

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TELANGANA

RECENT EXPLORATIONS - 2015

by

Dr. Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana



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FORE WORD

In view of the formation of the new state of Telangana, there is an urgent need to explore the so far neglected cultural heritage of Telangana. The need is felt by the young historian Dr. Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana. He put up painstaking efforts to explore about a dozen heritage sites during the past half year in Telangana so far not known to scholars and common people alike and published them in all the leading news papers of Telangana. The explorations enhanced the heritage value of Telangana.

The Telangana Resource Centre (TRC) felt the need of bringing out the explorations to the notice of the English - known people all over the world for the appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of Hyderabad Deccan Region. The TRC also hopes that the Government will take appropriate measures to protect and propagate the heritage value of the sites. Hence the TRC on its part is publishing this small but valuable booklet on the eve of World Musuems Day, 18th May 2015.

18th May 2015,
Hyderabad.

- M.VEDAKUMAR

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NALLAMUDI ROCK ART



While I was working on the culture and history of Naikpod tribe I came across an important rock art site called Aksharala Loddi in Nallamudi, Mulkalapalli (M), Khammam district.

A preliminary but careful study of the red colour paintings and petrolyphs on the northern wall of the 60 feet long rock shelter facing southward/a stream revealed that they display 1) animals (tamed and hunted), 2) religious symbols and 3) human activities.

Tamed animals include 2 elephants, goat, cow and calf and oxen and a tiger is shown faced by a man with spear. A series of cows and oxen with humps and horns depicted in petroglyphs as they are moving from west to east. The boat shown near the oxen may indicate a trade in cows and oxen with distant places.

Groups of 7 arrows marks painted at two different places may represent the origins of Saptamatrikas, the seven mother goddesses. A deity is painted as it is being carried in a palanquin. Ox sacrifice is also depicted at a place. Interestingly Swastic mark is also found at the bottom of the cave. A rock bruising of a Trishula is also found in the cave. A man with 6 fingers is painted as leading two men with a stick to a place of deity. A boy appears in between them. A sexual act with genitals united is also noticed. This site appears that it had been in existence at least from Neolithic times (3000 B.C.). It is a unique site with painted petroglyphs.

RAMAGIRI ROCK ART



Pre historic paintings probably belonging to Megalithic age (2500 BC) are found at three places on the foot hills of Ramagiri Khilla in Karimnagar district.

A stadium like cave site called Pandavula Lonka is in the surroundings of Jafarkhanpeta, Tadicherla Mandal. A cave in between a 1000 year old temple and recently erected Hanuman statue has red and white colour paintings with black outlines. Most of the paintings are disturbed by the tourists who visit the site during Sravan Masa (August) of every year. Yet a painting in which some men are attacking a tiger with spears is still visible. Nearby a crane in white colour with black outlines is depicted with live expression.

Another cave on the top of the stadium like site also has red colour paintings, but they were disturbed by devotees some 5 decades ago, who painted the figures of Pandavas, their consort Draupadi, their teacher friend Krishna, Nandi, Ganesh and Garuda over the previous prehistoric paintings. Yet a cave stone fallen down displays a cow in red colour. A beautiful waterfall is jumping into the valley.

One more small cave at the foot of Ramagiri Khilla enroute from Begumpeta has few more red colour paintings. Archeologist Thakur Rajaram singh collected pre historical tools here in late 1970s; most of them belong to neolithic age. However, based upon the presence of megalithic burials on the plateau above the Pandavula Lonka it can be said that these paintings also belong to their age of c.2500 years.

DONGALAGATTU ROCK ART



A cave formed under the locally called Eeranna Gundu or Maisamma Gudi at the eastern foot hills of Dongalagattu, Jupally, Veldanda Mandal, Mahabubnagar district, has petroglyphs hewn at two places. The first group of petroglyphs depicted 1 foot above the ground level display a heroic bull with long horns, hump and wavy skin under its neck (Gangadolu) in about 2 ft x 2 ft measures. More two bulls are depicted beside the first bull. Two calves are engraved under the bulls.

The second group of petroglyphs are engraved 6 feet above the ground level in front of first group of the petroglyphs and display a cow with small horns curved towards its front and it was followed by a humped bull and horned bull. Two calves and graffiti marks are also chiseled under the cow and oxen.

