDY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE**



**ABSTRACT SUBMITTED TO KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY**

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The glorious era of Buddhism was a time, when the creed of Gautama Buddha had very stronghold on the minds of people of Telangana during the three centuries preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ. This phase witnessed an unprecedented growth of Buddhist institutions and their art and architecture as witnessed from various Buddhist remains. These centers must have influenced the religious and social life of people. Telugu country occupies a place of pride in the history of Buddhism especially its philosophy and the art. The Telugu people were one of the earliest people who extended enthusiastic welcome to Buddhism and both the Theravada (Hinayana) and the Mahasanghika (Mahayana) systems enjoyed their liberal patronage. The wide popularity of Buddhism in Telangana is attested by the scores of Buddhist sites spotted so far by the spade of archaeologist. The recent excavations revealed that the building activity began though in humble way by the local Buddhists during pre-Asokan or atleast Asokan times. It reached its zenith during Satavahana and Ikshvaku times in Telugu country. The fact that it continued to flourish for another four hundred years (i.e. up to 700 A.D.) meant that the wharf and woof of culture of this region was largely Buddhist. The art and architecture began and developed in the region mainly under the Buddhist auspices.

The exploration of the Buddhist monuments initiated about the middle of the eighteenth century in Telugu country resulted in locating more than one hundred Buddhist sites and some of them were excavated by archaeologists. But recently during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fifteen Buddhist sites of early centuries were brought to light in the Telangana region. The excavated sites have brought out the grandeur and magnificence of *stupas*, *viharas*, *caityagrihas* and temples both rock-cut and brick built adorned with beautiful sculptures of stone and metal. Few of the label inscriptions and copper plates were also unearthed from these sites.

There was a phenomenal rise of Buddhist institutions situated on the banks of rivers or administrative head-quarters which were connected with highway trade routes starting from Kotilingala in Jagtiyal district, Sthambhampalli, Pashigaon and Dhulikatta in Peddapalli district; Kondapur

in Medak district; Tirumalagiri, Phanigiri, Gajulabanda in Suryapet district, Vardhamanakota, Yeleswaram in Nalgonda district; Nelakondapalli, Mudigonda and Karukonda in Khammam district. They were centers of attraction in the hayday of Satavahana and Ikshvaku rule. Some of them continued to flourish up to Vishnukundin period.

In spite of the Satavahana and Ikshvaku kings themselves were believers in Brahmanism, they were tolerant towards Buddhism the religion of the people in large. As there are no direct evidences of their patronage of Buddhism in Telangana, their leanings towards Buddhism is firmly established on the basis of the evidences found in the caves at Nasik, Bhaja, Karle and Kanheri in Western Deccan, at Allur, Gummadiurru, Ghantasala, Bhattiprolu, Jaggayyapet, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the eastern Deccan. The earliest caves of Ajanta and the Southern gate of Sanchi were their masterpieces. The present Telangana region formed part of Andhradesa which was ruled by Satavahanas and Ikshvakus. They were very catholic in their outlook and gave maximum encouragement to the religion of the masses of the day.

It is significant that the patronage of the art and architecture of the Buddhist establishments did not come from Kings of either the Satavahana or the Ikshvaku dynasties. The patronage was in fact a continuous process which had its roots in the common masses like craftsmen, artisans, wealthy merchants, officers, ministers, noblemen and ladies of all ranks who encouraged it for the fulfillment of their religious, spiritual, social and aesthetic predilections and aspirations. The *stupas* and other structures, sculptures and label inscriptions on slabs, potsherds inscriptions on boulders and copper plates indicate the flourishing state of Buddhism. The Buddhist centers inspired the people of the day to dedicate themselves in the propagation of the creed. Each unit of Buddhist establishments like the *stupas*, *chaityas* etc., might have come into existence with the munificence of devotees and they were patronised especially by the Gahapati, Setti and guilds of Artisan and Craftsmen, who formed the bulk of population. Monks, nuns and lay people like *upasakas* and *upasikas* and ladies of royal harem

also contributed to it. In course of time the establishments became well developed with kind and cash as self-sufficient centers. Buddhist centers in Telangana consisted mainly *stupas*, *viharas* and *chaityagrihas*. They are mostly of brick built except the rock-cut centre located at Karukonda village in Khammam district. The history of the earliest Buddhist architecture in Telangana goes back to the time of Mauryas. The Theravada and the Mahasanghika schools, and their sects and sub-sects like *Sailas* and *Chaityakas*, flourished in the Talangana region and had their *Viharas* to suit their religious needs and requirements.

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in Telangana an attempt is made in the present study to sketch the micro level study on the *Budhist Monuments in Northern Telangana: A Study of Art and Architecture*. These monuments require detailed study therefore this work will be found filling the gap for the proper study of Buddhist art and architecture in northern Telangana.

