Land and the man are the true foundation of the history of any country. The actions of man have their first cause in the nature of the land in which he lives, and history is the record of his attempts to satisfy his ever-growing needs, both on the material and spiritual plane. The physical features of Andhra Desa, its mountains, rivers, climate and forests have a great influence on human character and largely determine human action.

Andhra Desa covers a wide expanse of territory which presents infinite varieties of soil and scenery. Wide downs, rolling plains smiling with harvest, fantastic tors and logans, luxuriant forests, rivers tumbling over precipices and leaping in wild water falls, and streams foaming in wild torrents along with rugged rocky beds, combine in one superb panorama the varying aspects of awe and beauty. Alluvial tracts added to the natural wealth of the country.

Walls and rock that crown many of the hill-tops were easily turned into impregnable fortresses.

Archaeological excavations and explorations conducted by the Department of Archaeology, in the recent years have revealed evidence of human habitation belonging to the early historical period particularly of the Vishnukundin period at (1) Yeleswaram in Nalgonda district (2) Keesaragutta in Rangareddy district (3) Tummalagudem in Nalgonda district (4) Gollathagudi; (5) Gummadam in Mahaboobnagar district
(6) Rajahmundry in East Godavari district; (7) Vijayawada in Krishna district and (8) Veerapuram in Kurnool district.

1) Yeleswaram:

Yeleswaram is situated on the bank of the river Krishna in the Devarakonda taluk of the Nalgonda district. The village is located in a valley, covering an area of 13 square kilometres and is contiguous to the Nagarjunakonda valley. These two valleys form a ring of hills cut into two halves by the river Krishna.

This valley is relieved by small hillocks with precipitous hills surrounded on all sides and the swift flowing river Krishna serving as a means of both defence and transport. The picture-sque landscape and the natural setting of the valley caught the attention of the pre-historic man who settled down here before the dawn of civilisation as evidenced by stone tools left by him and it remained a cradle of culture in the early and medieval historical periods. Vast and varied remains have been encountered belonging to the late Satavahanas, Pallavas, Vishnukundins, Chalukyas and many other dynasties that followed in succession right up to the late medieval period or even modern times. A large scale excavation was undertaken during the period 1960-1965 as this valley was threatened with submergence under the waters of Nagarjunasagar Dam across the river Krishna.

Excavations laid bare several distinct occupation levels lying one above the other and exposed a whole phase of human society teeming with life.
The first civilised people who settled here were megalithic folk whose burials were encountered nearly 3.09 to 3.68 metres below the surface. The historical period witnessed building construction activity. The excavation yielded a rich crop of minor antiquities such as terracottas, iron implements, potsherds both designed and decorated, chaitya shaped sprinklers, highnecked vases, bangles, stucco, coins etc., which shed enough light on the culture milieu of different periods.

In a small pot, a hoard of 49 coins of Vishnukundin dynasty was found which had on the obverse a rampart lion and on the reverse two hanging lamps etc. This clearly proved that the direct successors of Ikshvakus in this valley were the Vishnukundins.

During the early part of this period dull redware of Ikshvaku period continued but the grey ware emerged and pre-dominated this pottery. The important finds of this period consisted of beads, terracotta, figurines, stuccos and glass bangles, iron slags, iron nails, staplers, finials, stone pots, etc. Some votive saivite shrines were found associated with layer 4 which is assigned to Vishnukundin period. Layer 4 cutting I consisted of gritty earth mixed with white pellets and brick bats, layer 4 - cutting II - contained rubbles, brick bats and gravel mixed with sand. In this period an enclosure wall was brought to light. Brick structures continued in this period and was installed with Benalinga connected by an abhisëka drain.
The spade of the archaeologist brought out a good number of implements, representing various activities of the people in agriculture, building construction, warfare and other household objects. The emergence of the historical period marked the maximum use of iron and Vishnukundin period particularly yielded a large quantity. The iron implements could be classified broadly under four categories namely

1. Building materials
2. Agricultural implements
3. Implements of war and chase
4. Household objects.

2. Keesaragutta:

Keesaragutta is about 40 kilometres from Hyderabad which is a great Saivite centre from times immemorial. The name Keesaragutta might have derived from Kesarigiri a hill of lions or lion hill.4

Physical features of Keesaragutta and its surroundings:

The district is mostly hilly, and thickly wooded, known as the Rajkonda range and the Anantagiri range of hills which is composed of high-level laterite across the district. Isolated granite hills are seen everywhere. The slope of the land is from west to east and south-east. The geological formation is of the Archaean gneiss. Tors and boulders of fantastic shapes are seen everywhere, composed of basalt and granite piled up in picturesque confusion.