Since the types of cattle depicted in the petroglyphs have resemblance with their counterparts in Indus valley civilization and Mysore region it may be assumed that a trade in cattle might have taken place between these regions. K. Ismail, Archeologist from Nagapur wing of Archeological Survey of India, who visited this site in 1982, opined that this was the first site in entire south India with petroglyphs painted with red colour, but no colour is visible now. In addition to the findings of K. Ismail I picked up two microliths, a sling stone and a findly ground stone which indicate that the site passed through Mesolithic and Neolithic age civilizations.

RACHAKONDA ROCK ART

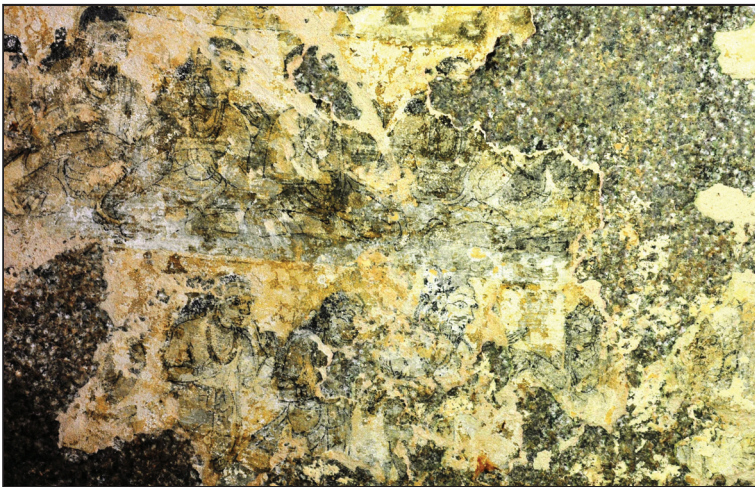


While I was searching for idols chiseled in a cave in Rachakonda hills as described in the annual report of Hyderabad Archeology department I found, on 9.11.2014, petroglyphs in a rock shelter right side to the medieval temple on the Gurrallagutta and rock paintings in another rock shelter to the north-eastern direction of the temple.

The petroglyphs display three persons each in two rows with bows and arrows aiming at a tiger before them. About 6 cup marks are also noticed among the archers in a pyramidal shape. A series of cupules numbering about 20 are also found running from the archers towards their front side in a line. Some more cup marks are also noticed under a rock shelter nearby where evidences of stone-rubbing grooves are also found.

The southern wall of the huge cave in the north eastern direction of the temple has red colour paintings belonging to two periods. The paintings display diagramic designs in oblong shape followed by some persons in different groups in dancing postures. Some feet-long stick marks are found in a half moon shape. The whole scene appears that devotees are celebrating some festivals at a devotional place. Two people carrying a leg of a game (or) with a *kaavadi* and a dumbel diagram indicating coupulation are other interesting paintings. The above prehistoric paintings and petroglyphs may belong to Neolithi (4000-1750 B.C. and Megalithic (1000-500 B.C.) ages.

RACHAKONDA RAMANAVAMI PAINTINGS



While I was searching for paintings below the roofs of the temples in Rachakonda I found them in the temple located inside the south-eastern entrance of the fort. The walls and roofs of the temple were full of paintings in the past, but almost all of them were chiseled out, probably by the Bahamani Sultans who defeated the Rachakonda Padmanayaka Kings since decorations are treated against their law Shariath. Only one stone slab over the roof is displaying some paintings depicting the episodes of Putrakameshthi and Asvamedha Yagas conducted by Dasaratha, as described in Ranganatha Ramayana (Balakanda).

One painting shows that Dasaratha is conducting Putrakameshthi yajnam, on a platform over the bank of river Sarayu, under the guidance of Sage Vasishtha and Santa-Rishyashruna, with his three wives Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, the last one is shown with wicked face. Another painting displays the Asvamedha Yagam in which noble men receive the horse which returned victorious after roaming the surrounding countries of Ayodhya. People belonging to four classes (Chatur varnas), divine persons, sages, divine ladies, female servants etc. who attended the sacrificial ceremonies are also depicted so beautifully in the paintings. The paintings were so simply depicted with black outlines on the white paste over the roof.

The paintings were certainly depicted 650 years ago because an inscription laid down in 1365 AD by the Rachakonda ruler Anapotana Nayaka is found in front of the temple of Rama.