### **Scope of the Study:**

The present study confined Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana districts i.e. Adilabad, Aasifabad Khumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, Peddapalli, Jagtiyal, Karimnagar, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Khammam and Bhadradri Kothagudem. The districts has historical evidence from Paleolithic time in Stone Age civilization. This districts ruled through the ages from Mouryans to Asaf Jahis. This study mainly focuses on northern Telangana districts. In these districts from Stone Age, onwards historical evidences came to lime light through the excavations conducted by Department of Archaeology, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The main purpose of this study is to analyse the available data, interpret in chronological order of *Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana, and focus on art and architecture*.

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in the Northern Telangana region an attempt is made in the present study to sketch the comprehensive picture on the *History of Buddhism in Telangana*, along with

*Buddhist Art and Architecture.* After tracing the historical background and socio-economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhism, an attempt has been made to highlight the art and architecture of the Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana. The life story and legends of Buddha and his gospel has been illustrated by the architects and artists with great enthusiasm. The Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana attest the patronage of the people of this land to the Buddhist institutions. The people of Telangana area might have actively welcomed and enriched the Buddhism and its establishments. Buddhist sites from Telangana region have been brought to light within the last 25 years. But recently fifteen sites were excavated. Their results have been published in brief in the annual reports of the state and central departments of archaeology, but the detailed reports of the excavations still await publication. All these Buddhist sites in northern Telangana requires a detailed study. No connected accounts of Buddhist remains in Telangana has hitherto been written and therefore this work will be found filling the gap for the proper study of Buddhist art and architecture in northern Telangana.

The present study is to expose the historical and cultural back-ground of Telangana region and also to throw light on the contemporary socio-economic conditions of the people of Telangana area from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which acted as base for the rise and growth of Buddhist institutions. The recent archaeological excavations have thrown much light on the socio-economic aspects which were congenial and contributed for the rise and maintenance of Buddhist establishments. Buddhism won the confidence of different classes, especially *Gahapati*, *Setti* and *Kamara* who formed the bulk of population.

The flourishing state of Buddhism was due to the strong support it received from the prosperous communities i.e. *Setti* (traders, merchants) *Gahapati* (agriculturists) and *Kamara* (artisan and craftsmen) which emerged as back bone of Buddhism and its institutions. This was a result of the favourable and helpful Buddhist attitude towards the contemporary conditions of socio-economic life of the above said people.

Another objective of this work is to study the Buddhist establishments covering Buddhist architecture such as *Stupa*, *Vihara*, *Chaityagriha* and Temple and also focus the salient features of Buddhist art of the northern Telangana region.

## **II. Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

Keeping in view of the extensive Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana region an attempt made in the present study following aims and objectives:

8. To analyze the physical background and historical background of the northern Telangana.
9. To sketch the comprehensive picture on the history of Buddhism in northern Telangana.
10. To trace the socio-economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions of this region.
11. To bring into light the identified and unidentified Buddhist monuments in this region.
12. To study the, an attempt has been made to highlight the architecture of the Buddhist monuments.
13. To study the, an attempt has been made to highlight the art of the Buddhist monuments.
14. To examine and analyze about architectural features and sculptural art of the Buddhist monuments in this region. Such as Stupa, Vihara, Chaityagriha and temple and also focus the salient features.  
and others.

## **IV. Hypothesis of the Study:**

6. Studying the Buddhist monuments of northern Telangana districts.
7. Understanding the role of the Buddhist monuments as centre in the form of socio-economic, religious and cultural aspect.
8. Considering the historic importance of Buddhist monuments in the form of architectural features.
9. Considering the historic importance of Buddhist monuments in the form of art features.

10. Enlightenment of sculptural art of the *Stupas, Viharas, Chaityagrihas* and temples.

#### **V. A Brief Review of Literature:**

Research so far conducted revealed that few scholars worked on Buddhist and other monuments in India with regard to Andhra Pradesh. Some of the eminent scholars worked on Buddhist monuments. The review of works so far completed on historical monuments more particularly on Buddhist monuments of Telangana region will review.

B. Subramaniyam in his book on ***Buddhist Monuments in Andhra Pradesh*** discussed on Buddhist monuments in Andhra Pradesh, which were explored and excavated from 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. He briefly reviewed the Buddhist monuments in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. He also mentioned Dulikatta Buddhist *Stupa*. But not studied in detail about Stupa which is unique in South India.

V.V. Krishna Sastri, worked on ***The Proto and Early Historical Cultures of Andhra Pradesh*** and ***Excavations at Dhulikatta***, he presents a brief account of few Buddhist sites and townships of Sathavahana period unearthed in Telangana region. He provides information on the early historical sites almost in every alternate village have been situated in this Karimnagar district. J. Ramanaiah, worked on ***History and Culture of Karimnagar District (A.P.)***, has given importance to Karimnagar district history and culture. He provides information on the early historical monuments in Kotilingala, Paddabankur, Pashigon and Dulikatta authored by him.

