

## Cultural Study of Hero Stones of Chitradurga region, Karnataka

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### ABSTRACT

Chitradurga district is located in the Indian state of Karnataka. The History of this region starts with the presence of habitats of mankind during Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Mesolithic and Megalithic ages. Various rock paintings and rock carvings of Chalcolithic age were also found in this region. The explorations carried out in the places like Talya and Janakallu in Chitradurga district revealed artefacts belonging to Old stone age. Middle stone age sites were also discovered at Bramhagiri, Nunkimale, Halekere etc. Robert Bruce Foot discovered crude hand axes and other implements from Talya and Janakallu in Chitradurga district.

Chitradurga district is located in the Indian state of Karnataka. The History of this region starts with the presence of habitats of mankind during Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Mesolithic and Megalithic ages. Various rock paintings and rock carvings of Chalcolithic age were also found in this region. The explorations carried out in the places like Talya and Janakallu in Chitradurga district revealed artefacts belonging to Old stone age. Middle stone age sites were also discovered at Bramhagiri, Nunkimale, Halekere etc. Robert Bruce Foot discovered crude hand axes and other implements from Talya and Janakallu in Chitradurga district considered to be one of the oldest settlements of the Old stone age man. Besides these sites, Parashurampura, Chandravalli, Sangenahally, Bramhagiri, Nunkimale and others are important Neolithic sites in this region. The excavations carried out in the places like Chandravalli and Bramhagiri revealed more artefacts belonging to Neolithic and Megalithic age. More than one hundred of megalithic Burials were found at Roppa of Bramhagiri region.

Chitradurga region was ruled by the famous dynasties like Maurya, Satavahana, Chalukyas of Badami, Rashtrakuta, Nolamba, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Hoysala, Yadava, Vijayanagara and Nayakas of Chitradurga. In ancient and medieval period it was called as Chinmuladrinadu, Sulgallu, Chimmatturu pattana Chimmattanakallu etc. Through this article an attempt to carve out the immense importance of the availability of epigraphical and literary source of hero-stones to construct and reconstruct the glorious past of the Chitradurga district.

During the Village to Village survey of Archaeological and Epigraphical remains of the Chitradurga district, more than 200 herostones are found. They are classified as below,

- Hero stones set up in memory of a hero who died in the battle.
- Hero stones set up in honour of heroes who died defending or rescuing the cattle during cattle raid or turugol.
- Hero stones set up in memory of the heroes who died fighting with Tigers.
- Hero stones set up in honour of heroes who died in Boar hunt.

- Hero stones in honour of persons who died of self immolation.

The Study of these hero Stones Provides interesting details of cultural aspects.

The practice of eulogising the qualities of a dead person influenced this tradition and led to the creation of various types of memorials in Karnataka. The institution of Viragals or Herostones was in vogue from the 5th century A.D. in Karnataka.



Hero stone - Tamatakallu, Chitradurga, Karnataka.

The first and foremost Hero stone is Gunamadhura's Viragal at Tamatakallu in Chitradurga district belonging to the period of 500 A.D. It was one of the rarest hero stone in this region. It was placed in the field of Hanumantappa a former of the village. It has a single panel. Three heros were standing in a single row. They are holding bow in their left hand and knife in the right hand. Some arrows are shown in their foot. The slab contains an inscription of the end of the 5th century AD referring to the good qualities of a Gunamadhura.

#### I . Hero stones set up in memory of a hero who died in the battle :

These type of hero stones are commonly found in the Chitradurga District. Generally these are having three panels. The lowest panel depicts the hero fighting with enemy. The second panel depicts the hero carried by Apsaras usually in a

vimana. The upper panel depicts a sivalinga, a Nandi, a priest and hero. In addition to this, the symbols of sun and moon are also shown. However, there may be differences in the way in which the details are executed. The number of panels are also variable to their convenience.



Hero stone – Hulluru, Chitradurga.

A typical example of a hero stone with two panels is noticed in the premises of Hanuman temple at Hulluru (Cta). The lower panel depicts a hero, who is having bow and arrow. He has ear studs, necklace, bangles and other ornaments. He wears dhoti. The upper part depicts sivalinga, Nandi, hero seated in anjalimudra. sun and moon are also shown within the semi circle. It may be assigned 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. Maha sati stone is also placed here. But it was belonging to later peiod.

