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## PROTOHISTORIC CULTURES OF TELANGANA: A STUDY OF MEGALITHIC TRADITION IN BHADRADRI OF KOTHAGUDEM DISTRICT

John Milton. K

The aim of this paper is to delineate unique features of the Megalithic structures found near Padugonigudem and Batannanagar (earlier known as Kistapuram) of Gundala mandal<sup>1</sup> in Bhadradi district of Telangana State. The monuments here are notable for its different typological variations; some of the unique features of these monuments hitherto unknown in peninsular India.

### The Region

Bhadradi district covers an area of 8,951 square kilometers forms the eastern part of Telangana State. Minor isolated hills traverse through north, central and southern parts of the district. The eastern end of the district is occupied by a group of hills stretching upto Papikondalu in the South. Geologically the area forms part of Godavari rift valley, located at tri-junction of Dharwar craton, Bastar craton and Eastern Ghat mobile belt with cover of middle Proterozoic Pakhal sediments and Permo-Carboniferous to late Jurassic coal bearing Gondwana sequence of Godavari valley with exposure of mafic-ultramafic layered complex and alkaline suite of rocks in the close vicinity<sup>2</sup>. The region endowed with a variety of important minerals such as coal (occurs in association with sandstone and Shales), iron ore, dolomite, limestone, quartz, barytes, copper, garnet, steatite, chromite, corundum, red oxide, kyanite, copper, and graphite<sup>3</sup>. The light loams or black soils, heavy loam soils and also the red sandy loams are found in the district. Two important rivers watering the district flow through in North-West to South-Eastern direction. One is Godavari and the other one is its tributary

Kinnerasani, an important rivulet of this region. The region is known for its extreme temperatures during summer, often crossing 48 °C (118 °F) mark and it touches lower temperatures up to 10 °C (50 °F) during winters. The place gets most of its rainfall from the South west monsoon. Dry deciduous forest covers the vast areas in the district and this district is known one of the prominent forest cover region in the Telangana state<sup>4</sup>.

### Megalithic Monuments in Padugonigudem and Batannanagar.

Megalithic monuments found more than a thousand in each site at Padugonigudem and Batannanagar. The distance between both of these sites measured approximately 30 Kilometers and these monuments were located on the hilly tracts covered with thick forest close to the Kinnerasani rivulet. The monuments which were found here could be considered under the broad category of the Dolmen monumental typology; however they exhibited a rare kind of structural features. Apart from this, a peculiar variety of anthropomorphic statues, sarcophaguses and stone vats have also been found in association with these monuments. A brief description of these monuments is pertinent here to understand the unique features about these structures, which makes them as distinctive from the rest of the monuments found in peninsular India.

### Dolmens and Dolmenoid cists:

The Dolmens and Dolmenoid cists of Megalithic monuments are found in both of these sites. However later type of monuments are more in number.

Dolmen consists of a large capstone or capstones supported by a number of upright stones built on the surface of the ground. That collection of stones creates an enclosed chamber area beneath the cap stone. Sometimes these upright stones or orthostats buried in earth so that cap stone set upon the orthostats appears at ground level or just above the ground level. This is referred as Dolmenoid cist.

#### Anthropomorphic statues:

An interesting and unique find in association with some of the Megalithic monuments here is the anthropomorphic statue. Some statues are reported at few, but scattered places of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka. However, the Megalithic folk lived here attempted to carve out a perfect shape to some of the human organs in the abstract human statues. This type of monuments noticed for the first time here only. In Padugonigudem there are 40 such kind of anthropomorphic statues were noticed so far. In Batannanagar 10 such figurines were identified. These anthropomorphic statues measure about 1.50 - 3.50 meters on average.

Most of these anthropomorphic statues are found either in association with a Megalithic monument or are located in a Megalithic burial ground. Their association with the Megalithic monument is confirmed by those places where these statues form an integral part of the architecture of the Megalithic monument. These statues planted vertically in front of the Dolmen or Dolmenoid cist in both of these sites. Some times, we come across two figures, one having female features, probably the other representing male and thus a male and female figure was meant to be represented.

The evidence of these anthropomorphic statues signifies certain ritual beliefs of the Megalithic communities about the post death life. Scholars opine that the anthropomorphic statues represent the earliest stone carving tradition in India, next only to the tradition prevalent in the Harappa sites.

