



UNEARTHING THE FORGOTTEN JAIN LEGACY OF DANAVULAPADU

A multidisciplinary exploration of religious confluence in the kadapa region

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Abstract: The study is aimed at revealing the incredible Jain tradition of the Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh with reference to the recently unearthed Jain Temple at Danavulapadu. The Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Government Museum in Kadapa has a great influence on sculptures, inscriptions, and other artifacts that form the history of the region. Based on the archaeological evidence, cultural analysis, and historical records, the study reveals the multifaceted history of this important but scarcely studied Jain site.

The primary concern is explained as the missing or relocated Jain sculptures and artifacts found at the Danavulapadu site. The research will reveal the subsequent destiny of these missing Jain artifacts and find out what happened to them after they were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. The research uses a multi-pronged methodology through which the author reconstructs the history of this ancient site by engaging in archival research, visiting the site, and museum, and performing comparative analysis.

The study reveals that Kadapa (earlier called Cuddapah) was a part of the Madras Presidency during British colonialism, and the discovery of the Jain idols at Danavulapadu was reported in official records. The archaeological work exposed a massive, almost intact granite figure of a Tirthankara along with other important relics proving that the discovered area has historical and religious importance. The facts and findings concretely suggest the complex interaction of two religions on the site, which is Danavulapadu: Jain and Hindu.

The conclusion includes the works of Jains and other dynasties in the Kadapa region, where Jain caves, chaityas, and sculptures have been taken over or assimilated into Hindu temple structures. The objectives of the research are to explore the religious and art history of the area and to enrich the knowledge about this area's social and cultural dynamics.

Keywords - Jainism, Kadapa, Archaeology, Mahaveer Museum, Art

I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Government Museum in the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh has a vast collection of sculptures, inscriptions, and artifacts that were used during the period. The museum was set up in 1982 and is credited to a kind donation made by the Marvadi¹ community. Though the museum has a collection of Hindu sculptures, weapons, and pottery, its Jain art gallery is of special worth². The sculptures included in this collection offer the essential evidence that Jainism, which used to be quite active in Kadapa, is now almost nonexistent. But at the same time, the museum also tells a rich story of religious and cultural conversion, which is evident in the conversion of Jain temples to Hindu temples.

This paper aims to discuss the topic of Jainism in the Kadapa region, exploring the historical context and analyzing artifacts in the museum, as well as investigating factors behind the declining influence of Jainism in the region. The investigation employs archaeological data along with historical and cultural narratives to reconstruct the forgotten history of the Jain Temple at Danavulapadu. Through the exploration of this often-overlooked artifact of the Kadapa region, the study seeks to bring to light the religious and artistic history of the area as well as to offer a more informed analysis of the social dynamics of the region.

¹ See. Kamalakar, pg. 55

² See. Kamalakar, pg. 55

II. PROBLEM

The key problem addressed in this research article is the apparent disappearance or relocation of the Jain sculptures and artifacts discovered at the Danavulapadu site. While the site was once known as an important Jain center, with a well-preserved Jain temple and a colossal statue of a Tirthankara, the site today appears to be a deserted space³, devoid of these significant archaeological finds. The excavations done at this site yielded temple remains preserved up to aadisthana, pillar fragments, nisidika stones, coins, bangles, and stones⁴.

The study seeks to establish the fate of these missing Jain sculptures and find out what happened to the sculptures after they were discovered in the early 20th century. The basis of this study is founded in the analysis of original historical records, particularly official documents and letters which offer a glimpse of the exploration and unearthing of the Jain temple at Danavulapadu. These documents are of paramount importance with regard to the peculiarities of the discovered temple and the actions that were first undertaken to protect the site and its artifacts.

Thus, by employing site visits, museums, and comparative approaches, the author aims to reconstruct the fragmented narrative of the Danavulapadu Jain temple and its relevance to the religious and cultural context of the Kadapa area. The primary objective is to identify the fate of the lost Jain images as well as to reveal the relationships between Jainism Hinduism and other religions in this historically significant region.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study discusses the discovery and partial exploration of a Jain temple at Danavulapadu in 1903-1904 to explain the findings and its role in the evolution and religious history of the Kadapa region. A multi-prolonged methodology was employed to reconstruct this broken story of an ancient site by combining historical and geographical investigation, site visits, museum studies, and comparative analysis.