A beautiful hero stone was noticed at Bagenal(Cta). It was placed at a field of a former just adjacent to the village. It has four panels. But, the lower panel was incompleated. The second panel consists the battle scene. Hero was seated on the horse. He is having spear in his right hand and he is attacking on the soldiers mounted on horse. The third panel depicts the hero in the vimana being carried by chauri bearing Apsaras. The last panel depicts the hero who was seated in anjalimudra, priest, linga and Nandi. On either side of linga a chauri is depicted. A son and moon are also shown here. It may be assigned 11<sup>th</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Another hero stone which is having the same features was found at Hire Emmiganuru(Cta). It was placed at premises of veerabhadra temple.

A peculiar hero stone was found at Metikurke(Hir). This is an interesting hero stone depicting six panels one above the other. All the three panels from the bellow depicts the hero charging his opponent. This part containing war scene. Hero and his soldiers are having arrow and bow in their hands. Opponents are also having the same weapons. The fourth panel depicts, on the left side, two heros are seated in a mantapa flanked by chauri bearers. On the right side, two Apsaras are shown. They are standing in front of the

agnikunda with rising their right hands. In the fifth panel, a nandi, a linga worshiped by a priest and four Apsaras are shown. In the upper panel which is arch shaped, consists a sun and moon.

Four hero stones are found at Dodda Ullarthi village. These are laying at a field just adjacent to the village. One of these hero stone is consists three panels. The lower panel depicts a battle scene of soldiers mounted on horses. One on the left side is shown with a long spear piercing through his head. on the right side, opponent enemy is seated on the elephant holding with arrow and spear. In the second panel, two Apsaras are carrying the hero holding with chauries. In the third panel a hero is seated. a priest, a linga, Sun and moon are also shown. The sculpture may date from 12th century AD. It seems to commemorate the death of two heroes in a single battle. It is interesting for the elaborate depiction. The inscription on the hero stone refers, when the singhapottakali Nolamba ruler Permadi was ruled over in this region, a hero was died in a battle. It may be assigned to mid 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. A another hero stone which was placed here, has the same features. The third hero stone It depicts three in panels. The lower panel shows the hero attacking his enemies. On the left side, hero standing in front of his soldiers(meny soldiers are shown). On the opponent side, four soldiers are shown. In the central panel the hero stands with two Apsaras, who hold chauris in their hands. Another two persons are also shown here. In the upper panel Nandi, priest, linga, a hero along with apсарas are shown. Another two persons are also shown in the top. Probably, these two persons are also died with the hero in the same battle. The inscription on the hero stone refers to the reign of Nolamba pallava Annaiah and mentions the death of kaantada Goggimaiah along with his two soldiers in a battle.

There are meny memorial stones are found at Dharmapura(Hir). Out of them, some are hero stones. One of the hero stone with three panels is noticed in the premises of P.U College. Lower panel of the sculpture was damaged. It consists battle scene. Two soldiers, Elephant and Horse are shown back side of the hero. In the second panel the hero is being taken by the Apsaras to the heaven. on the left side, another Apsara was also shown. In the top panel a linga, flanked by priest and the hero seated in anjalimudra is shown. It may be assigned to 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. A another hero stone, which is placed adjacent to this has two panels. The lower panel depicts a hero, who is having sparrow seated on the horse. He wears ear studs, necklace, bangles and other ornaments. He wears dhoti. The upper part depicts sivalinga, flanked by priest. sun and moon are also shown on the top of the sculpture. It may be assigned 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. Maha sati stone is also placed here. But it was belonging to later peiod.

There are three hero stones were found at kunabevu(Cta). These are placed in the middle of the village. All the three hero stones are having same features. In the lower panel depects, war scene. Hero is shown holding arrow and bow fighting with foot soldiers. In the second panel depects, the hero carried by Apsaras. And in the upper panel depects, a hero, a linga and nandi are shown. These may assigned 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.,

Another two more hero stones were found at Kolahal(Cta). These are placed in just behind the Kalmeshwara temple. These hero stones are attributed to memory of a hero who died for good cause in war. These are having same features which we have already discussed in the above. These may be assigned 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

Another hero stone was found at Talaku(ck). It is placed just behind the Eshwara temple. It consists three panels. The lower panel depicts battle scene. Hero holds the bow and arrow. In the next panel depicts the hero is seated in mantapa and it was being carried by two Apsaras. In the upper panel the hero is shown seated on a platform attended by two chauri-bearing ladies. It may assigned 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

There are two hero stones are found at Janakal(Hsd). These are placed in the premises of Shankaralinga temple. One of the sculpture has three panels. The lower panel contains battle scene. The second panel depicts the hero being carried by Apsaras. The last part depicts the hero, priest, linga and Nandi. Ason and moon are also shown here. The inscription on the hero stone is dated 1302 AD and mentions the death of Somadandanayaka, who was a local ruler of Bemmattur. It was belonging to Ballala-III of Hoyasla kingdom.