The most important river of the district is Musi which rises from Anantagiri hills near Sivareddipet and flows almost due east; it joins the Krishna river near Vadapalli in Nalgonda district.
There are two protected forest tracts in the district where certain kinds of good timber viz. teak, ebony, and nalla-maddi are available. Unprotected forest tracts exist in all parts, consisting of ghairi or common wood used as fuel and also for thatching and wattling, low scrubby jungles give cover to leopards, bears, hyenas and occasionally tigers, while in the more open plains antelopes abound. Partridges, quail and wild pigeons are very common, and in the tanks and rice fields wild duck, teal and snipe are plentiful in the winter.

Climate and Rainfall:

The climate is salubrious and equable, exempt from the fierce heat and severe cold of the north and the depressing influences of the coast. However, the numerous tanks and streams make the climate somewhat damp especially during the rainy season. The temperature during the winter and summer seasons stands at 13°9° and 39.8° centigrade respectively. The average rainfall of the district is about 90.68 cms. or 35.7 inches. The district receives rains both from the south-west and north-east monsoons mostly from the month of June to August but occasionally in September, October and November also.

Geological Setting:

The prevalent rock belonging to this group is known as "The Peninsular Granite Complex" which includes a variety of granites polyphiritic, equigranular, massive, banded and
streaky. Depending on the colour of felspar two types of granites are recognised, one pink and the other grey, but there is gradation from one to the other. Rocks are usually coarse to medium grained and wide variation is seen regarding their textural features. The most common minerals are quartz, felspar, ferromagnesian minerals which include biotite, hornblende and epidote, whereas magnetite, apatite, zircon, sphene, allanite and pyrite, occur as accessories. The granites are traversed by numerous quartz and pegmatite veins and basic dykes, which vary in size considerably from small veinlets to large roofs. The basic dykes stand out prominently as ridges trending in east-north-east, west-south-west or north-north-east, south-south-west directions and range from 30 metres to several kilometres in length. These are either doleritic or basaltic in composition, consisting of plagioclase felspar and augite.

**Bhimas:**

Rocks younger than the Archæans but older than the Deccan traps are represented by the sedimentary rocks known as the Bhimas. These include grits, sandstones, shale and limestone. These overlie the granites unconformably with coarse gritty and pebbly sandstones at the base, succeeded by shales, lime stones. The shales are olive green, drab or purplish in colour and the limestones are grey cream coloured and flaggy.

**Deccan Trap:**

Lava flows known as Deccan traps cover a considerable portion of the district, concealing part of the Bhimas as well as the archæans. These traps are formed by the solidification
of lava extruded through fissure like eruptions in the older rocks. As the flow of lava was intermittent, there are several
layers or flows of the rock, the individual layers differing
slightly in texture and thickness. They are mostly fine to
medium grained, dark grey to almost black in colour and consist
of plagioclase felspar and augite. Some of the layers of the
traps are scoriaceous due to escape of gases through the lava
before it was fully consolidated. The scoriae or cavities in
such rocks were later partly or wholly filled by secondary
minerals, like zeolites, calcite and various forms of
cryptocrystalline silica, such as chalcedony, agate, onyx, jasper etc.

Laterite

Laterite is a product of tropical alterations suffered by
some rocks and is developed typically in the tropics. It is a
porous, pitted, clay-like rock with red, yellow, brown, grey or
mottled columns depending on some measure on the composition.
defunct. The fort was provided with four main gates to stop
direct onslaughts of the enemy forces. Some water gates were
also provided near the water pools for fetching water into
the fort. As there are no perennial sources of water such as
a river or streams in the vicinity, the natural depressions
at the gradients were cross-bunded during the Vishnukundin
period to store rain water. There is a huge tank at the foot
of the fort on the west which must have served both as a
source of drinking water and as a deep water hurdle for the
protection of the fort. Entire fort is studded with remains
of brick structures.