RACHAKONDA CORBELLED CANAL

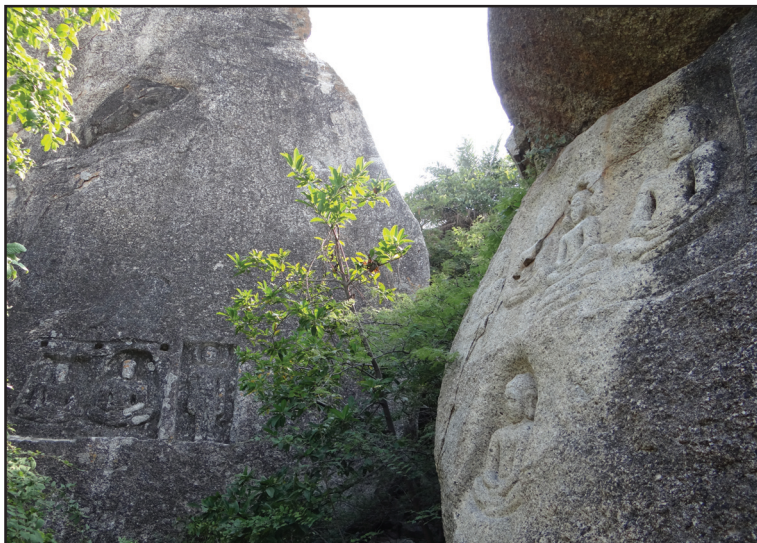


While I was searching in the valley between the Kaccheri Gutta and Gurralla Gutta in Rachankonda, Samsthan Narayanpur (M), Nalgonda district I came across a canal covered with stone slabs. The canal is running on gravitation principle from the tank Anavota Samudram or Raya Samudram built by the Padmanayaka king Anavota Nayaka in 1365 AD. The canal is flowing in North-South direction about a furlong distance until it reaches a rock cut pond where it is jumping down like waterfall and its tributary is bifurcating to supply water to the royal palaces and harem downward probably through the channels built inside the outer walls of the palaces.

The canal is in rectangular shape with huge stone slabs arranged in one yard wide with 2 ½ feet height. The slabs are pasted with some type of gum material not to leak water or not to let in outside water. The covering/cap stones are protecting the under current of water from outside pollutants. Earlier historians thought that Golkonda fort is first of its kind in entire South India to have such corbelled drainage system (from Durgam Cheruvu), but the Rachakonda canal preceded it with 2 centuries.

It appears that the Rachakonda rulers copied this system from the king Bhoja who constructed such underground masonry canal under the Bhopal lake. Because Kakatiyas and subsequently Rachakonda rulers had the tradition of following, for example, the 'Jhaaraavali' kind of roofs in temples described by Bhoja in his book 'Samaraangana Sutradhaara.'

INDRAPALANAGARAM BUDDHIST SCULPTURES



A copper plate inscription found in possession of one Sri Anjaneyulu of Thummalagudem village of Valigonda Mandal of Nalgonda district states that Vishnukundin king Govindaraju donated in his 37th regnal year the villages of Penkapara and Enmadala to Dasabalabali, President of the fourteenth Arya Sangha of the Buddhist monks. The inscription also states that his queen Parama Bhattarika Mahadevi built on her name a Buddhist vihara called Mahadevi Vihara. I suspected the presence of Buddhist sculptures in that vihara and found them in two places on the Indrapalanagara hill. One is in the cluster of three boulders located at a furlong distance from the present temple of Lord Siva and the other is on the surface of a huge cave located in about 300 meters from the locally called Pancheswaralaya temple.

Both the caves have sculptures of Dhyana Buddha in *padmasana* posture and of Buddhist Acharyas like Dasabalabali, Dignaga and Nagarjuna who hailed from Telangana. The Nagarjuna sculpture is in standing position with Naga hood over his head. Similar metal sculpture is found in Kesaragutta, another center of Vishnukundins.

Since Govindaraju made the donation on the eve of Vaisakha Poornima or Buddha poornima in the year 435 AD as opined by historians like B. N. Sastri and N. Venkata Ramanayya, we have inscriptional evidence to say that Buddha Poornima has been being celebrated in Telangana from (at least) 1580 years onwards.