Two hero stones are found at premises Bhogeshwara temple at Yalagodu(Cta). One of the hero stone has three panels. The lower panel depicts a hero piercing an enemy with a spear as also a soldier mounted on a horse. The second panel depicts the hero being carried by two Apsaras, who hold amritghatas in their hands. In the upper panel the hero is shown seated on a platform attended by two chauri bearing ladies. The inscription on the hero stone refers to the Vijayanagara period dated 1405 AD. It seems to record the death of Bomminayaka son of Mandinayaka.

There are four hero stones were found at kogunde(Cta). These are placed in the premises of the Basaveshwara temple. All the four hero stones are having same features. In the lower panel depicts, the hero charging his opponent. Hero is shown holding arrow and bow fighting with enemies. In the second panel depicts, the hero in mantapa flanked by chauri bearers. And in the upper panel depicts, a hero, a linga and nandi are shown. It may assigned 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

Three hero stones were found at Malali(Hsd). These are preserved at the premeses of Kalmeshwara temple. One of them, is belonging to the Hoysala period. It has three panels. The lower part consists battle scene. Hero was seated on the hores with holding bow and arrow. He charging his enemy. The second panel consists the hero in the vimana being carried by Apsaras. The last part depicts the hero who was seated in anjalimudre, a priest, linga and Nandi. The inscription on the hero stone is belonging to the Hoysala period. It mentions the death of Madigouda son of Machagouda of Malali and Bammisetti Nagaiah are died in a battle.

Six hero-sati stones and two hero stones are found at Hireguntanuru(Cta). out of them two hero stones are prominent. These two are placed in front of the Dyamalamba temple. One of the hero stone has three panels. The lower

panel depict battle scene. The second panel depicts the hero in the vimana being carried by chauri bearing Apsaras. The last part depicts the hero, priest, linga and Nandi. On either side of linga a chauri is depicted. Another hero stone has also the same features. These two may be assigned to 16-17<sup>th</sup> century AD.

There are four hero stones are found at premises Bhogeshwara temple at Shirekola(Mlk). These hero stones are placed in front of the temple. All the four hero stone are having three panels. The lower panel depicts battle scene. The second panel depicts the hero being carried by Apsaras, who hold chauries in their hands. In the upper panel the hero is shown seated on a platform attended by two chauri bearing ladies. These may be assigned to 16-17<sup>th</sup> century AD.

There are three hero stones were found at Doddaghatta(Cta). These are placed in the premises of Hanuman temple. Out of them, . One of the hero stone has three panels. The lower panel consists the battle scene. On the left side, the was hero is seated on the Horse. Hero holds sword. On the right side, another soldier who is having also sword fighting with his enemy. In the second panel consists the hero being carried by two Apsaras. The last panel depicts the hero, priest, linga and Nandi. On either side of linga a chauri is depicted. Another hero stone is also having the same features. The third hero stone has three panels. Its lower part contains battle scene. Hero was seated on the Elephant. In the central panel the hero is depicted as being carried by Apsaras in kanthas'lesha manner. In the top panel a linga, flanked by priest and Nandi and also the hero seated in anjali mudra is shown. Sun and moon are also depicted above. These hero stones may be assigned to 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

A beautiful hero stone was found at Menasinodu(Hsd). It was placed in the compound of school. This hero stone has four panels. The two panels from the bellow are consists battle scene. The third panel depicts the hero is being carried by Apsaras in kanthas'lesha manner. In the top panel a linga, flanked by priest and Nandi and also the hero seated in anjali mudra is shown. Sun and moon are also depicted above the sculpture. It may be assigned to 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

A hero stone is found at Akka – Tangi temple of Bramhagiri (Mlk). It consists of three panels. The lower panel depicts the encounter between the hero and enemies in a battle. On the left side, hero is seated on the Horse. He was having spear. Meny soldiers are shown behind him. On the right side, opponent was also seated on the horse. He has also spear. The central panel depicts the hero being carried by six Apsaras each holding a pot. In the upper panel the hero is seated on a pitha flanked by meny Apsaras, a linga and a nandi are also shown here. Sun and moon shown in the top of the panel. It may be assigned to 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

There are two hero stones are found at Mattodu(Hsd). These are placed in the premises of Banashankari temple of the Village. One of them has three panels. The lower panel consists battle scene. The second panel consists the hero being carried by Apsaras, who hold chauries in their hands. In the last panel the hero is shown seated on a platform attended

by two chauri bearing ladies. A son and moon are shown here. It may be assigned to 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century AD. Another sculpture ruined, which was placed along with this hero stone.