In the course of excavations at the palace complex many
Vishnukundin coins of a squatting lion with a spiralled tail
and raised fore-paw on the obverse, a poornaghata flanked by
two lamp-stands all enclosed in rayed circle on the reverse
were found. Besides, beautifully modelled human and animal
stucco figurines used for decorating the walls of the building
were also recovered. The pottery was red polished, brown
polished and dull redwares. The collection also included a
few necks of sprinklers and spouts of red polished vases.
The other antiquities were shell bangles, beads of semi-precious
stones, a stone plaque of Mother goddess, and a decorated
globular pot, and a human skeleton in inverted position found
under the fallen bricks.

The massive style of architecture of the multi-storied
secular buildings and the decorative features indicate that
it was the palace complex of Vishnukundin period, protected
by a secondary fortification wall of rubble which encompasses
an approximate area of 1 Sq. Km. the outer and the inner defensive fortification walls, the numerous religious and secular structures inside the fort, the coins, the pottery and other finds, all datable to the Vishnukundin period are evidences enough to prove that Keesaragutta was a centre of human activity in the early Christian era. It can also be deduced that the people settled in and around Keesaragutta during the times of Vishnukundins in view of the historical, political and religious importance of the region in those days.

More details regarding the finds of Keesaragutta excavations are given in the following chapters.

3) Tummalagudem-

Tummalagudem is a village in Ramannapet taluk of Nalgonda district, 5 km away from Ramannapet, on Bhuvangiri-Nalgonda road. There is a big tank near the village. The length of the tank bund is about 4 kilo metres. There are reminiscences of an ancient city on the banks of river 'Musi' extending upto the tank-bund near Tummalagudem. This extensive area is surrounded by fields. Ruined temples, votive shrines, brick structures, basements, show that it was a great city which flourished by the name Indrapalanagaram during the Vishnukundin period. North of Tummalagudem and adjacent to the river Musi there is a hillock called 'Indrapalagutta' extending one km in length and half a km in breadth. There is an ancient fort on this hillock belonging to Vishnukundin period. This fort has twelve turrets. On the top of the hill there is a deep tank which is locally
known as 'Enugula Bavi'. Big sized bricks, stones, basements, walls, ruined rooms are seen near this tank. The fortification has gates and towers. A figure of priest carrying material for the worship of Lord Siva is carved on a huge boulder. On the back side of this hill there is a spacious mandapa supported by twelve pillars. There exists another Siva temple on the eastern side of the hillock. The linga is made of black granite the height of which is 60 centi metres.

In the vicinity of this temple towards east, there are ruined buildings; adjoining these ruins there is another Siva temple, with a tank to its north, flight of steps leading down to the Musi river. About 200 meters away from Indrapalagutta one hundred and one Sivalingas are seen, carved on flat rock in the Musi river bed.

The people of those times might have preferred the area for their habitation in view of the availability of natural water resources, cultivable fertile lands in the vicinity, abundant rain fall for agricultural operations, natural rocks, and other material required for building activity for secular, religious and defensive purposes.

4) Gollathagudi:

Gollathagudi is situated about 10 kilometres from Jadcharla railway station on Secunderabad-Dronachalam Metre-gauge line within the precincts of Alwanpalli village of Jadcharla taluk. Alwanpalli is situated about 100 kilometers from Hyderabad.
Excavations at this place, brought to light an early temple of Mahavira with a sanctum, antarala and Mukhamandapa foundations of two more temples with its lime plastered brick walls and the Mukhamandapa. Excavations were continued in order to expose the brick temples situated on the southern flank of the mound IV (Padalagadda) and to clarify their chronological position in the general structural sequence of the site.

The details of the temples were completely obliterated for they were entirely ruined leaving the foundations in position. Three temple plans, all oriented east-west, were brought to light during the excavations. Temple I was built on a plan containing the Garbhagriha, a pillared mandapa and an entrance porch on the east. Temple III consists of a Garbhagriha and an entrance constructed in between these two temples. Temple II originally stood on a simple plan having a Garbhagriha facing east and a pillared mandapa with a northern entrance.

The excavations also yielded large number of stucco figurines which included human and mythical animals.