M. Radha Krishna Sharma, in his book ***Temples of Telangana*** and B. Rajendra Prasad in his book on ***Art of South India – Andhra Pradesh*** given importance to Hindu temples of this district but not discussed, Buddhist monuments and their architectural features. E. Shiva Nagi Reddy and R. Subramanyam in their book on ***Buddhist Archaeology in Andhra Pradesh*** reviewed entire work more particularly explorations and excavations of Archaeology Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh from 18<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. They mentioned the importance of Buddhist

monuments at Dhulikatta and Nelakondapally. But not discussed in detail about the unique architecture of this Buddhist sites.

From about the closing years of eighteenth century several British government officers started excavating Buddhist sites. Robert Sewell, Sir Waitair Elliot, Col. Mackenzie, James Burgess, Alexander Rea are some of the eminent archaeologists who carried out the excavation of Buddhist sites in Andhra. Their reports are of fundamental value which throw light on the neglected conditions of the monuments. James Burgess did a monumental work on the ***Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta***.<sup>47</sup> Alexander Rea, who excavated several sites including Bhattiprolu, Gudiwada, Ghantasala and Sankaram, produced a nearly comprehensive work entitled ***South Indian Buddhist Antiquities***.<sup>48</sup> Robert Sewell produced a work ***The Antiquarian Remains in the Presidency of Madras***.

Later, Longhurst excavated Guntupalli, Salihundam and Nagarjunakonda and the results were published in the annual reports.<sup>49</sup> Following him both T.N. Ramachandran and R. Subrahmanyam excavated Salihundam and Nagarjunakonda. R. Subrahmanyam brought to light about fifty Buddhist sites in the Nagajunakonda valley.<sup>50</sup> These sites throw ample light not only on the history of Buddhism but also on the development of Buddhist architecture. They also exposed how different Buddhist sects, developed different patterns of vihara architecture.

A detailed report on the excavations still awaits publication. I.K. Sanna has carried out excavations at Amaravati and Guntupalli and his discoveries are published in the journal of the epigraphical society of India.<sup>51</sup> T.V.G. Sastry of the Birla Archaeological and cultural research institute, Hyderabad excavated one of the earliest Buddhist sites on the hill of Vaddamanu.<sup>52</sup> K.R. Subramanian tried to give a comprehensive account of Buddhist remains, but it was more than five decades back and new discoveries have added to our knowledge. ***The Indian Architecture-Hindu and Buddhist*** by Percy Brown contains only brief information of Andhra monuments. Debala Mitra, H. Sarkar and others gave brief accounts of the ***Buddhist art and architecture in Andhra***. H. Sarkar has made a very short

but highly valuable study of ***The Early Buddhist Architecture in India***, a chapter included in this book on the architecture of Buddhist monuments in Andhra. Debala Mitra in his monumental work ***Buddhist Monuments*** devoted only a small chapter on small Andhra but focused mainly the national monuments of different countries. B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao attempted to present a comprehensive picture of the rise and spread of Buddhism and its various sects in Andhra.<sup>53</sup>

Several scholars have worked on the Andhra Buddhist sculptures, and have published works on different aspects. C. Sivaramamurti has written on the sculptures of Amaravati in the Madras Government Museum.<sup>54</sup> T.N. Ramachandran studied the sculptures from a stupa near Goli village, Guntur district. This work is published by Madras Museum.<sup>55</sup> Douglas Barret's work deal with the ***Amaravati Sculptures in the British Museum***, O.C. Gangooly (***Andhra Sculpture***) and M.L. Nigam (***The Sculptural Art of Andhra***) also have attempted to study the Buddhist art in Andhra. Amita Ray has attempted to study the Buddhist art of Andhra in the socio-economic context of the period.<sup>56</sup> K. Ramachandra Rao tried to give the characteristics of Nagarjunakonda sculptures where as K. Krishna Murthy presents the material culture of the Nagarjunakonda art.<sup>57</sup> B. Rajendra Prasad in his work ***Art of South India - Andhra Pradesh***, presents a brief account of the characteristic features of Buddhist art and architecture of Andhra. However, none of these scholars has attempted to study the Buddhist art and architecture of the Telangana region.

