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## MUJJUGUEM IN KHAMMAM DISTRICT: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

In the present article an attempt is made to analyse the archaeological information about Mujjugudem to trace its excavations history. Mujjugudem and the adjoining region consists site history, stupa, sculptures on the basis of which the analysis is made.

**KEY WORDS:** *Mujjugudem, Stupa, monks and nuns, coins, pradakshina patha, sculpture.*

### INTRODUCTION

This village is situated near Nelakondapalle in Khammam District, in the present Telangana. In addition to Nelakondapalle, Mujjugudem also is a centre for Buddhist activities. This Buddhist site is very close to the village Mujjugudem. This is on the high way. This is also inside a trade route and connected with many Buddhist centres. This is 15 miles away from Khammam and 20 miles from Jaggayyapeta.

This site was excavated for the first time in the year 1977, which created interest in Archaeological Department of A.P. to probe further in their work to unearth the Stupa etc. These excavations covered an area of about two square miles. This is marked by Bairagigutta on south, and Balasamudram in the north. To the village Nelakondapalle on the south, Mujjugudem village is situated on the North-East, and on the East, there is a village called Sadasivapuram.

Buddhists chose this site because of the presence of the tank Balasamudram where there is a abundant water and which is free from the buz of the cities. They usually choose their sites where there is drinking water in abundance, and facilities to the drainage etc. In this atmosphere they could pay more attention to propagate their faith. There is a pillar which looks small in the middle of the tank. According to the villagers it is a very lengthy pillar and because of the accumulation of the silt the pillar looks small. Historians like Chandra Reddy feel that more and more historical information would be available if this pillar is taken out<sup>1</sup>.

The word Mujjugudem is explained in different ways by different scholars. A section of the scholars is of the opinion that because of the growth of the Munja grass, (a variety of grass) in plenty in that place it is called so. This grass is used by monks to produce mats etc. Another section says that the word Majjiga means butter milk. As this village is rich in milk, curd, ghee etc., this is called so, as in the case of Kummarigudem where pots on a large scale were prepared. This is also a third section which goes to the extent of saying that the word Manjusri is used to Lord Buddha in reverence and the Majjhima Nikaya<sup>2</sup> is the oldest text which gives the disciplinary rules for the monks and nuns. As these Buddhist mendicants practiced these rules here this place is called Majjhima Gudem which in course of time became Mujjugudem. This last view is acceptable to Chandra Reddy<sup>3</sup>. But I personally feel that the word Mujju is from the Sanskrit root munj which means sounding. (The word mounji means the string of the bow is from the same root). There must have been in this site a training school for preparing idols etc., usually known as sculptures colony which reverberates throughout the day with the sounds of their chistle, hammer etc. So, this site must have been called Mujjugudem. The resounding system found here also may be responsible for this name.

This site for the first time was excavated on a trial basis in 1977 and for the second time in 1984, by the archaeological department of the A.P. Government. In the first exploration nine standing images of Buddha were discovered. They also found a Quadrant of a mound to a depth of fifteen feet, which revealed a fine flooring in brick. There was a red-soil mound where big Stupas were noticed. There is also evidence of a big brick-platform running the mound. A portion of the drum also was unearthed. As this site is in close proximity with the other famous sites like Amaravati, Jaggayyapeta, Nagarjunakonda etc. it may be presumed that this site also came into the belt of the above sites. The Archaeological department in their excavations in 1977 found the articles like nine statues of Buddha; pottery of black and red ware; paneled pottery; lead coins of Satavahanas; brick-wall foundations and a mound recognized as Buddhist Stupa. On this mound there were four stones in all the four quarters. The speciality of the mound lies in its eastern side, where resounding system of voice comes from about 200 yards distance.

In the excavation conducted in 1984, many other items were unearthed. Scholars working at this felt that this Stupa is a ground and brick-built Stupa as in Dhulikatta, Ghantasala etc. The moulded bricks are of two types – a) Rectangular and b) 'L' shaped. The



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bricks measure 22 x 10 x 3 inches – These are similar to that of Nagarjuna konda and Amaravati. The height of the Stupa is 50 ft. and the height of the anda is 30 ft. The diameter of this anda is 140 ft. It seems that there are 24 spokes in the Stupa. The rectangular cells measure 170 x 140 cms. The diameter of the Adhithana and *Pradaksinapatha* is 200 ft. It had a vedika (circular platform) with hemispherical dome. Hermika with Chattra or chattras decorative marbles slabs and Ayaka pillars have not so far come to light.

A wide range of pottery pieces consisting of dishes, bowls, 12 small pots, with beautiful carving creeper-plates are observed near Bairagigutta. There must have been a colony of potters.

Two kinds of beads, one with hole and the other without hole-were discovered. Terracotta figures like a figure of bull used as a toy, were found. Two conch-shells used in the preparation of bangles, three coins-one made of copper belonging to the Vishnukundis<sup>4</sup>, with a *burnakumbha*, the other a lead one belonging to the Ikshvakus and the third one probably belonging to the Satavahanas, were noticed.

A semi-circular white bangle, spout, small disc like mud lamp, articles connected with gold purification, shells with letters, quartz nodule, etc., also came to light during the excavations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The articles found in these excavations, reveal the fact that this place starting from pre-history and witnessing Hinduism, became famous in the Buddhist-period during the first century B.C. to the third century A.D. The sculpture of the place indicates that it belongs to the Amaravati school and from the coins we note that this centre enjoyed the sway of the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus and the Vishnukundis.

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