In the temple south-west of Padalagadda a Nandi carved in granite with head mutilated and decorated with band of beads with hanging bell around the neck, is found. The size of the bricks used in construction of this temple is 41 x 21 x 7 cms. This must be a Saivite temple of Vishnukundin period.

Redware pottery found here consists of storage jars, vases, vessels etc.
Though the entire area, where excavations were conducted, revealed only the temple complex, there are evidences of extensive habitation, half a kilometer away from the temple complex towards Alwanipalli village, where pottery like storage jars of coarse dull redware, vases, etc., were found from a deposit of two metres on the road side. On the other side of the Jadcharla-Devarakonda road towards south, pieces of redware pottery of early historical period are visible on the surface itself. The land is under cultivation of dry crops like Jawar etc.

These areas extend upto two kilometres towards south touching the western bank of the Dindi river a tributary of the Krishna which supplies water both for drinking and agricultural purposes. The river takes a curve near the outskirts of Alwanipalli village giving a picturesque view.

The climate is generally hot with moderate rainfall.

The soils of the area are (1) black cotton soil derived from Deccan traps; (2) Calcareous loamy soils covering the purana sedimentaries; (3) red loamy soil derived from the Dharwar schists and (4) sandy gneissic soil occurring in the granite country. The soils of Mahboobnagar mostly consist of stiff black 'ragur'. Stony red soils are observed in a few parts.

Ancient workings for copper are found in the neighbouring taluks like Mukthal. Quartz veins with malachite stains were also observed in the vicinity.
The pink and grey granites of the area supply any amount of building material for heavy construction. The porphyritic granites take excellent polish and produce decorative stones in pleasing colours. The massive Narji and flaggy limestones yield good material for construction and pavement. The extensive quartzites of Amarabad plateau afford suitable material for construction and also for making grinding stones.

5. Gummadam:

Gummadam is a small village on Wanaparthy-Kolhapur road in Mahboobnagar district, a few kilometres away from the river Krishna. This is one of the villages which comes under the submergeable area of Srisailam project.

Excavations were conducted on the mound situated 1½ kilometres away from Gummadam towards east, brought to light a Saiva shrine constructed with bricks measuring 40 x 20 x 6 cms. datable to Vishnukundin period. Linga and Panavatta are partly broken, and uprooted.

Pottery consisting of vases, lids, jars of coarse pale red-wares some of them washed with deep red, were recovered.

Animal bone fragments, terracotta figurines were also found.

Evidences of early settlements are noticed in this region. The region enjoys fairly good weather throughout the year. The bulk of the rain fall is received during the later part of the south-west monsoon period.

The main soil of the region are the chalk and the sandy soil. Black cotton soils are also found.
6) Rajahmundry:

Excavations were conducted by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, A.P., at Rajahmundry on the eastern banks of the river Godavari near Chandrika mini-theatre to glean the vertical cultural development at the site. The archaeological site is situated on the banks of the river Godavari bounded by Chandrika theatre on the east, the river Godavari on the west, an elevated area on the north and a katcha Municipal road on the south. The site is actually located in the area of Chagalanadu pumping scheme.

The excavations brought to light very interesting stratigraphical and structural evidence from the site. The deposit exhibited 7 layers above the gravel. Layer 7 is the earliest occupational deposit. It indicates structural activity datable on the basis of pottery to 4th century A.D. A wall of bricks of the size of 51 x 23 x 7 cms. and 46 x 23 x 7 cms. exposed in the slopes of Godavari bund near the old steps intended for the bathing also belongs to this layer.

The foundations of a brick temple of two rectangular cells was discovered. The temple was badly ruined and no superstructure was extant. No presiding deity is found in the cella. The bricks used in the construction measure 30 x 20 x 7 cms. The bricks of this size were also used in the construction of contemporaneous wall running east-west, a few metres away from the temple on the north. Layer 6 is the earliest layer
of the site. Conspicuous change of pottery fabric is of some significance. A structure probably apsidal or found was found below the foundation of the brick cellas. The plan of the structure could not be exposed to view, since it was thoroughly superimposed by the cellas. The bricks are about 46 x 23 x 7 cms. long. The size of the bricks is generally assigned to the Vishnukundin period in Andhra Desa.