VEPALASINGARAM FOOT FOSSIL



A news appeared in Namaste Telangana daily on 13.10.2014 stating that a foot of prehistoric man was unearthed during the agricultural operations in Vepalasingaram, Huzurnagar Mandal of Nalgonda district. When I have seen that it did not appear that it belonged to a man, but his predecessor... perhaps Homo Erectus who lived on the earth some 40,000 years ago. Because, the foot fossil with 6 inches length and 4 inches width has 6 fingers and a protrusion. All these features of the foot reminded me of my finding of a sculpture of a hero with 6 finger feet and tail found at a place called Gurrapalli in Mahabubnagar district.

I recollected a similar experience of a reputed archaeologist I. K. Sarma who also found one or two similar evidences and tentatively concluded that such sculptures and fossils belong to the progenitors of Angada, son of Vali whom Rama is said to have killed as per the epic of Ramayana. Angada is said to have roamed on a unique horse. Interestingly I found such unique monolithic sculpture of a horse of 10 feet height with camel features in the same village of Gurrapalli which is named after the presence of the sculpture of a horse (Gurram in Telugu) in the surroundings of the village. In conclusion it can be said that the foot fossil of Vepalasingaram might belong to a human race called Homo Erectus from which the lineage of Angada or such other race had evolved some 40,000 years before now.

MALLURU MEGALITHIC PARK



In an attempt to search for the historical remains/presence of tribal elements in the temple surrounds of Malluru, I came across hundreds of Megalithic structures on the top of the hill at the foot of which Lord Laxmi Narasimha is chiseled in a cave temple.

The hill-top is moulded into a fort which has 3 sections with entrance/exit to each another in a radius of about 2 K.M. On the outer foots of the fortification we find hundreds of Megalithic burial structures. Most of them were built with 6 slab stones in the measure of 1m x 2m x 2m (height x length x width).

There are remains of door stones also. Most of the structures are facing north or towards the nearby flowing river Godavari. Some Megaliths face east also. One or two water troughs chiselled in non-local stone brought from distant places are identified in many of the structures. Each and every Megalithic burial is encircled by finely ground walls. The Megaliths that appear towards west side of the fort are larger than their counterparts in east side.

Systematic excavation of the whole site will definitely reveal most astonishing facts about the history of Telangana of some 3000 years. The site is suitable for promotion of adventure and eco-tourism also since it is located on a height of 1000 ft. in a beautiful location of the river Godavari, forests, valleys and tribals.

BAMMERA MENHIRS BEFORE POTANA



Bammerra is known to the people of Telangana as the birth place of the great poet Potana. But the place has history of some 2000 years before the birth of the poet who became famous in 15th century. There is a temple now called Veerabhadraswami Alayam in Bammerra, Warangal district by the side of which still prehistoric Menhirs can be seen. The Menhirs are the stones of some 10 feet height erected on or near the burials of the elders or the heroes fought for the protection / welfare of the people of the locality some 2500 years ago.

Nearby a huge agricultural well called Narsim Bavi is found under which a cave is also found. Based upon the presence of the cave and a hillock and a stream nearby it is possible to say that once a pre-historic culture existed there around 2500 years before now. The culture is called Megalithic Culture when people painted nearby caves like the one under the Narsim Bavi and invoked them as their temple or the place of their god. The paintings are called *bommalu* in Telugu. People continued their life in and around the place of bommalu, hence the place came to be known as Bommarige up to 12th century. This is attested by an inscription of 1124 AD in a nearby village called Guduru in which it is stated that one local chief by name Viriyala Malla constructed a temple of Malleswara and donated the village Bommarige for the up-keeping of the temple. The temple of Mallanna is still seen nearby the Narsim Bavi.