This research is founded on prismatic analysis of the primary archival records. At the center of these are the Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency and a letter from A. Sambasiva Iyer, the Sub-Magistrate of Jammalamadugu, to the Collector of Kadapa, dated 24th August 1903⁵.

This document provides firsthand information on the discovery, subsequent excavations, and the characteristics of the discovered temple. Supporting these documents is a newspaper report of the Madras Mail written by Mr. Ramayya Pantulu, Deputy Collector, which offers other perspectives on the discovery.

In addition to the archival data, the study progressed to the field, involving visits to Danavulapadu itself. Exploration of the current remains of the temple and the surrounding environment allowed contextualisation of the data gathered from the archives within the physical environment of the site. This kind of experience helped to pay more attention to the location of the temple and its connection with the Pennar River, which was mentioned in the archival data.

Museum studies formed another crucial component of the research methodology. Visits to the Sri Bhagavan Mahaveer Government Museum⁶ in Kadapa and the Government Museum in Egmore, Chennai, provided access to a broader collection of regional artifacts, including sculptures, inscriptions, and antiquities. These collections offered comparative material, enriching the understanding of Jain art, iconography, and the broader cultural context within which the Danavulapadu temple existed.

³ See. Kamalakar, pg. 55

⁴ See. Kamalakar, pg. 55

⁵ See. Archaeological Survey of India, pg. 26-27

⁶ Two museums were constructed in the Kadapa region: the Sri Bhagavan Mahaveer Museum in Kadapa and the Dam Site Museum by the Irrigation Department in Mailavaram, Jammalamadugu. Sculptures, inscriptions, and antiquities found in surrounding areas, including Rajampet, Rayachoti, Badvel, Jammalamadugu, Mylavaram, Pulivendula, and Devapalli, were distributed between these museums.

The Mahaveer Museum is organized into four galleries: God/Goddess, Jain Art Gallery, Weapons and Pottery, and Attendants.

1. The Rajampet section houses sculptures of deities such as Lord Narayandudu, Goddess Annapura Devi, and Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, dating from the 9th to 15th centuries.
2. The Jain Art Gallery contains 12 sculptures of Tirthankaras like Parsvanatha, Jaina Choumukhi, and Mahaveera, sourced from Jeedimetla, Balnagar, Hyderabad, and Danavulapadu, some donated by Kadapa's Jain community.
3. The Weapons and Pottery section displays Khadgas, Khetakas, Buddha padas, seals, coins, granaries, Bidiri work, spittoon bowls, candle stands (donated by former Nawabs), and a print layout of the Srikalahasti inscriptions (contributed by Dr. Saranga Pani).
4. The Attendants section exhibits Yakshi, Yakshas, ascetics, hunting scene murals, scenes of daily life, and Shiva and Vishnu incarnation sculptures. The museum's collections represent Hindu, Jain, and Islamic traditions, as well as regional military and craft histories.



Fig. 01 Shri. M Ramayya, Museum in-charge explaining about museum collection, Jain art Gallery, Shri Bhagavan Mahaveer Government Museum, Kadapa, 25 September 2022, Photo Credit: Chaganti Durga Prasad

In addition, this research also incorporated a good source of primary and secondary research data. The Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1901-1905 were used to source historical background information and information on the state of archaeology in the region at the time of the temple's discovery. The secondary sources of Jainism and regional history as well as the archaeological writings expanded the research framework for the evaluation of the source materials.

The chronological and historical context of the temple was most deciphered with the help of epigraphic analysis. A careful study of the inscriptions discovered at the site was made, these include a damaged Sanskrit inscription in early Chalukyan script and two Chalukyan period inscriptions. These inscriptions with references to the rulers and land grants helped to give the archaeologist definite pointers as to the period in which the temple was constructed.

Finally, comparative analysis helped to link the Danavulapadu results to other noted Jain locations and inscriptions both in Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India. This comparative model helped to reveal the specificity of the object under study, namely the Danavulapadu temple with its atypical underground construction and the exceptionally well-preserved central deity. In other words, by situating the Danavulapadu temple within the context of other Jain temples, the study sought to determine the particular role this temple played in the history of Jainism in the area.

Thus, this research utilized a rich and interrelated methodological approach to investigate the Jain tradition in the context of Danavulapadu. In this way, the study conducted archival research, and site visits, tackled museum studies, reviewed literature, analyzed epigraphy, and compared findings to shed light on the history of this temple and its significance in the context of Indian religious and cultural history.