The fabric of black and red ware is profusely prevalent in the early historical period in A.P. The earliest layer which contains fragments of sprinkler necks, arretine ware, the other dominant redware sherds suggest a date that ranges between 2nd and 4th century A.D.

The layer that overlies the earliest one is associated with the remains of the temple complex that contains the brick of 46 x 23 x 7 cms. again suggest continuity up to a later date.

The earliest mention of Rajahmundry in any literature is in the introduction to the Telugu translation of the Mahabharata which was composed by Nannayabhatta in the reign of the eastern Chalukyan king Raja Raja Narendra. In this the town is called Rajamahendrapatnam and is referred to as the capital of the Eastern Chalukyan kingdom and the central gem of the Vengi country.

Geology:

Rajahmundry and its surroundings (hinterland) form one of the most interesting regions geologically, because of the variety of its formation. Trap rocks which are evidently the south-eastern most extension of the Doccan traps, occur on
both sides of the Godavari near Rajahmundry. The traps are greenish basalts containing amygdales with chalcedony and agate. The main interest lies in their showing a set of intercalated limestone beds.

There are in addition some limestones beneath the traps. The traps are overlain unconformably by reddish sandstone and conglomerates which in other places rest directly on the gneisses and Gondwanas. They vary from shaly sandstones to conglomerates; the prevalent colours are reddish, purplish and yellowish-brown.

Climate:

The climate is comparatively equitable and although it is very warm in April, May and June, it is never too oppressive during the rest of the year. More than half of the annual rainfall is brought by the south-west monsoon while a greater part of the rest occurs in October and November.

Forests:

The forest near Rajahmundry contains timber and bamboos. Some of the beds are highly ferruginous and have been used as sources of iron ore when an indigenous smelting industry was in existence.

Graphite is an essential but sparsely distributed, constituent of some of the members of the gneissic series. The different sandstones of the area yield good building stones. The limestones associated with the traps are used for lime-making.
7) **Vijayawada**—

"Egypt is the gift of Nile" wrote Herodotus centuries ago. It can be said in a like manner that the hinterland of Andhra Desa, from Rajahmundry to Vijayawada is the gift of the Godavari and the Krishna figuratively the white and the blue niles of the Deccan. These two rivers have exercised, from times immemorial, a profound influence on the economic and the political life of the people of the Deccan and the two eastern Deltas.

The period of Vishnukundin rule was a period of great building activity. A number of temples were excavated on the hill sides for the accommodation of the dieties of the Brahmanical pantheon. There is a group of Brahmanical cave temples in and around Vijayawada situated on the northern banks of the river Krishna. There are two caves in Vijayawada, five in the neighbouring village of Mogulrajapuram and five more in the village of Undavalli, about two miles away on the opposite bank of the river.

Vijayawada, Vijayavata, Vijayavatika, modern Bezwada, seems to have risen to great importance from the ninth century A.D. onwards. Its antiquity would be carried much further back if future discoveries should prove its identity with the Vijayapura of an early Amaravati inscription. "Bezawada" is mentioned in the inscription of 'Yudhamalla' found on a stone pillar in Malleswara temple at Vijayawada. This inscription belongs to saka 820 (898 A.D.).

In the inscription of Pandranga of Addanki datable to S.770 (848 A.D.) it was stated that 'Kandukur' was made as great as...
Besawada city. So it can be taken that Bezwada was a flourishing city even prior to the 9th Century. Cave temples of Bezwada Mogalrajapuram, and Undavalli further prove that people had their early settlements in those parts.

Besides the above monuments, the recent archaeological excavations conducted on the top of the hillock Mogalrajapuram brought to light, a Brahmanical shrine built in brick belonging to Vishnukundin period. Vestiges of brick structures in complete ruins are also seen. A square plinth with large bricks before a votive stupa is also visible. Votive stupas were neatly carved over the surface of the living rock in bas relief are observed.

The 'U' shaped hill was found quite convenient to the builders to have a series of rock-cut shrines from end to end. Exploration of the surrounding area has brought to view carvings of early Buddhistic faith in the form of chaitya representations executed on the vertically cut ridges. Cave No. V which faces west is at the turn of northern end; it has a flight of steps at its extreme right leading to the terrace. Right from this point to the hill top the ridges were found cut down vertically for facilitating easy ascent and some times steps were carved out within the bed rock to make the access easier.

