

## **Nelakondapalli Through the ages**

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**Abstract:** Nelakondapalli is a small town and Mandal Head Quarters about 25 KM from its district Head quarters Khammam. It is one of famous Mahayana Buddhist centre in the Ancient times. The excavation conducted from this place throws much on the art as well as craft centre. An attempt is made in this paper to study Nelakondapalli historicity and Religious art –crafts significance in the in the medieval in Andhra.

**Key Words:** Antiquities, Physical needs, Terrakottas, aesthetic people, decorative motifs, material remains, Anthro morphic Specimen, glittering.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

At present Nelakondapalli is a small town and Mandal head quarters about 25 K.M. from its district. head quarter Khammam . On the road to Kodad. In course of archaeological excavations during the last few years it is found that this place was a Buddhist centre and might have been a centre of various workshops of arts and crafts. It seems to have been located on a highway trade route and emerged into a town during the period of Ikshavakas. The agriculture surplus, trade and different crafts with specialization of rural to urban character of the place. The results of excavations proved that it was a famous Mahayana Buddhist centre with well-build stupa Vihara - and manufacturing centres or workshops of different sculptures and commodities which catered to the needs of the people.

Nelakondapalli emerged as a one of the famous religious - craft centre during early medieval Andhra. Barinig on the archaeological data collected during the period of explanations and excavations conducted by the Department of archaeology and museums at this site for the lost two decades. the excavations brought to light well developed Buddhist structures - a massive stupa viharas, Buddhist Idols of stone and metal and other articles along with coins lables inscriptions<sup>2</sup>. Two non-Buddhist sculptures and inscriptions of Kakatiyas to Qutub shahi dynasty have been un earthed stone terracotta, Kaolin, Conch-shells - Semi precious materials like agate and carn chan metal like Iron have been employed for the preparation of antiquities processing equipment like grinders have also been found at the site.

Crafts cater to man's physical needs, crafts express out the human spirit in material from which gives delight to mankind. The concepts of arts and crafts are inter changeable<sup>3</sup>. A craft is functional whose purpose is to be as aesthtic people express their concepts of beauty through decorative motifs. Some of them reflect spritual concepts also while a few others becomos objects of worship the Ancient Andhra desa no exception to this dictum. Buddhism inspired building activity and contributed to the developments of arts and crafts. The earliest crafts and their evolution may be traced out from early historical Andhra, i.e. Satavahana period at Amaravathi and continued at Nagarjuna konda during the period of Ishavakus.

The archaeological evidences proved, that the stone carving and the associated technical skills were already well etashished at Nelakondapalli during the Ikshavau period datable to 2nd-3rd century A.D. It was a golden age of Buddhist art and architecture. The various craftsmen during this period seem to have had their workshops at Nelakonda palli. Basing on the material remainis collected during the excavations at Nelakondapalli we may establish that there were various specialist in arts and crafts.

**Stone craft :** Some of the carvings at Amaravathi and Nagarjuna Konda indicate that their crafts men were highly specialised and that they were influened by the wood and ivory carver's crafts. The objects of ivory traced out at Dhulikatta, Koti lingala - Peddabankura and Kondapur in Telangana region<sup>4</sup> would substantiate this view. The crafts men are expected to have a clear picture in his minor of the attributes and qualities of the deity whose image he is to make before he starts, Nelakondapalli was one of the centres of sculptures and

continued as a later branch of the Nagarjuna konda school. The school become popular for all regions pantheons specially for the Buddhist figure's worshipped as a Physical manifestation of Buddha in anthropomorphic and even symbolic forms. The figures probably produced at this site are kept in various Museums of Andhra Pradesh. Buddhist sculptures of the region are attracting people by virtue of their expression and aesthetic appeal.

The favourite medium of the sculptures here was lime stone remains of figures and other glass found at Nelakondapalli are interesting lime stone has become the common building material for Buddhist carving because it is soft and appealing. Many stupas with carved slabs of lime stone are found in Andhra desa<sup>5</sup>. Deposits of lime stone are available in the Palnadu area. Nelakondapalli is located at distance of 100 Kms. from Palnadu. Lime stone could easily be cut and Polished and can be applied for caring the drum ayaka plate rooms and dome portion of stupas.

Nearly thirteen figures of Buddha in stone have been found during the excavations and they represent the best specimens, used as objects of worship. The craftsmanship exhibited on the figures of Buddhas is quite pleasing and interesting. The figures possess an air of superiority and super natural bliss.

**Metal Craft** : - Smelting furnaces<sup>6</sup>. Iron slags, bronze figures and gold necklaces<sup>7</sup> are discovered in a stream flowing close to the site. This a solid Idol of Buddha in standing position. This is one of the important findings from Nelakondapalli Buddhist site indicating an advanced achievement in the metal craft. Copper and bronze Icons are portable and give a glittering appearance besides being durable, one of the bronze icons of Buddha is carved in standing position. The right hand in Varada Mudra while the left is touching the sangati his head is covered with curls-ushnisa and elongated ears. The lower garment of Buddha was treated disparagingly, probably suggesting an impact of foreign strain.

Improvement of craft skills in religious Buildings, from time to time there was development in craft skills in the building structures. The stupa at Dhuli Katta datable to the 3rd- 2nd centuries B.C. belonged to the solid variety type<sup>8</sup>. There was an improvement in the use of bricks and plastering in the construction of the stupa. The real form was raised on rubble foundation at a later phase at Nelakondapalli a massive stupa and two viharas were built in brick. The stupa is built in wheel shaped plan with concentric circles and ayaka plate forms. This was intended for making the centre of the dome an order to facilitate the laying of brick courses according to plan<sup>10</sup>. It was to mark the spot to erect the Harmika and Chatra.

Stupas of this plan and elevation carry structural stability and longevity, material economy and Ideological concept<sup>11</sup>. The architects appears to have followed some texts and possessed good knowledge of the use of brick technology<sup>12</sup>. They used rectangular and wedge shaped bricks. They also fixed stone slabs to the drum and dome of stupa with lime plaster. Remains of bricks, lime mortar and concrete have been exposed at Nelakondapalli.

Buddhism was perhaps the first popular religion among craftsmen in this area. The flourishing state of Buddhist establishments were due to newly emerged local-socio-economic situations trade routes passed through Buddhist centres permitting exchange of arts and ideas possibly people of different regions could come together<sup>13</sup> and give active support and service to the Buddhist settlements in the form of kind or cash. Buddhism championed the cause of the hitherto neglected craftsmen who became the backbone and mainstay of Buddhist establishments in this period<sup>14</sup>. The artisans were assigned the fourth position in Hindu social order and it had not accorded them any respect. But Buddhism was favorable to other people who were in search of a social identity and it honoured and encouraged them in various arts and crafts. Buddhist centres thrived due to the prolific donations of the craftsmen. Who spent their surplus money generously for earning social status prominent position and religious merit. The above study suggests to us the existence of reciprocal and vice-versa connections between the emergence of contemporary socio-economic forum (craftsman) and popularity of Buddhism. Finally they were one of the responsible factors for the growth and development of religious craftsmen which concentrated at the Buddhist settlements.

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