

## Megalithic Myths and Traditions in Rayalaseema Region of Andhra Pradesh

J. NARAYANA

Dept. of History & Archaeology, Yogivemana University, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, India.  
E-mail: [narayanaj86@gmail.com](mailto:narayanaj86@gmail.com)

*Abstract: Megalithic monuments, scattered in different parts of South India, number a few thousands in existence. The Megalithic monuments of antiquity are always related with some myths and Traditions. Myths and traditions vary from place to place and region to region. But most of the traditions and legends are similar in both character and content, and usually, they convey similar meaning. Pandavas, the mythological heroes of Indian lore are often given credit for the construction of megalithic monuments, particularly the dolmens and dolmenoid-cists. Such monuments are known as “Pandavula gullu”, “Pandavula penta”, and “Pandugutta chenulu”, etc. In Telugu “banda” means ‘stone.’ “Pandavula banda” and “Pandavula gudi” or “gullu” are the two names which are found connected with many megalithic sites in Chittoor District. Particularly in the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra Pradesh there is a legend among the local people that the Pandavas constructed the monuments during the period of their exile.*

*In some places, the megaliths are associated with mythology, For example in some of the regions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the megalithic monuments are referred as “Pandavara mane” or “Pandu Pare” meaning ‘House of the Pandus’ or ‘stone of the Pandus.’ In some other places in Telangana state, the same is referred as ‘Rakshasa gullus’ At Kaperlaguru in the Warangal District, the area noticed with megalithic monuments is known as “Rakshasa gudiam” meaning ‘village of the domons. Sewell noticed the Telugu names ‘Rakshasa gullu’ or ‘goli - the Rakshasa’ and derives the name of Goli villages.*

**Keywords:** Anthropomorphic Statues, Cist burials, Megalithic, Menhirs Myths and Traditions, Neolithic

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## Introduction

Rayalaseema is a cluster of four districts of southern Andhra Pradesh, comprising of Anantapur, Chittoor, Kurnool and YSR District (Kadapa district). All the constituent districts show individually unique

lithology of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks existed in Archaean and Precambrian age. The region as a whole composed of varied geological formations starting from Archaeans composed of older metamorphic constituted by Hornblende-talc-mica schist, Quartzo-feldspathic schist, Banded Ferruginous Quartzite. These rocks followed Peninsular Gneissic Complex with granodiorite, granetoid gneiss, migmatite. Overlying these rocks Lower Proterozoic rocks consisting of Dharwar Supergroup are present. They are Banded Freeuginous quartzite, Quartzo-felspathic gneiss, Champion gneiss. These rocks are immediately overlain by Palaeoproterozoic rocks containing Alkali complex like syenite, epidote-hornblende gneiss, Acid intrusive containing granites and Basic intrusive such as dolerite, gabbro. The Palaeo proterozoic is followed by a non-conformity which indicates a period of non-deposition.<sup>1</sup>

In parts of the Rayalaseema region, the post Archaeans has encountered a meteorite attack upon the non-conformity, resulting the formation of crescent shaped Cuddapah Basin. The Cuddapah Basin is filled with sedimentary rocks of alternate strata of arenaceous, carbonaceous, argillaceous rocks with timely erupted igneous intrusions in the form of sills. The strata of these rocks are named as Cuddapah Supergroup of rocks (W. King<sup>2</sup>, 1872; Bhattacharji and Singh<sup>3</sup> 1983; Nagaraja Rao et al<sup>4</sup>, 1976). They composed of Papaghni group with Gulcheru formation and Vempalli formation, the earlier composed of quartzite, arkose, conglomerates while the later composed of stromatolitic dolomite, mudstone, chert, breccias, quartzite, basic flows and intrusive. Chitravati group with Pulivendla formation, Tadipatri formation and Gandikota formation, the first containing quartzites, second containing shale, ash fall tuffs, quartzite, dolomite with intrusive and the third containing quartzite and shale. Nallamalai group with Bairenkonda formation and Cumbum formation, the earlier containing quartzite, shale with intrusive and later containing phyllite, shale, quartzite, dolomite. An isolated Srisailam formation is separated from the lower and upper formations of the succession by unconformities. This formation is followed by Kurnool group of rocks composed of Banganapalli formation with conglomerate and quartzite, Narji formation with limestone, Owk formation with ocherous shale, Panium formation with quartzite, Koilakuntla formation with limestone and Nandyal formation with Shale (Nagaraja Rao et al., 1987).<sup>5</sup> All these rock types host numerous, valuable mineral resources like Barytes, Asbestos, Iron ore, Clay, Ochre, Quartz, Steatite, Talc, Gold, Diamond, Uranium, Limestone, Dolomite etc. In the study region of Rayalaseema, no high mountain ranges, no thick forests, the lack of perennial rivers, a low rainfall and an enervating climate - these are part of what nature has given to this land. It is a landlocked region without coastline, but bound by land on all sides. The region lies at an altitude of 300 to 700 meters above mean sea level.