V.V. Krishna Sastry presents a brief account of few Buddhist sites and townships of Satavahana period unearthed in Telangana region. P. Srinivasa Chary excavated Kondapur and published a booklet on it. Kwaja Md. Ahmed excavated Phanigiri and published ***Phanigiri Bouddharama Sidhilalu*** in Telugu. The Andhra Pradesh State Department of Archaeology and Museums has excavated several early historical sites in Telangana. These excavations have brought to light several Buddhist remains apart from fortified towns of the Satavahana and post-Satavahana times. The findings of these excavations in Telangana are reported briefly in the annual reports



of the Department.

Amita Ray made a valuable contribution, by following the methodological frame work of 'Niharanjan Ray', (***Mauryan and Post Mauryan Art***) on the Early Art of Andhra in her book entitled ***Life and Art of Early Andhradesa***. She has tried to establish a close relationship between the prosperous socio-economic conditions which provided a base for the rise and growth of the Buddhist institutions and art. She also refers to some of the Buddhist sites from Telangana region.

In her work Amita Ray studied the socio-economic base of the Buddhist establishments with the help of archaeological sources including art. She devoted her work from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. in Andhradesa. She studied the whole Buddhist settlement and its surrounding locations for proper understanding of the socio-economic support to Buddhist establishments.

In the present study the Buddhist sites are viewed in the wider socio-economic background, establishing their relation with urban and rural centers nearby. Various monasteries were not growers of food and essential commodities. Naturally their subsistence depended on agricultural production. They required a wider social organisation with sufficient strong economic base to get support. Buddhist establishments were able to acquire wide and deep social base in the form of pilgrims, donors, bankers, traders, merchants, caravan leaders etc. The rearing up and the maintenance of large and small Buddhist establishments could not have been possible without the backing of the gold and silver currency. Roman gold coins are discovered at Dhulikatta, Peddabankur (Peddapalli district), Kondapur (Medak district), Yeleswaram (Nalgonda district), and at many other places in Khammam and Suryapet districts, where there are number of Buddhist sites witnessed.

The dominant faith amongst the aryanised upper and middle strata of the people, seems to have been Buddhism, and the epigraphic records,

sculpture and architecture, that have come down to us, are mostly Buddhist in affiliation and content. It is significant that the Buddhist *sanghas* that reared up the art did not come from the kings of either dynasty, namely, the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus. All that they had contributed towards its furtherance was their liberal and catholic outlook. It is equally significant at least in the case of the Nagarjunakonda establishments, that while the kings and probably also the nobles and ministers were Brahmanists, the queens and ladies of the royalty and nobility were ardent supporters of Buddhism and of the Buddhist *Sangha* if not actually Buddhists by themselves.

## **VI. Methodology of the Study:**

As cited elsewhere, since re-reading and re interpretation is needed in this regard. Gathering material for this work is by Primary and Secondary sources. Historical method, empirical research method is adopted in dealing with the subject.

**1. Primary Sources:** The primary sources using for this work is the excavation reports of the department of Archaeology, Government of Andhra Pradesh. These reports available as first hand source from 1976 to 1994 and 2008. In these reports the year wise excavations, and explored material like *stupa*, *vihara* complex, halls, votive *stupas*, sculptured panels mentioned. Buddha idols, Bronze Icons and Satavahana coins, inscriptions and early historic pottery will be used as primary source. Personal visit of Buddhist sites and comparative study of available reports will be studied and confirmed.

**2. Secondary Sources:** As cited above in review of literature all above books useful for this study as secondary sources. Besides official records of northern Telangana districts, archaeological reports, Gazetteers, revenue records which are preserved collectorate. The periodical journals, magazines, articles, newspapers etc., also utilized as secondary data.

**3. Field Work:** As a part of field work I have frequently visited the archaeological sites at Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Khammam and Warangal districts and gathered data pertaining to the present study. To

make the study more comprehensive I have also visited the places of historical importance in the adjoining areas of Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar and Andhra etc.

## **VII. Chapterization of the Work:**

This varied information is analysed and organised into seven chapters. The scheme of chapterization and their contents is given below.

**Chapter-I: Introduction:** Apart from introducing the subject, this chapter is devoted to explain the scope of the study, aims and objectives of the study, sources of the study, hypothesis of the study, A brief study is also made to review the literature published already on the subject and the sources for the present study, methodology of the study. At the end, the scheme of chapterization is provided.

**Chapter II: Geo-Historical, Religious and Cultural Background:** This chapter focus on the geographical setting of the Telangana region and its historical, religious and cultural background. Regarding the historical background, this chapter provides an outline of the political and cultural history of the region from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. i.e., covers the rule of the Pre-Satavahanas, the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus and the Vishnukundins in the history of Telugu country. Regarding the religious and cultural background, it is a brief study of the religious life of the people of this region. An information focused on the historical development of pre-Buddhist religious concepts, advent of Buddhism, its antiquity and history.