## II. Hero stones relating to rescuing the cattle during cattle raid or turugol :

Hero stones set up in the honour of heroes who died in defending the cattle are called **turugol** hero stones. This type of hero stones were laid for village fellow men who tried to bring back their lost cattle, those people were remembered as heroes of the village. These type of hero stones are common in the Chitradurga district. Normally they have engraved in three parts. The lowest part depicts the hero engaged in a fight with enemy. The central panel contains the figure of hero carried by Apsaras usually in a vimana. The top panel depicts sivalinga, Nandi, priest and hero in addition to symbols of sun and moon.

There is one hero stone found at Hayakal(Cta). It is placed in the compound of the Ramalingeshwara temple. It consists of three panels. The lower panel depicts two heroes defending cattle from enemies who are mounted on horses. In the middle panel two heroes are being carried by three Apsaras. These Apsaras are hold chauries in their other hand. In the upper panel two heros are seated in padmasana. Two apsaras are shown behind the heros. This may be dated in the first half of the 9th century AD.

There are three hero stones were found at Adanur(Hlk). These are placed in the premises of the Banalingeshwara temple. One of them belonging to 10<sup>th</sup> century AD., another was 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. First one consists of three panels. The lower panel depicts a heroe defending cattle from enemies. In the middle panel the hero is being carried by Apsaras. These Apsaras are hold chauries in their other hand. In the top panel hero was seated in padmasana, a linga which was worshiped by priest, sun and moon shown. The inscription on the sculpture belongs to the Rashtrakuta period i.e., 968 AD. Another hero stone which was placed here is also having the same features. This hero stone is dated 1372 AD.

Another hero stone was found at Dodda Ullarhi(Clk). It consists three panels. The lower panel depicts battle scene. Hero defending cattle from enemy. Cattles are shown at the back side of the hero. He holds the bow and arrow. In the next panel depicts the hero being carried by two Apsaras, who hold chauries in their hands. In the upper panel the hero is shown seated on a platform attended by two chauri- bearing ladies. The inscription informs that it was setup in the reign of Pallava Nolamba 974 AD in the memory of Maraiah son of Kambhaiah, who died defending the cattle.

One of the hero stone which was found at Kalleshwara temple of Malali(Hsd) is belonging to Hoysala period. It has three panels. The lower panel shows the hero defending cattle from enemies. The second panel depicts hero being carried by two Apsaras in kanthaslesha fashion. The upper part depicts the seated hero, a priest, a linga and a Nandi. Sun and moon are shown at the top. The inscription which is on the sculpture informs that it was setup in the reign of Someshwara of

Hoysala. in the memory of Ajabova, who died defending the cattle.

There are six hero stones and two sati stones are found at Godabanahal(Cta). One of the hero-stone has three panels. The lowest panel contains the cattle raiding. The cattle's are shown in a row vertically at the right margin. Two heros are shown here. They are standing by holding sword and rectangular shield in their hand, and they looks like fighting with enemy. The team of the enemy contains infantry and a horse-rider who is shown prominent in the team his infantry are holding sword & shield in their hands. In the second panel, two heros are being carried by apsaras in a vimana. In the upper panel, the hero is seated in Anjalimudra before a Sivaling and a yati is worshipping the Sivalinga by standing at the left side. The figures of cattle shown here indicate the cattle raiding. Rest of the hero stones are also in similar.

There are three hero stones are found at Lokadolalu(Hlk). These are placed just behind the Siddeshwara temple. One of them having the features of Turugol hero stone. It has three panels. The lower panel depicts the battle scene. Hero defending cattle from enemy. Cattles are shown at the back side of the hero. He holds the bow and arrow. In the next panel depicts the hero being carried by two Apsaras, who hold chauries in their hands. In the upper panel the hero is shown seated on a platform, a nandi and linga depicted. Sun and moon are also shown on the top of the sculpture. It may be assigned to 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Another hero stone was found at Kadabanakatte(Cta). This hero stone was placed behind the Hanuman temple. It is engraved in three parts. The lowest panel depicts the hero engaged in a fight with enemy. The central panel contains the figure of hero carried by Apsaras in a vimana. The top panel depicts hero is seated in Anjalimudra before a Sivaling and a yati is worshipping the Sivalinga by standing at the left side.