The study region can be divided into two distinct geomorphic divisions' namely (1) hilly region and (2) plateau region. The hilly region comprises of the Eastern Ghats which occur in the form of a series of ranges. The only prominent mountains in Rayalaseema are the "Nallamalais". They are located in Kurnool district running about 112 kms long and 40 km broad and reaching at some places a height of 914 m. In Kadapa district, the hilly are known as "Seshachalam" (600 m) and "Palkonda" (900 m) mountains. Anantapur district has no hill range of any significance except for a few rocky elevations here and there. Chittoor district abounds in small groups of hills among which "Horsley hills" are familiar, Avulapalli hills and Tirupati hills deserve mention. Megalithic monuments, scattered in different parts of South India, number a few thousands in existence. The Megalithic monuments of antiquity are always related with some myths and Traditions. Myths and traditions vary from place to place and region to region. But most of the traditions and legends are similar in both character and content, and usually, they convey similar meaning.

Pandavas, the mythological heroes of Indian lore are often given credit for the construction of megalithic monuments, particularly the dolmens and dolmenoid-cists. Such monuments are known

as “Pandavula gullu”, “Pandavula penta”, and “Pandugutta chenulu”, etc. In Telugu “banda” means ‘stone.’ “Pandavula banda” and “Pandavula gudi” or “gullu” are the two names which are found connected with many megalithic sites in Chittoor District. Particularly in the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra Pradesh there is a legend among the local people that the Pandavas constructed the monuments during the period of their exile.<sup>6</sup> In some places, the megaliths are associated with mythology, For example in some of the regions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the megalithic monuments are referred as “Pandavara mane” or “Pandu Pare” meaning ‘House of the Pandus’ or ‘stone of the Pandus.’<sup>7</sup> In some other places in Telangana state, the same is referred as ‘Rakshasa gullu’ At Kaperlaguru in the Warangal District, the area noticed with megalithic monuments is known as “Rakshasa gudiam” meaning ‘village of the demons.’<sup>8</sup> Sewell noticed the Telugu names ‘Rakshasa gullu’ or ‘goli - the Rakshasa’ and derives the name of Goli villages.<sup>9</sup> The Tamil epic Manimekhalai, throw light on various modes of disposing the dead, practiced by different groups of people.<sup>10</sup> According to Tilley, the construction of Monuments balances the cultural memory of the place and in Indian context, the local legends were used for understanding the megalithic burials.

### Balapanuru

Balapanur<sup>11</sup> is a village which is situated 15 km. north-west from Nandyal mandal headquarters in Kurnool district. In the center of present village there are two megalithic slab Menhirs are noticed. These menhirs locally known as ‘*Niluvuralu*’, ‘Standing stones’. The shape of the two menhirs signifies a conical structure, the proximal end is stumpy and apex end is narrow, this probably assumes head, these two menhirs are named according to their size the bigger one is called “*Poturaju*”, and leaner one is “*Lingamaiah*”. According to the oral traditions the villagers reveal that a small story behind these menhirs as these two menhirs were transported on a bullock cart from ‘Nallagonda’ to ‘Munagala’, the cart started moving from Nallagonda and reached the cart to the present menhir site in Balapanur, in this spot both the bullocks are stopped their moving. In this situation a ten year old boy having spiritual thought signifies that in front of this “*Poturaju Katta*” a seasonal stream was flowing, after crossing the stream these menhirs probably reached to ‘Munagala’, but this boy thought revealed to the villagers both these menhirs are interested to plant in this place of ‘*Poturaju Katta*’, ‘Menhir noticed on a platform’. So all the villagers are agreed according to boy’s words and planted both these menhirs in the same place. According to the villagers a yearly ritual was conducted every year, for the past few years the ritual was not conducted. These two menhirs measuring as follows, among these bigger one is called “poturaju” and leaner one is called “lingamaiah”, actually these menhirs were situated on a local village platform called “Poturaju katta”, this platform is having height with 1 m. on the platform poturaju stone measuring 1.80 m. height and 1.70m. width in bottom, 1.20 m. width in middle, and 0.90 m. width in apex part, and the thickness of the stone is 0.20 m., where as Lingamaiah stone measuring 1.80 m. height and 1.30m. width in bottom, 1.40 m. width in middle, and 0.70 m. width in apex part, and the thickness of the stone is 0.35 m.