**Chapter III: Socio-Economic Basis of Buddhist Institutions:** This chapter is devoted to trace the new socio-economic conditions which supported and encouraged the Buddhist establishments and their organisation. The emergence of the new socio-economic forces and their support to the Buddhist institutions is discussed in detail with the help of available source material.

### **Chapter IV:**

**Buddhist Sites in Northern Telangana:** A general survey of Buddhist sites and their distribution pattern is the subject matter of this chapter. Their

topography, location and antiquities of each Buddhist site are discussed in detail.

**Chapter V: Buddhist Architecture in Northern Telangana:** In this chapter, an attempt is made for the study of a detailed description of the architecture of Buddhist monuments found in all over the northern Telangana region. Each unit of the Buddhist monastic establishments has been studied under different structural heads like Stupas, Viharas, Chaityagrihas and Cave Temples. Thus, an effort has been made to bring out the architectural features of different Buddhist establishments.

**Chapter VI: Buddhist Art in Northern Telangana:** This chapter devoted for the study of the Buddhist art, which included the symbols and images of Buddha, the sculptural reliefs depicting Buddha's life, and his teachings and it also present decorative motifs, torsos, etc. found at various Buddhist monuments in northern Telangana region. After giving the description of each sculpture thematically, an analytic study of the Buddhist art of the region is made in comparison with the Buddhist art of other centers of Andhradesa and other regions.

**Chapter VII: Conclusion:** This is being the concluding chapter, briefing the summary of the research worker based on the important findings.

#### **SUMMARY OF THE STUDY:**

Basing on the literary and archaeological evidences, the above study makes it clear that the history of Buddhism, its antiquity and its establishments in Telangana goes back to the time of Pre-Asokan period. Buddhist Jataka literature and the story of Bavari in *Suttanipata* refers to the fact that the Buddhism reached Telangana region even during the life time of Buddha himself. The 13<sup>th</sup> Rock Edict of Asoka and Kathavatthu refers to the Andhakas. Asoka seems to have invited the different sects among the Andhra Buddhists. Perhaps they participated in the Third Buddhist Council held at Pataliputra. *Mahavagga* mentions Andhakavinda at Sravasti and Rajagriha which were monasteries intended for Andhra Buddhists at the time of Asoka. According to *Mahavamsa*, Moggaliputta

Tissa sent Mahadeva to Mahishamandala and Asoka built 84,000 stupas throughout the country.

Buddhism which was perhaps the first popular religion among Telugu country might have united all the tribes and races and formed the Andhra race. It absorbed all the existing primitive beliefs and practices into its religious art and included the local modes of primitive worship like *Yaksha*, *Naga*, *Tree*, *Animal*, *Mother Goddess* and *Burial* etc. The Andhras were one of the earliest people who extended enthusiastic welcome to Buddhism. It became their favourable religion and they contributed for its establishments. The popularity of Buddhism in southern Telangana region is attested by not less than fifteen Buddhist sites so far discovered. Most of them were brought to light in the recent excavations.

The Pre-Satavahana, the Satavahana, the Ikshvaku and the Vishnukundin period occupy a place of pride in the history of Buddhism in Southern Telangana. Particularly during the period of Satavahanas and Ikshvakus, there was a rapid growth of Buddhist institutions in Andhra and Telangana. The Satavahanas, who succeeded the Mauryas, united all the tribal republics under their rule and provided some sort of centralised administration to the Deccan in general and to Telugu country in particular. The Satavahanas helped Andhra to emerge as a political unit. The political unification under the Satavahana rule helped the effective utilization of mineral and agricultural resources of Andhradesa. The development of communication between North and North and introduction of monetary economy brought the two regions into closer contact. These developments stimulated Andhra's economic relations with the southern and western regions and enabled them to establish commercial and cultural contacts. The intensified economic activity naturally enriched the *gahapati* (peasant), *kamara* (artisan) and *setti* (merchant) classes, who were the chief patrons and promoters of the Buddhist establishments. The same was maintained by their successors, the Ikshvakus.

Thus the age of Satavahanas and Ikshvakus (230 B.C. to A.D. 300)

was in fact heyday in the annals of Andhra Buddhism. It became a popular movement among Andhras. The flourishing state of Buddhist establishments was due to the patronage extended by the newly emerging socio-economic classes which acted as a basis for Buddhist sangha. It was the result of advanced rural agrarian economy which raised surplus food production that resulted in a new socio-economic institution named '*gahapati*'. This class supported the Buddhist institutions by raising and patronising the splendid monuments.