#### Sarcophaguses:

Another important form of funeral monuments found here is Sarcophagus. Though the terracotta Sarcophagus has found in Southern Andhrapradesh and Tamilnadu,

perhaps the sarcophagus made out of stone probably comes from here in these sites only. The Sarcophagus was usually kept in Dolmens and Dolmenoid cists. The earlier reports were citing that these kinds of Sarcophaguses were contained of grave goods; however as a result of human vagaries now they were no such kind of material appeared except very small pieces of Black and Red ware pottery shreds and a few small pieces of iron objects.

#### Stone vats:

Another remarkable feature about the Megalithic monuments found here were Stone vats. Perhaps this may be the only place in India that these kinds of monuments were noticed so far. Earlier such stone vats were noticed in Southeast Asian region.

Stone vats of different shapes and different sizes have been noticed here in both of the sites. They were carved out of a thick stone blocks. They measure anywhere between about 50 cm length with 25cm width to 1.5 meter length with 1metre width. Usually they were found in front of a Dolmen or Dolmenoid cists.

#### Discussion:

The forms of the Megalithic structures of the Indian subcontinent, their builders, the legacy and their possible connection they might have with later cultures of the same geographical region has been anticipating by the scholar in recent period. Their attention has been turned to explore whether later architecture in the Subcontinent evolved from Megalithic structures. The Indian subcontinent is rich in secular as well as religious architecture and it is well possible that the seeds for these came from relatively unremarkable monuments of earlier periods.

The Stupa as a funerary monument associated with Buddhism. Raymond Allchin and Stuart Piggot have drawn attention to the similarity in form between Buddhist Stupas and Megalithic barrows or Cairns covering cist graves<sup>5</sup>. In this context, the Dolmen/Dolmenoid cists can be considered as a close resemblance in form and as well as content to the Stupas. This kind of speculation would be strengthened when we compare the round shaped Dolmen/Dolmenoid cists of Padugonogudem as well as Batanna nagar.

The Dolmen/Dolmenoid cist structures built by multi orthostats supported by domical capstone, Port hole passage way, door slab and circular enclosed courses of thick stone slabs reminds us about Stupa construction of hemispherical dome which is usually surrounded by a railing with entries from the cardinal directions. Besides this stone sarcophaguses found in Dolmen/Dolmenoid cists shares the resemblance of the relic chambers of Buddhist stupas. Another striking feature was ancestor veneration in both of these traditions which can be seen in enshrining the relics of the dead in whose commemoration these monuments were built.

A part from this the square structured Dolmen has striking similarities with the temple architecture of Kakatiya period in this region.

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3. *ibid.*
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5. Menon, Srikumar, M., *op.cit.*, p.66.

Insertion of Anthropomorphic Statues at the land scape of the Megalithic monuments which was a venerated place for the Megalithic folk may also contributed for the ideas of idol worship in later days in this region.

#### Conclusion:

The funeral monuments of the Megalithic period were assumed special significance in understanding of the later religious structures that came to be built for worship. In this direction, by possessing anticipated similarities of later architectural trends - the monuments those have found in Bhadradi region have the immense potentiality as they would provide important clues in understanding architectural development of the subcontinent.

## SAROJINI VARADAPPAN- A VETERAN WOMAN LEADER OF TAMIL NADU

Kalpna Devi Priya. R

Sarojini Varadappan, a veteran women social worker, whose efforts, ideal optimism and exemplary work through social organisation, served as a beacon light and provided required inspiration to the women of Tamil Nadu. Sarojini, the daughter of Baktavatchalam<sup>1</sup>, the former Chief Minister of Madras state was born on September 20, 1921 in Madras. She had her early education in Madras and obtained M.A. degree from the University of Mysore.

Right from the early-hood, she had close associations with the voluntary organisations and decided to work actively for the upliftment of women. At the age of twenty she joined the Women's Indian Association. She is an admirer of the famous social worker Durgabai Deshmukh, who started the Central Social Welfare Board in 1963.<sup>2</sup> Sarojini became an active member of the board and organised rallies in order to boost the morale of women and to

have national involvement. She had been the Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board<sup>3</sup> which gave her a better chance to travel far and wide. She met the women leaders of Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Andaman and Laccadives.

She carries on her work in Madras for the social upliftment of women in the rural areas. For that she exhorted that Madhar Sangams should be strengthened. The sangams should concentrate their attention on - literacy, child care, economic programmes and legal literacy. She had of the strong opinion that these sangams should be free from politics. She compared the Madhar Sangams of Tami Nadu with that of the Chinese Women's Association which is a very strong and powerful body. From regional organisations, she was able to become the member of national organisations like the Indian Council of Child welfare which was started by the women for the welfare of the weaker sections of