### Bilakalaguduru

Bilakalaguduru<sup>12</sup> is a village which is on the left side of the Gadivemula – Nandyala Road, situated 5 Km. East of Gadivemula. To the southeast of the present village at a distance of 1 km situated a megalithic site, nearly a hundred cist-burials noticed on a hillock locally known as “Gujjari guttala banda”. The megalithic monuments are locally known as “Pandavagullu”, “Pandava ramane”, “Pandupare”, “Pandavakkuli”, etc. In the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, there is a tradition current among the local people that the megalithic dolmens were constructed by the pandavas when they were in exile,<sup>13</sup> and also in





**Plate 1 : Menhirs, Balapanuru, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 2 : Menhirs, Balapanuru, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 3 : Menhirs, Balapanuru, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 4 : Menhirs, Balapanuru, Kurnool Dt.**

many parts of Andhra Pradesh megalithic monuments are called “Rakshasa gullu” or “Rakasi gudi”. The meaning of which is temple of demons. But the present site locally known as “Gujjari guttalu”, the local people were believed that these monuments were constructed by the short people in ancient days. (In Telugu short people known as Gujjari or Marugujju). In the present site the Cist- burials were disturbed by the natural agencies and the local people. The cists constructed out of dressed slabs, called the normal type of cists. In this variety of slab cists as they can be conveniently designated, the sides of the cists



**Plate 5 : Cist Burials , Bilakalaguduru, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 6 : Cist Burials, Bilakalaguduru, Kurnool Dt.**



are built of orthostatic slabs, in majority of the burials, one large slab for each side, but less frequently, a single side being made up of two or three, at times even four slabs, arranged in such a way that each of the orthostats would present the other from falling in i.e. the orthostats is arranged in swastika plan, generally in a clock-wise-direction, but rarely in an anti-clock-wise direction.

### Durvesi

Durvesi<sup>14</sup> village is situated 5 km. left side from the main road from Nandyala- Gadivemula. In the centre of the present village a megalithic site was noticed with four menhirs. These menhirs are locally known as “Niluvu rallu”. Among these menhirs one of them standing and another one fallen at the bottom. The remaining menhirs surrounding the area in the form of a cluster. These menhirs measuring from 3 to 6 m. height and ½ to 1 ½ m. width. Behind these menhirs locally a traditional myth was encountered by the local people. Once upon time, there was a Couple, they had two children, a boy and girl. Unfortunately the parents died the children became orphans, some of their relatives adopt the children individually and protect them, later they were grownup without knowing each other, after few years by mistake the same adults got married. Finally they know about their relation, that they were both brother and sister, hence they felt unhappy, they did a great sin, to get relief from the sin, they visited many temples, gods, and goddess, finally they visited Bhogeswaram one of the famous saiva temple near Nandyala, they get relief from the sin. There is a myth in that village for every good thing return to the home (or) return to the same aspect leads to bad evil. After relief from that sin in the present village Durvesi, one of their relatives’ calls them back; unfortunately they turn back and became stones. Presently the girl stone is standing upwards vertically, the boy stone is falling on the foot of the girl stone in horizontal position, and some of their relatives also became stones.

Apart from the story actually the site were disturbed by the nature, natural agencies and local people, and fallen here and there, still the local people treated them as their local village deities.

### Hattibelagala

Hattibelagala<sup>15</sup> is a village which is situated 4 km. south from Alur mandal headquarters in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. Towards south west of present village with distance of 0.5 km there is a granite hillock locally called as “Urukonda” is situated, surrounding of this hillock with diameter of 500 meters there is thick habitation is situated with numerous pottery shreds of red ware, brown ware, grey ware, black ware, black and red ware, and extra. On top of Urukonda hillock there is lot of rock shelters are situated, in and around the rock shelters and on the huge granite boulders there is number



Plate 7 : Menhirs, Durvesi, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 8 : Menhirs, Durvesi, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 9 : Menhirs, Durvesi, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 10 : Menhirs, Durvesi, Kurnool Dt.

of engravings were depicted. Among the engravings animal pictures, human being pictures, humped bulls, hand impressions and more engravings are depicted.