Almost all the Buddhist establishments in this region are located on highway trade routes. During this period, the commercial contacts between North, West and East via Telangana region (i.e., ancient Asmaka region) were stimulated. The trade was profitable and merchants emerged as the most influential section in the society. By virtue of their position of wealth they began to bank on the Buddhist establishments. The inland trade routes connecting the arterial routes passed through Buddhist centers and market towns. This resulted the local people of different arts and crafts to come together and enable them to give active support and serve the Buddhist settlements in the form of kind or cash. The apparent causes for the flourishing state of Buddhism in this region was the local economic prosperity on one hand and on the other the expansion of Roman trade. Ultimately, it was responsible for the strengthening of economic base for the rise and growth of Buddhist establishments and urbanisation in Telangana region and entire Deccan. Whatever the evidence of contemporary Buddhism we have in these places, is closely associated with urban centers, the occupational groups like those of the merchant's *nigama*, *gosthi caravan* leader's and craft guilds.

In such advanced stage of agriculture and flourishing economic condition of arts and crafts and expanding trade, Buddhism championed the cause of the hitherto neglected peasants, traders and artisan classes who were the back-bone and mainstay of Buddhism and its institutions in this region. It was the direct result of their desire to attain prestigious social status that was commensurate with their economic power, which was

derived from a stable rural agrarian economy, an active maritime and inland trade and rich art & craft industries. The traders, agriculturists, artists and craftsmen and all the common people were assigned the third and fourth position in Hindu social order and it had not accorded them any respect. But Buddhism was favourable towards all the common people who were in search of social position and it laid great emphasis on purity, equality and fraternity of the society and opposed the caste system. Brahmanical socio-economic ideology was inimical to trade and commerce, money lending and sea voyage all of which were important constituents of the contemporary economy. The most favourable Buddhist precepts weaned away the peasant, mercantile and artisan communities from the unhelpful Brahmanism.

Buddhism permitted all the adjuncts of an urban society like living in towns, money lending on interest, running of shops to sell food, foreign and maritime trade, agriculture, cattle rearing, arts and crafts. Moreover, agriculture, trade and commerce and different professions of art and crafts were the honourable professions in the Buddhist scheme of things. They became more prolific donors to Buddhist cause and this suggests the existence of some connection between the emergence of socio-economic forces and diffusion and popularity of Buddhism in this region since 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Buddhism in Telugu country was not confined to the monks and nuns. Buddhism was able to acquire a social base which was fairly wide and deep. That social superstructure was constituted of those who were in control of the wealth of the society, namely the *gahapatis*; artists and craftsmen, bankers, caravan leaders, traders and merchants, who were all in the relatively lower grades of Brahmanical hierarchy. Buddhism was already an established and popular religion during 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and made considerable inroads into the people of those sections.

Splendid Buddhist institutions were raised on highway trade routes. They received the generous donations from different sections of people like faithful lay-devotees, pilgrims, bankers, arts and craftsmen, traders, merchants caravan leaders and rich land owning house-holders, along with

their family members and relatives and the female members of the noble and royal family. They were always in a position to spend their surplus money on earning religious merit for themselves and their four-fathers.

The Telangana like that of the southern Telangana region, witnessed a prolonged building activity from 3<sup>rd</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. under the patronage of the above said people of different sections and classes. Each Buddhist establishment consisted mainly *Stupas*, *Viharas* and *Chaityagrihas* and temples. They are mostly structural (brick-built) and a few of them are rock cut. The earliest stupas at Dhulikatta and Kotilingala might have been erected in about 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. On the basis of the inscriptional evidence and the solid Stupas built with large sized bricks the date of these stupas can be assigned to Asokan or atleast to the Late Mauryan period. They are identified as the early centres of Theravada (Vibhajyavada) school of Buddhism. The earliest Buddhist stupas were small and built with earth and brick and its architectural evolution in Telangana passed through several stages. They developed specific features peculiar to the land besides broadly following the patterns that adopted at Amaravati.

The Telangana region being situated at the centre point of North India, enabled it to become a confluence of art and architectural traditions from different directions. Absorbing the various features, the creative genius of Andhra artist, reinforced by ideological convictions, developed a style of his own. This is reflected in different items of architectural parts of the stupas with wheel and *svastika* base and *ayaka-vedikas* (platforms) with pillars. The earliest stupas are of solid variety, with brick-built structures as noticed at Bhattiprolu, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Chandavaram and Dhulikatta. Gradually this practice was given up as it was expensive and laborious. In many cases of later stupas the base is made up of a wheel plan with hub and spokes a unique feature of Andhra stupa architecture. In the stupas of larger dimensions there are wheels one within the other connected by radiating spokes walls, and the resultant compartments were filled with tightly packed and rammed earth. It suggests the evolution of technical skill in their particular material and ideological setting. At few places and times,



at the top centre of the stupas a brick svastika was inserted. The dome is believed to have been hollow generally filled with earth. It is surmounted by a *harmika* with one or two *chatras* shooting out of it.