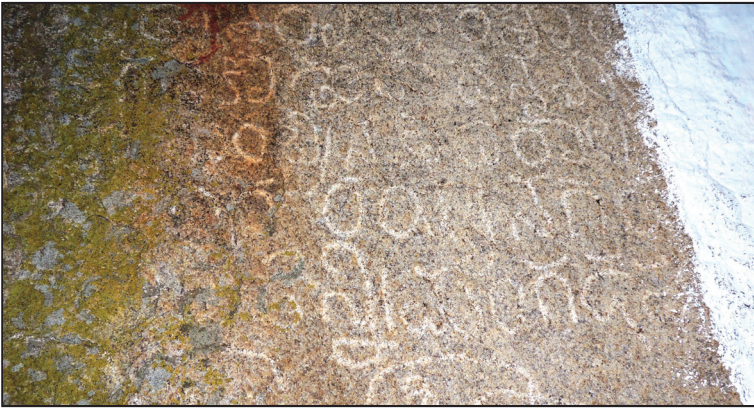
MANNANUR KALAPANI JAIL



Like the British Indian Government used to deport staunch Indian freedom fighters in the Cellular Jail (Kalapani Jail) of Andaman Islands, the Nizam Government of the Hyderabad State used to confine such freedom fighters in the Jail of Mannanur, Amrabad Mandal of Mahabubnagar district. It was surrounded by the deep forests of Nallamala Hills which are the largest abodes of the tiger and cheetahs in India. This was stated so by Pandit Narendraji, an Arya Samajist leader in Hyderabad State who fought for the rights of the citizens of the state against the Nizam Government. He was deported to the Kalapani Jail of Mannanur on 15.10.1938. The jailors used to supply the water of the nearby Kalapani well to poison those who were retained in the Jail. The Kalapaani well can be still seen right side to the Srisailam road in Mannanur.

A huge agitation was held in Hyderabad with 15,000 Arya Samajists for the release of Pandit Narendraji. A national leader of Arya Samaj explained the issue to Mahatma Gandhi and wrote a letter to the Nizam's Government on serious consequences. Finally the Prime Minister of the Hyderabad Government Mir Laik Ali went to a nearby place called Farahabad with Australian engineers to develop it as a Hill Resort and while coming back he spoke to Pandit Narendraji and the latter was released on 6th April 1940. The same date in this year commemorates the 75th year of the release of the state leader. The jail in which Narendraji was deported is turned into a school now and Narendraji Memorial Stupa is erected by Arya Samajists in front of the jail which needs to be declared as a protected monument by the Government.

THIMMAYIPALLY HERITAGE TREASURES



Thimmayipally is a small village in about 20 km from Kotra Thanda junction in the Hyderabad-Srisailem highway. It has at least 4 historical sites, viz.,

1. Glass industry in the backyard of the village.
2. Megalithic burials in the premises of a medieval temple of Rameswaraswami.
3. Neolithic culture in the caves of Kotagattu.
4. 17th century temple/inscription in Chennamayya Volam.

Numerous remains of pottery with glass moulds, raw-materials, making equipments, furnaces, etc are found in a place called Doddi Godalu which is adjacent to a local stream (which supplied water to the industry). On the basis of the presence of the Megalithic structures on the hillock above the stream it can be said that the glass industry may have the age of the Megaliths of 2000 years.

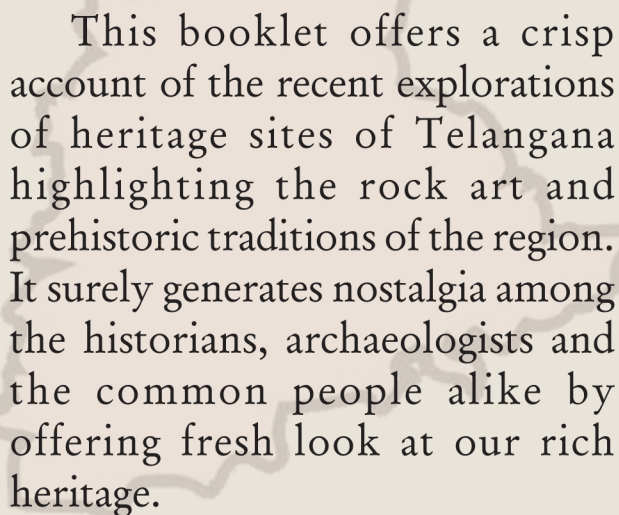
Numerous pottery pieces, finely ground stone weapons (axes), red pigment stones, etc. are found in the caves of Kotagattu before which a stream is flowing from West to East. A boulder with cut steps is also seen in a cave (temple). Village elders told that they saw grinding stones and holes and rice husk during their tender ages (some 70 years back) in the caves.

One Chennamayya built Kuberalayam and engraved a Telugu inscription in 17th century on the surface of a boulder of the Cave Temple on a hill called Chennamayya Gutta. There is a tank called Narayankunta on the name of his father Narahari. The head cut idol in the temple also seems to belong to 17th century on its stylistic grounds. Further excavations have to be conducted to know more history of Thimmayipally.

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This booklet offers a crisp account of the recent explorations of heritage sites of Telangana highlighting the rock art and prehistoric traditions of the region. It surely generates nostalgia among the historians, archaeologists and the common people alike by offering fresh look at our rich heritage.



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