### Myths and Traditions of Village

In Hattibelagala village nearly thousand houses are situated, with combination of all caste people are living together, but majority of the people belongs to Kuruba community which traditionally belongs to shepherd occupation as usually in rayalaseema region. Most of the people of village were engaged in agriculture as their occupation. In this village the people following different myths and traditions as part of their cultural patterns, and they celebrated some festivals and followed some customs as part of annual activities.

### Siddalingeswara Swamy

On the hill of Urukonda there is a shiva temple locally called “Siddalingeswara Swamy” temple, according to local people once upon a time there was a hindu saint named Siddalingeswara was there and he thought spiritual things to surrounding people, later he did “Jeevasamadhi” in that place, later the place become as “Siddalingeswara Swamy” temple. Here in this temple the people following a tradition that, woman were not allowed to the temple, only men should go to the temple, especially matured women should not enter to the temple. From far away Urukonda hillock looking like Ganesha, so the village people perform Ganesha pooja sometimes.

### Nallabotulamma

In this village there is a local goddess named “Nallabotulamma”. Village people celebrate annual fest for goddess and sacrifice their fowl and cattle as part of the celebration which locally called as “Devara”, according to local myths with these sacrifices the goddess may give them good rains, fine profits in their agricultural activities, and protect them in all aspects.

### Sanjeevani

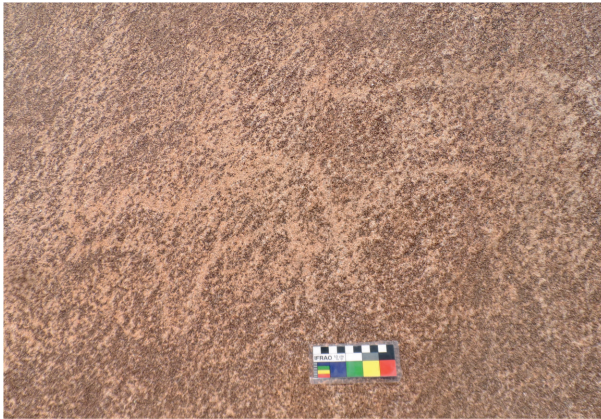
According to local myths the village hillock Urukonda have a unique characteristic is there, that on the hillock there is a plant called Sanjeevani. This plant of Sanjeevani have superstitious powers like dead things can also alive with touching of the Sanjeevani plant. Once upon a time some of the villagers went to hunting and hunted a rabbit, then they killed and fired the rabbit to eat, one of the hunters unknowingly taken the Sanjeevani plant and clean the fired rabbit, when the leaves of Sanjeevani plant



touches to the rabbit the rabbit alive and ran away. From that time onwards the village people have a faith that on the Urukonda hillock there is Sanjeevani plant is there.

### Chirutha Aata

In this village the villagers were participated in a traditional game locally known as “Chirutha Aata”. Once up on a time the villagers catches wild cheetah (Chirutha) with arranging some traps. If cheetah was cached by the villagers they give good feeding for some days and announce in surrounding villages and call on the Chirutha Aata to participate. One fine day in the occasion of Ugadi celebrations the game was held with all the gathering of surrounding villagers. In this game number of villagers can participate with their own village team with including of their trained dogs, and all the participants have to be in their prescribed place up to their term come. The Cheetah was tied with strong iron chain and the chain was tied to central pillar, with that the Cheetah can roam surrounding the pillar in diameter. If any village come their term to fight with Cheetah they can fight with Cheetah with taking support from their trained dogs, finally which village was won that village have a great credibility among surrounding villages. And won village participants were reach the village with joyful rally [Uregimpu]. And sometimes accidentally the Cheetah’s chain was cut down and that may attacked to the surrounding people. Once upon a time this was unique game, but now a days it is not conducting as the social conditions were changed, up to recent times of five to six decades earlier also the game was conducted by the villagers, even today some of the old people were there in the village who personally saw the Chirutha Aata game in their young age.



**Plate 11 : Animal Representation Rock Art,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 12 : Human Representation Rock Art,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 13 : Humped Animal Representation Rock Art,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.**



**Plate 14 : Humped Bull Representation Rock Art,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.**





Plate 15 : Humped Bull Representation Rock Art,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 16 : Habitation with Stone Circle,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 17 : Neolithic Stone Tools,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 18 : Iron Slag pieces,  
Hattibelagala, Kurnool Dt.