IV. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND: JAINISM IN KADAPA REGION

Jainism, an ancient Indian religion emphasizing non-violence, self-discipline, and the pursuit of liberation (moksha), has a long and complex history in the Kadapa region of Andhra Pradesh. Literary sources suggest its presence dates back to the 6th century A.D., with a notable surge in societal support during the 7th century following the reign of Ashoka. His grandson, Samprathi, is credited with re-establishing and bolstering Jainism, paving the way for royal patronage from dynasties like the Rastrakutas, Vengi Chalukyas, and others. This support facilitated Jain's participation in political life for a significant period.

The two main sects of Jainism, the Svetambaras (white-clad) and Digambaras (sky-clad)⁷, both left their mark on the Kadapa region. Sculptures, murals, and other artistic remnants found in temples and museums, such as the Sri Bhagavan Mahaveer Government Museum in Kadapa, offer tangible evidence of the practices and beliefs of both sects. Sites like Dommara Nandyala,

⁷ From the dawn of time, humanity has grappled with fundamental questions of existence: What am I? Where did I come from? What is my purpose? These inquiries have fueled religious and metaphysical speculation, leading to diverse explanations of creation and the cosmos. In India, various theological and ethical systems offer answers, including Jainism, among the oldest Indian religions. Derived from the Sanskrit "jina" meaning conqueror, Jainism applies this term to those who transcend worldly passions, achieving spiritual victory. Followers of this path are known as Jains.

Expounded by Mahavira over 2500 years ago, Jainism aligns with the shramana tradition, distinct from Vedic and Aryan origins, possibly even pre-Aryan. Over time, Jainism developed a comprehensive philosophical system encompassing ontology, epistemology, ethics, mythology, and ritual. This evolution led to two main sects, Shvetambara and Digambara, each with unique deities, monastic orders, leaders, scriptures, rituals, and festivals. See. Doshi, Saryu. Pg. 09

Gandikoda, Jammalamadugu, Daanavulapaadu, and Mylavaram stand as prominent historical Jain centers, each contributing to the rich tapestry of Jain heritage in the area.

The narrative surrounding the Shiva temple near Dommara Nandyala encapsulates the complex dynamics between Jainism and Hinduism in the region. Local oral histories, as recounted by individuals like Purushotham Chowdam, speak of a time when Digambara Jains practiced their rituals openly, eventually leading to a confrontation with the local Hindu community. The story of a challenge posed by disciples of Adi Shankaracharya, resulting in the Jain's departure, highlights the tensions and negotiations between different religious groups⁸. However, the enduring presence of Jain monuments, sculptures, and artifacts serves as a powerful reminder of their historical presence and cultural contributions.

The artwork titled 'Jain Choumukhi' (Fig. 02) was found at Daanavulapadu of Kadapa district in C. 10th- 11th century. It made its appearance during Rashtrakutas (Indra III C. 914-928 A.D) It is carved on Granite stone. On a square-like structure, on all four sides, Tirthankar is in a sitting position and represents Dhyana Padmasana (lotus pose) or a poster Samadi, i.e. meditation. In this pose, the figure sits in the padmasana and the palms of the two hands, one over the other, generally right on the left. The palm faces upwards. The figure is surrounded by yaksha and yakshini beside him and mukkudai (Triple umbrella) Mahavir is identified by the symbolic representation of a lion on the pedestal and on top of his head Simha mukha (Lion face) is beautifully carved in detail.

The interplay between Jainism and Hinduism is evident in the evolution of rituals and practices. While the Vedas, dating back to c. 1500 BCE, influenced the language, rituals, and traditions of numerous dynasties, including those that patronized Jainism, certain similarities emerged between the two faiths. The Jain practice of ritual bathing with honey, water, milk, and other substances, as described in the sacred text Varangacharita, mirrors similar purification rituals in Hinduism. This convergence of practices may have influenced the creation of the Choumukhi sculpture (Fig. 02), with its four-sided depiction of Tirthankaras, possibly echoing the concept of Trimurti in Hinduism.



Fig: 02 Jain Chaumukhi, Granite, Shri Bhagavan Mahaveer Museum, Kadapa, Date: 25 September 2022, Photo Credits: Chaganti Durga Prasad.