Many sculptures and memorial stones were found at Vaddikere(Hir). These are placed in the premises of Siddeshwara temple. Out of them, one of the hero stone has three panels. The lower panel depicts battle scene. The hero shown defending cattle from a soldier. The second panel contains the hero being carried by Apsaras. The upper part depicts a priest, a linga and a Nandi. Sun and moon are shown at the top. The sculpture may be assigned to 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

## III. Hero stones set up in memory of the heroes who died fighting with Tigers :

There are hero stones set up in memory of the heroes who died fighting with Tigers. These types of hero stones are also seen in the Chitradurga district.

A typical hero stone is found at a hamlet belonging to Nayaka community in North – East of Konasagara of Molakalmuru Taluk. It is 5' high and 3' wide. It is housed in what resembles a small shrine. A hero wearing a dhoti is holding a Tiger by its neck. The tiger has laid a hind foot on the hero's legs and a fore-foot on his belly. A dog is attacking the Tigers hind-leg, another is trying to catch it by its tail. An

inscription states that, Eramanchaiah, son of Nigudoddaiah of the village died after killing the Tiger, which was attacking the villagers.



Hero stone- Godabanahal, Chitradurga.

An interesting hero stone preserved in the compound of kalmeshwara temple at Godabanahal(Cta). It consists of three panels. The lower panel depicts a battle scene of hero with the Tiger. Two persons are shown just behind the hero. One holds bow, arrow and spear. In the second panel depicts the hero, who was seated in vimana being carried heaven wards by four Apsaras. The upper part depicts sivalinga, Nandi, priest, hero seated in anjalimudra, The sun and The moon are also shown on the top of the sculpture. The inscription on the hero stone refers to Krishna-III(946 A.D.), the Rashtrakuta king. Inscription started with shaiva shloka, at the time of Rashtrakuta period, kannayya was ruled over kadambalige nadu as a samantadhipati. He grant some field to a family, who died fight with the Tiger.

One of the hero stone which was found at Nagasamudra(Mik) is belonging to Hoysala period. It was placed at near by water tank of the village. It has three panels. The lower panel depicts the hero, who was seated on the horse fighting with the Tiger. Some peoples are shown behind him. The second panel depicts hero being carried by two Apsaras in kanthaslesha fashion. Another apsara was also

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shown here. The upper part depicts the seated hero, a priest, a linga and a Nandi. Sun and moon are shown at the top. The sculpture may be assigned to mid 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Another hero stone was found at Anivala(Hsd). It was placed at the premises of Veerabhadra temple of the village. It depicts in three panels. Lower panel consists fighting scene of a hero and the Tiger. Hero holds the sword in his hand. In the middle panel the hero is being carried by Apsaras in a vimana. These Apsaras are hold chauries in their hand. In the top panel hero was seated in padmasana, a linga which was worshiped by priest, sun and moon shown. The sculpture may be assigned to mid 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.

A beautiful hero stone was found at Kotahal(Hlk) which was now preserved at the premises of S.J.M College, Chitradurga. It has three panels. The lowest shows the hero fighting with a tiger. In the middle panel the hero shown seated within a vimana, which is being carried by four chauri-bearing Apsaras. In the upper part a linga flanked by a priest on the left side and seated hero in a anjalimudra on the right are shown. The sun and the moon are also shown at the top of the sculpture. The sculpture may be assigned to 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> century AD.

A typical hero stone was found at Imangala(Cta). It was placed at premises of Veerabhadra temple of the village. It depicts in two panels. The lower panel shows the hero fighting with a tiger. He has holding spear in his left hand. Behind him two oxens shown stealing away from the scene. Another oxen was also shown behind the Tiger. He wears ornaments like, necklace, bangles, etc. Sun and moon shown at the top of the sculpture. The sculpture may be assigned to 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century AD.

## Conclusion :

The above study makes it clear that the region is rich in diverse types to hero stones. We have not only hero stones of the common type but also hero stones representing death of heroes in different contexts such as in defending the cattle, in boar hunt, attack of tigers etc. There are also memorial stones in honour of persons who died of self immolation (siditale). The hero-stones of Chitradurga district are remind us of the glorious self-sacrifice of the heroes in this region. The medieval society expected chivalry from the brave persons just as it expected charity from the wealthy citizen. Inturn, the heroes were assured of 'fame and gain in this world and place in heaven' Assurance of spiritual, social and economic gains appears to have emboldened soldiers so much as to lead them to embrace death on the battle field without anxiety.

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