### Kammaguttapalli

Kammaguttapalli <sup>16</sup> village is located 6 km northwest of T.Sundupalle village and mandal in YSR Kadapa District. Towards southeast of the kammaguttapalle these megalithic monuments were noticed at distance of 2 km, noticed on a granite hillock, locally named as ‘Pandurajubandagutta’. The noticed monuments are Megalithic dolmens and Slab circles encircled in 3 to 4 circles. Approximately 10 to 12 monuments are noticed, the dolmens are encircled with slab circles. The slabs are semi circular in nature with one circle to four circles. In one circle the slabs are reach to height of 2 to 2.50 m and width of 1.50 m., the slabs are packed with stone rubble for strength and support. Normally the slabs are 8 to 9 in a single circle. In the centre of these monuments dolmens are noticed with orthostats and the front orthostats of all the monuments are missing. One of the monument having four slab circles, the smaller circles are in the outer circle, going into the inner circles the size of the semi circular slabs are increasing in their size. In the second slab circle instead of Stone slab, a megalithic anthropomorphic statue was noticed with bottom in the form of a plank, in middle or in the waist region of the statue is narrow in appearance, in the pectoral or the proximal region of the statue noticed with two half jointed together without a head. In the place of the head region a ‘V’ shaped depression was noticed. This type of statues is noticed at ‘Midimalle’<sup>17</sup> in Chittoor district, explored by Prof. K.P. Rao of University of



Hyderabad. Over the entire site Kammagutta palle is a peculiar site having this type peculiarity with anthropomorphic statue noticed in YSR district. In the same mandal, another site ‘Devandlapalle’ was noticed within few km. In the surrounding places of these monuments megalithic pottery was encountered.



Plate 19 : Slab Circles, Kammaguttapalli,  
Kadapa Dt.



Plate 20 : Dolmen, Kammaguttapalli,  
Kadapa Dt.



Plate 21 : Anthropomorphic Statue, Kammaguttapalli,  
Kadapa Dt.



Plate 22 : Slab Circle, Kammaguttapalli,  
Kadapa Dt.

### Pagidyala

Pagidyala <sup>18</sup> is a village is situated 8 km northeast of the Nandikotkur town, and south bank of Tungabhadra river. To the west of the present village with a distance of ½ km. a megalithic site is found with nearly ten menhirs. These menhirs are locally known as “*Niluvurallu*”. Behind these menhirs a local myth is traditionally following by the local people. Once upon a time from the present village a family was going to another village for marriage, when they reach the out skirts of the village they have to sacrifice some formalities to the local village deity. But they forget that formality and crossed the village borders near “*Badanamma Bavi*” (*Badanamma well*) hence the local deity got angry upon the family and given curse to the family. The family become stones, not only family but also bullocks, bullock courts, animals’ children, women, their relatives and their different things all were became as stones. The place nearby Badanamma well, then the place is known as “*Badanamma Gutta*”, and the menhirs known as “*Niluvurallu*”. These are the megalithic menhirs were made by lime stone. These are measuring from ½ m to 3 m. height. Due to the road extension the village people disturbed the site and some of the stones are remaining.



Plate 23 : Menhirs, Pagidyala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 24 : Menhirs, Pagidyala, Kurnool Dt.

### Parumanchala

A group of five menhirs were noticed in the centre of the village. Parumanchala<sup>19</sup> village is located in between Nandikotkur – Atmakur main road, which is situated 15 km southeast of the Nandilotkur, and 5 km south from Atmakur. The author assumes that some of the menhirs look with megalithic anthropomorphic features, how for it is correct we don't know? Villagers call these monuments as **“Perantala Rallu”** (the local people telling a tale about these stone structures), and the platform is known as **“Perantala Arugu”**. Among these erected stones one of them looks like women, which carry a child in her waist. These erected stones measuring one meter, two meters, and one and half-meters respectively. Due to the widening of the road, these menhirs are kept aside, performing daily rituals to these stones. So these figures might have played an important role in the cult of the megalithic people and early historic times.<sup>10</sup> (Narayana, J., *Studies in Megalithic Culture of Tungabhadra valley in Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh*, Unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to Dravidian University, Kuppam, 2016, pp. 43-44.)



Plate 25 : Menhirs, Parumanchala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 26 : Menhirs, Parumanchala, Kurnool Dt.

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