The sculpture, Parsvanatha, the 23rd tirthankara of Jainism appears during C. 9th-10th century of Hyderabad region. He is represented as Digambara (Sky-Clad). The Dharanendra and Padmavathi are associated as attendants to Parsvanatha on his left and right. This sculpture is made up of Limestone and has a little glossy finished surface because of touching the surface. It looks like a tranquil expression, with arms reaching down to knees, a Srivatsa (Diamond shaped) symbol on his chest. The fusion of the Naga cult (serpent worship) is in Jainism. It has seven hoods on top of his head. The attendants beside him are shown smaller than the tirthankara.

According to Jain belief, Indra, a semi-god in Hinduism and Jainism appoints Yaksha and Yakshinis to every tirthankara to serve as attendants. The story narrates the triumph of Jina of Parsvanatha over the cloud prince Samvara. The workmanship has developed a lot compared with Gupta period Parsvanatha sculpture. Currently, this sculpture is displayed in the Mahaveer Museum, Kadapa.

⁸ The Shiva temple near Dommara Nandyala stands as a significant historical site, bearing evidence of Jain visual imagery and artifacts. Local narratives, including those from Purushotham Chowdam, recount a history of Digambara Jains practicing their rituals in the area, leading to conflict with the Hindu community. These accounts describe a challenge issued by Adi Shankaracharya's disciples, demanding proof of Jainism's validity. The Jains' purported failure to provide such proof resulted in their departure, leaving behind monuments, sculptures, antiquities, and objects that now serve as remnants of their presence and offer glimpses into their history.

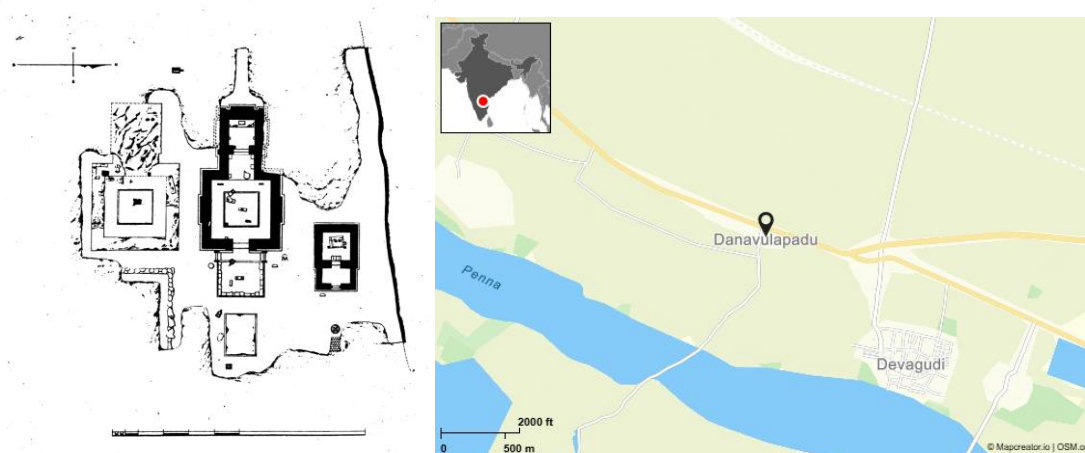
V. FINDINGS

5.1 Danavulapadu

Kadapa was indeed part of the Madras Presidency during British colonial rule in India. The Madras Presidency was a large administrative division that encompassed much of southern India, including present-day Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and parts of Odisha and Telangana.

The region of Kadapa, which was then known as Kadapa, was a significant part of the Madras Presidency. It played a crucial role in the region's history, economy, and culture during that period.

Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency during the year 1903-1904, mentions, Mr. B. Macleod, I.C.S, Collector of Kadapa reported the discovery of some important Jain relics were discovered and partially excavated at Danavulapadu on the bank of Pennar river, 5 miles east of Jammalamadugu, Rayalaseema.



Ground plan of the buried Jain temple at Danavulapadu, Jammalamadugu taluk, Kadapa (D), Image source: Snapshot from Annual Report of the Archaeological Department, Southern Circle, Madras. Coorg (1903-04)

The sanction of the Government was obtained for excavation at this place, and funds were provided by the Imperial Government. Partial excavation at this site resulted in the discovery of some buried Jain shrines, several statues, Images, and other sculptures.