The wheel pattern and spoked massive stupa at Nelakondapalli in Khammam district which is more than 40 meters in height may be considered as a typical example of the Ikshvaku times. It has a solid central circular hub of three meters diameter encircled by five more radiating walls, *ayaka* platforms, *pradakshinapatha*, a stair-case connecting the top of the drum, lower *pradakshinapatha* and *torana* bases have been clearly exposed. The wheel based stupas are rare in outside of Telugu country. Another striking feature of the Andhra stupas is the addition of *ayaka vedikas* to the *medhi* in all the four cardinal directions, each supporting a group of five free standing pillars i.e., *ayaka stambhas*. This method is generally adopted by the Chaityakas and Saila schools. They might have given ideological importance to the wheel and to the number of spokes it contains and the *ayaka stambhas*. But the *Theravadins* had only rubble stupas without the *ayaka vedikas* and *stambhas*.

The stupa being an article of worship it was generally an important item of the *vihara* complex. On the top of the hills at Pashigaon, Sthambhampalli, the *viharas* with rows of cells give an idea of the typical *vihara* architecture developed by the Andhra Buddhist architects, especially by the Sailas. The ideological differences between the varopis schools and sects among the Buddhists also reflect in their viharas. The *vihara* of the Mahasanghika (sailas) school was a three winged monastery with a pillared *mandapa* inside, one or two *Chaityagrihas* facing each other in front and a *mahastupa* beyond. The entire complex was generally enclosed by a wall. The Theravadins had four winged monasteries and we rarely find in them the pillared *mandapas*. Subsequently, as they were influenced by the ideology of other sects, *Chaityagrihas* were added to the Theravada *viharas* also. The roofs of the *viharas* were generally made of perishable materials like wooden rafters and tiles.

At Pashigaon the circular *Caityagriha* was entirely built of lime stone.

*Chaityagrihas* at Pashigaon are the earliest in north Telangana. In coastal Andhra, at some places like Salihundam, Ramatirtham and Bavikonda circular brick built *Chaityagrihas* are found. In the Telangana region and Krishna valley the *apsidal chaityagrihas* were popular. In the shrines which were circular, *apsidal* and rectangular, and popular among the Buddhists, they were installed either the symbols of Buddha like the throne, feet, the fire pillar, the stupas or the Buddha image itself. At Karukonda in Khammam district of north Telangana region there are two rock cut shrines and monolithic stupas with Buddha sculptures flanked by the attendants. The doorways are carved with life sized *dwarapalas*. The viharas were constructed on hill tops at Pashigaon with brick buttresses and mud mortar. At many sites stone and brick was employed in flooring and to encase the drum and dome portions. The art and the architecture was to make Buddhism known and acceptable to the people by means of visual representation of the life story of Buddha and the Jataka stories. The artist in the early phase of Buddhism depended more on the symbols like tree and animal motifs, and the message of Buddha covered in such mystic depiction. They represented Buddha through various different symbols. The entire art activity of these early Buddhist (Hinayana) establishments were intended not so much to enhance the external beauty of an edifice but more to eulogise the *dharma* in the minds and hearts of its devotees. The motifs and symbols carved on or around the stupa were meant to convey a deeper meaning and appeal to human intellect.

Dhulikatta was an earliest (Theravada) Buddhist site in north Telangana where Buddha was represented in anionic (symbolic) form. In the first phase of Buddhist art, the important life events of Buddha were conveyed through the symbols in low reliefs on ayaka slabs. For example the life events of Buddha are represented symbolically in the form of a *lotus*, *elephant* (the birth), *riderless horse* (the, renunciation), *foot-prints* covered by the *five hooded Naga* and *Bodhi tree* (the enlightenment), *dharmachakra* on pedestal or the *throne* (the first sermon), *flaming pillar* and *water* (miracle at Sravasti), the *stupa* (mahaprinirvana), *Lion* (Buddha's clan - as Sakya simha), and *bull* (Buddha as munipungava). *Purnaghata* (Purnakumbha or

Vase), Lotus designs, *Triratna* symbols. Some of the articles collected at sites which represent Buddha symbolically are the votive stupa and throne. The sculptural members of these symbols like votive stupa and the throne recovered from Nelakondapalli are very rare in the north Telangana region. The throne is carved with lotus creepers and flowers with 'srivaccha' (Srivatsa) and *Triratna* symbols.

The emergence of Buddha image may be considered as a result of growth of the Bhakti cult and (Mahayana School) and development of strong sense among the devotees who wanted to have a direct vision of their 'master' before them. The peak stage of Mahayana school of Buddhism and prosperous economic condition of the land and admission of foreigners into Buddhism like Parthians, Sakas, Kshatrapas etc. contributed to the production of image of Buddha and its evolution as a piece of art.