The flat hill top at one place was found scooped out to a depth of 1 metre in square and circular shapes, which in all probability meant for conserving water. Some heaps of brick-bats scattered here and there deserve further examination.
A Vishnukundin coin, partially cut, bearing double 'ya' "^" symbol in addition to a few red ware pot sherds were collected from surface.

The climatic condition of the region is of extreme kind with hot summers and cold winters and may be classified as tropical. At Vijayawada the heat is excessive and unbearable owing to radiation that develops in the crest of Indrakeela mountains nearby. The rainfall of the region is unevenly spread and it is determined by the two monsoons it receives i.e. the south-west and the north-west.

The soils consist of three main varieties namely, the alluvial, the black-regur and the red-ferruginous types. Endowed with a rich variety of soils, the region occupied an important place in agriculture. Enormous mass of silt, which the river Krishna carries has in course of ages, been deposited in the form of a wide alluvial delta and every bit of the alluvial soil must have put to agricultural use by the early settlements in and around the river near Vijayawada.

Mineral Resources:

The gneissose granite and dolerite serve as a good material for building construction.

8. Veerapuram:

Veerapuram village is situated on the right bank of the river Krishna in Mandalakur taluk of Kurnool district. Early temples and living floors of Early historic times have been brought to light during the excavations conducted by the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute, Hyderabad. Cultural succession from about 18th century back to 4th-5th
century A.D. has been established. An addition to the known pottery fabrics of the early historical period at the site consists sherds of the Russet coated ware. The crowning part of the mound consists of temples which are among the early brick built shrines in South India and the oldest known in Andhra Pradesh.

There is continuity of occupation here.

The climate of the region is on the whole quite healthy. The first three months of the year are usually pleasant and the wind blows with moderate force from the south-east. Very heavy rain usually falls over the region, the heaviest showers usually coming from the north-west.

Geology:—

Mostly shales, limestones and quartzites are found. In places about the right bank of the Krishna owing to denudation, these lime-stones come up to the surface. They are of a red purple colour generally purple always, and are at times seemed with pale turquoise green calcareous layers or thin bands of limestone. The actual limestones lie below the shales.

Flora and Fauna:—

The region is covered with very thick forests. There are extensive grassy level lands which afford pastures to the numerous herds of cattle. The wild animals are found in the region.

Soil:—

The region is rich in regur a soil of a superior kind. Inspite of inadequate rainfall this soil responds very well
to jawar and cotton. Minerals like barytes, clay, iron-ore, ochre and steatite are found in the area. It is well endowed with regard to building material etc.

9. Tellakunta:-

Tellakunta is on the motorable road from Sultanabad to Dharmapuri in Peddapalli taluk of Karimnagar district. The importance of the place lies in the fact that a hoard of Vishnukundin coins have been recovered in the past which have been examined and published by Dr. M. Rama Rao.\textsuperscript{11}

To the east of the village lies series of low lying hills, consisting of large quantities of iron-ore. A huge tank is situated on one of the hills. Surface exploration over the hills revealed some circular structures made of brick which are apparently remains of blast furnaces. Human habitation is not found on the top of the hills but for these furnaces. It is quite likely that iron ore was smelted in situ and exported as pig iron. As such, the place must have been a commercial town of considerable importance during the early historical period. Exploration over the neighbouring mounds revealed red-polished and dull-redware potteries.

The range of hills around Dongathurthi, Nandimedaram and Tellakunta consists of magnetite quartz rock. Iron ore in the form of banded magnetite haematite quartzite occurs in this area.

The climatic conditions are moderate. Red sandy loamy soil, familiarly known as Chalka soil, forms the main type
although large patches of black clay loamy soil are found scattered.

The sources of irrigation are tanks and wells.

The epidiorites form low hillocks and occur as sheets and dykes invariably covered by residual soils. By far the major portion of the region is composed of the peninsular granite complex, comprising the pink and the grey granites. Limestones are also available which are high in calcium carbonate and low in magnesium carbonate. These can be used for the production of magnesia used in the preparation of refractory linings in metallurgical furnaces.