The Sub-Magistrate of Jammalamadugu, A. Sambasiva Iyer, reports to the Collector of Kadapa on August 24, 1903, about the discovery of a buried Jain temple at Danavulapadu. The excavation unearthed a colossal, well-preserved granite statue of a Tirthankara, along with a hexagonal stone pillar, possibly used for lamps. An antechamber with a stone threshold and a finely worked monolith featuring "Digambara" figures were also found. A smaller, mutilated idol was located nearby. Iyer notes the presence of brick cellars and similar idols in the vicinity, suggesting a Jain settlement. He emphasizes the significance of the find, particularly the pristine condition of the main idol, and requests the involvement of the Archaeological department for further excavation and preservation.

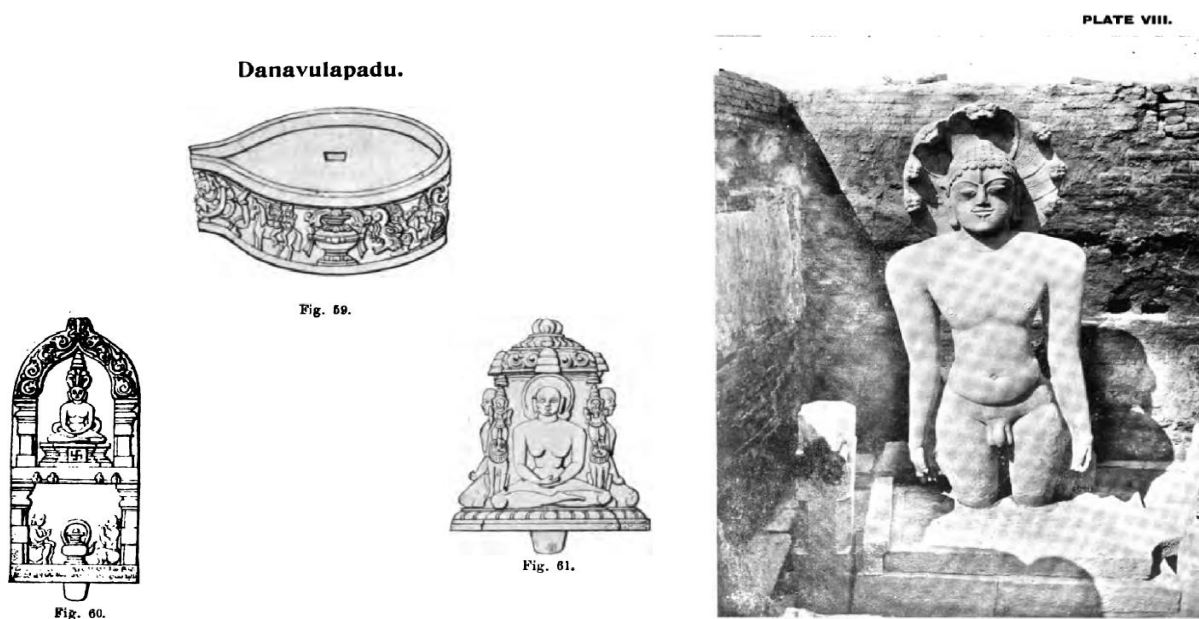


Fig. 03 Left: Excavated artifacts from Jain temple, Danavulapadu, Image source: Snapshot from Annual Report of the Archaeological Department, Southern Circle, Madras. Coorg (1903-04)

Fig. 04 Right: Colossal statue of Tirthankara in the shrine of the buried Jain temple, Danavulapadu, Jammalamadugu taluk, kadapa (D), a snapshot from annual progress report of ASI- 1903-1904.

Danavulapadu, whose name intriguingly translates to “village of Danavas or Rakshasas⁹,” presents a compelling case study of religious confluence and historical significance. Mr. Ramayya Pantulu’s contribution, published by the Madras Mail¹⁰, sheds light on the archaeological discoveries that paint a vibrant picture of this ancient settlement.

The discovery of a buried Jain temple, unique for its burnt brick walls in a region where such construction is unusual, immediately sets Danavulapadu apart. Within this temple lies a remarkable statue: a large, grey stone depiction of Jana, crowned by a seven-hooded serpent. This striking image hints at the rich tapestry of beliefs that once thrived in this area.

Further clues to Danavulapadu's past are etched into stone. A revolving stone block in front of the temple depicts Jain gods gathered beneath a tree reminiscent of the Bodhi tree, a powerful symbol in Buddhism. This block also bears an incomplete Sanskrit inscription in early Chalukyan or older script, a tantalizing fragment of a forgotten narrative. Nearby, granite pieces carry further incomplete inscriptions from the Chalukyan period, one referencing the reign of Vijayaditya and the other invoking a curse upon those who would reclaim granted lands.