Thus in the second phase of Buddhist art, Buddha assumed the *anthropomorphic* form at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda during later Satavahana period. It was the beginning of the transition period where the symbols transformed into the human form and these devices and characteristic features and styles were followed at other places of north Telangana like Mudigonda, Nelakondapalli, Dhulikatta and Karukonda. Even after this time simultaneously Buddha represented in symbols and also anthropomorphic forms. Buddha sculptures are carved in different postures like *sthanaka* (standing), *asana* (seated) and *sayana* (recumbent or reclining). There are mostly standing figures of Buddha which prominently appeared at Buddhist monuments of north Telangana. They are carved in *Abhaya* and *Vyakhyana* postures. At times few seated figures of Buddha are also shown in *dhyana* or in preaching postures. The third type i.e., reclining figure of Buddha is shown at one place only representing his Great Demise or '*Mahaparinirvana*'. The standing figures of Buddha from Nelakondapalli and Mudigonda are mainly influenced by the Buddha images of Nagarjunakonda. The Buddhist centers in north Telangana were mostly influenced by the art traditions of famous schools of *Amaravati* and *Nagarjunakonda*. Basing on the stylistic features, Buddhist symbols from

Dhulikatta and the Buddha image from Stambampalli, Nelakondapalli and Karukonda, we can say that they owe their origin from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools.

The standing Buddha figures from Telangana appear with slim, tall, calm and elegant. They seem to be handsome and youthful. The right arm is raised in *abhaya-mudra* or *Vykhyaana Mudra* and the left hand is clasping the robe. The monastic robe is draped in 'U' shape and with sharp precise folds. The seated Buddha figures are shown in *dhyanamudra* or *preaching mudra*, and covered with full monastic garment. In a panel relief from Mudigonda, Buddha is depicted in *Satvaparyanka-asana*. The robes of metal (panchaloha) image of Buddha, Nelakondapalli is treated diaphanously. Its right hand is presented in *Varadamudra* and left hand holds the corner of the robe.

Most of the standing and seated figures are carved with round faces having open eyes, tender lips, an urna in between the eye-brows. Its head is covered with snail - shelled curly hairs, elongated ears and is topped by *usnisas*. All these images are with a mild smile in their faces expressing eternal bliss. A constant effort has been made by the artists to achieve a harmonious combination of the physical beauty and the spiritual maturity through the facial features of Buddha image. The sculptures have been modelled in rounded contours. The lines are not rigid and frontally appear less pronounced. In relief sculptures, the artist interestingly took care to avoid crowded scenes of men and women. Their neat and subtle workmanship may well be compared with the goldsmiths or the ivory carver's crafts. Figures of men and women have been modelled in varied and difficult movements with great skill and imagination. The figures obviously indicate the influence of the stylistic features of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda schools. The sculptures of the period built mostly of limestone. Buddha figures are carved with curly hairs, a halo rounded the face, and drapery with thick folds. The expression of peace, piety and calmness on the faces of Buddha images were treated as attributes of spiritual quality.

The Buddhist monuments were in a flourishing state in north

Telangana and other parts of Telangana and Andhra from third century B.C. to fourth - fifth century A.D. The prosperity of the Buddhist monasteries was at its zenith by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. but started their declining after fourth - fifth century A.D. as they start losing their social base due to the changes in their political, socio-economic and religious fields. However, they did not vanish from the scene all of a sudden. They must have lingered on till about 700 A.D. Whatever socioeconomic forces prompted the people of different sections to establish the Buddhist institutions, caused for the down fall of the Buddhism and its institutions. Decline of the foreign trade and the net work of internal commercial activity isolated and weakened monasteries and the Buddhist Sangha. Telugu country witnessed a serious critical economic conditions after the down fall of Ikshvakus. Trade with Rome declined which had hit hard the local industries. These poor economic condition impoverished the artisan and craftsmen and the merchant classes who had been the chief patrons and promoters of Buddhist institutions and their establishments. After A.D. 300 we rarely notice gifts made to the Buddhist institutions by these classes. Either building or renovation of Buddhist monuments did not occur after seventh century A.D. Moreover during the period of the peak stage of Mahayanism, there were emergence of many schools, sects, and sub-sects particularly Vajrayana school created many complications in the religious practices and they lost their morals and ethics. These religious developments in the *Sangha* led to its degeneration. The later dynasties such as the Pallavas, the Chalukyas, etc. who ruled over the Telugu country after the Ikshvakus, were the staunch followers of Brahmanical Hindu religion and patronised Brahmanical Hindu institutions. This gave a final death blow to the Buddhist establishments in Telugu country including southern Telangana region. The most striking feature in the religious history of Telugu country was that there was vigorous Hindu temple building activity and the Buddhist building activity almost came to a standstill and discontinued except only under the few rulers of the Vishnukundin dynasty.