10) Nelakondapalli:

Nelakondapalli is situated on the Khammam-Kodad road some 26 kilometres from Khammam. At a distance of one and half kilometres from the village there are places known as Viratrajudibba and Kishakagundam claiming importance in the days of Mahabharata. The old relics and coins unearthed in an area within a radius of 16 kilometres and the supposed relics of the cowsheds of Sahadeva strengthen the belief that the place was noted as far back as the days of Mahabharata. Some Buddhist stupas also existed around this village.

Physical features:-

The village is lying between 17° of the North Latitude and 80° of the Eastern Longitude. The climate of the taluk is moderate. The average annual rain fall is about
The soils in this region are of four varieties viz., (1) sandy soil (2) red chalka, (3) black cotton soil and (4) choudu. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people here. The two important rivers that flow through this taluk are the river Muner and the river Palair both of which ultimately fall into the river Krishna.

Khammam district is very rich in mineral resources, forest wealth and power potentialities. This district forms part of the Indian peninsula which is quiet stable, composed of geologically older rocks. The oldest rocks are the Archaean comprising schists, amphibolites, dolerites, nepheline, syenites, gneisses and granites. The Gondwanas of this district were represented mostly by lower Gondwana rocks and partly by upper Gondwana. Lower Gondwanas are represented by Talchir Boulderabod followed by Barakar sand stones, shales and coal seams and by younger Kambli felspathic sandstones and grits of light brown colour with red clay bands and few lime stone beds.

Slates and slaty phyllites, argallaceous group of end rocks is best developed and are the most wide spread rocks in the area. Sericite, biotite, chlorite and quartz form the essential minerals where tourmaline is an important accessory. Quartzites are of massive, fine grained recrystallised rocks, white, cream or purplish in colour. Occasionally iron oxide forms the cementing material. Dolomites and Dolomitic lime stones are fine grained, dark or cream coloured highly siliceous variety. These are economically important, since they contain deposits of Barytes in them.
There are vast reserves of dolomitic lime stones within the pakkals. The district possesses various other mineral deposits though in minor quantities such as iron ores, graphite, garnet, kyanite, dolomites, corundum, slate, mica, soapstone, chronite etc., apart from the vast sources for building materials.

Limestone and marble deposits are occurring in this region. The reserves are not estimated but it is clear that they will run to enormous quantities. These marbles are found to give low porosity and absorption values and suitable for interior and exterior decoration and also building purposes.

Forests:

The forests in the Khammam division lie mostly on flat and undulating ground. The hills are low rising to a maximum height of 1,300 feet above mean sea level. The forests consist of mixed deciduous species, characteristic of the Deccan peninsula. The main types found in the division are teak type, mixed type, satin type, anduk type and bamboos. The quality of bamboos is fairly good.

Archaeology:

There is an extensive ancient habitation site very close to Nelakondapalle. Since the mound was dug away for removing pati earth, the strata were thoroughly examined. In the trial trench dug to a depth of half-a metre, black and red-ware pottery, clay beads, one terracotta human figurine, etc. were brought to light besides innumerable lead coins of the Ikshvakus and the Vishnukundins. During the course of
scooping operations, fragments or broken hands, legs and bronze knobs, terracotta figurines, coins etc., have been brought to light. In the nearby fields, marbles are noticed in abundance, in the course of ploughing. Four trenches were taken here, covering the mound where brick walls connected by rubble alignments were noticed. Stumps of columns of white marble and some decorative motifs are also noticed among the fragments collected in the course of exploration. About two kilometres North-East of Nelakondapalle there is a mound popularly known as Viratraja Gadda or Erradibba. This appears to be a stupa constructed with bricks. Evidences of two phases of habitation in the early historical period are seen at this site. Nelakondapalle appears to have been a flourishing township of the Ikshvaku and Vishnukundin periods.

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REFERENCES

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3. ibid, page 48.
5. - - ; 1961; District Census Hand Book; Hyderabad District, Chapter I, pages 1, 2, 3.
6. - - ; 1968; District Census Hand Book; Hyderabad District Chapter I, pps. A5, A6, A7.
8. - - ; 1966; District Census Hand Book, Mahaboobnagar District, 1961; Chapter I, p.iv.
12. - - ; 1961; District Census Hand Book, Khammam District, A.85 A.86.
13. ibid page A4, A5.
14. ibid page A9.
15. ibid page A3, A46-47.