The age of these antiquities, estimated to be at least 1,000 years, is supported by a 13th-century inscription mentioning ‘Jana Devara's temple’. This timeline places Danavulapadu within a historical context that witnessed the rise and fall of empires and the ebb and flow of religious influence.

The evidence points towards a fascinating coexistence of religions in Danavulapadu. This is not an isolated phenomenon; a 13th-century inscription from Amaravati records simultaneous grants to a Buddhist Chaitya and an Amareswara temple, demonstrating a remarkable tolerance and intermingling of faiths. Huen-Tsang's 7th-century accounts further corroborate this picture of amicable relations between Buddhists and Brahmins.

5.2 The Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai

The Government Museum in Egmore, Chennai was established in 1851. It has a rich collection of South Indian art under the patronage of various dynasties. It also has a separate Jain gallery which consists of 44 Jain sculptures. Jain sculptures of Daanavulapadu were discovered in C. 1920 A.D. The found inscriptions, Nishidi pillars, and sculptures belong to two different dynasties namely Rashtrakutas and Vijayanagar dynasties.

According to literary evidence of annual reports of Archaeological surveys, local people, and Historians of Kadapa, there are several Jain temples and sculptures found in Dammor Nandayala, Mylavaram, Daanavulapadu, Nemalla Tippa (Cave Site), Gandikoda backside, Jammalamadugu and few more. There are a few Jain relief sculptures carved inside mandapam pillars in Venkateswara Swamy temple, near Jammalamadugu. Several Terracotta bricks used by Jains have been found near Jammalamadugu and they were moved to the nearby Dam Site Museum, Mylavaram. It is believed that it was re-constructed into Sivalayam, a Hindu temple built by Nandavarika Brahmins in C. 14th Century during the Vijayanagara period. Till date, there are small Jain murals carved in the entrance of Gharbhayalam.

Buddha Paadas and chaityas were found on a large stone slab outside the temple premises of Shiva temple near Khajipet, Kadapa. A few Jain mural carvings are visible in Pushpagiri temple. This evidence shows that most of the Jain temples constructed in the Kadapa region might be dismantled, removed, demolished, migrated, or reconstructed into Hindu temples. Many of the sculptures were moved to the Government Museum in Egmore, Chennai where it was the principal museum of Madras presidency during the later half of the 19th century and 1st half of the 20th century.



Fig 05. Display of Jain sculptures from Danavulapadu, Kadapa, Government Museum, Chennai, Image source: P Sri Kavya

⁹ Danavulapadu's name translates to ‘village of Danavas or Rakshasas,’ meaning ‘donators or protectors.’

¹⁰ See. Archaeological Survey of India, pg. 28



Fig. 06 Left: Rishabha/ Mahavira on pillar, Narapura Venkateswara swamy temple, Jambalmadugu, June 2022, Photo Credit: Chowdam Purushotham.

Fig.07 Right: Jain Tirthankar on doorjamb, Siva temple, Dommara nandyala, June 2022, Photo Credit: Chowdam Purushotham.

The findings at Danavulapadu offer a glimpse into a complex and layered past, where different belief systems intertwined and left their mark on the landscape. Further exploration and analysis of these archaeological treasures promise to reveal even more about the rich history of this ancient settlement.

VI. CONCLUSION

Jains and other dynasties have contributed and left us remarkable evidence to trace today through murals, sculptures, and inscriptions. There are many Jain caves and Chaityas were converted into Hindu temples. To name a few, Chennakesava temple, Kanya Teertam, Daanavulapaadu, Naraswamy temple, and a few more temples near Mylavaram are still prominent Jain evidence. The oral stories of locals said that, In Dommara Nandyala, there used to be a row of Jain sculptures in a well, but that well was buried less than 30 years ago. Nearby Jain cave was also changed into a Shiva temple.

In this 21st century, Jains (Sevtamabara) still exist by living in their lifestyle. Current Jain communities in Kadapa are working as merchants. There are well-developed Jain temples in Kadapa namely, Shri Neminath Jain Sevtambar mandir located near YV street, Gangapeta looks similar to the Jain temple architecture of Gujarat. This is a renovated building of 'Sree Jain Shwetamber Temple Kadapa 1960'. The entire temple has been beautifully designed with miniature-style mural works related to Jain Tirthankaras and sculptures, all are made of white marble stone and it is well maintained by the Jain communities of Kadapa.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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