

A Study On Hero-Stones from Baireddipalli Mandal, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh

Dr. M. Sandhya Rani

Lecturer in History, Smt.NPS Govt. Degree College for women(A)
Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

Hero-stones constitute an important category of memorial monuments that reflect the socio-cultural values, warrior ethos, and commemorative practices of early and medieval Indian society. These stones were erected in memory of individuals who sacrificed their lives for the protection of society, community welfare, or the defence of moral and social order. Predominantly associated with the medieval period, hero-stones are significant sources for understanding social structure, religious beliefs, funerary traditions, and local historical narratives. The present study focuses on the hero-stones identified in Baireddipalli Mandal of Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. Through a detailed field-based investigation, the paper examines their typology, iconography, epigraphical features, spatial distribution, and associated ritual practices. The study attempts to contextualize these memorial stones within the broader socio-economic and religious framework of the region, highlighting their role in reinforcing ideals of valor, sacrifice, and social memory. By analyzing the regional variations and distribution patterns of hero-stones, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of local historical traditions and the continuity of memorial practices in South India.

Keywords: Hero-stones; Memorial Stones; Medieval Period; Socio-cultural Traditions; Funerary Practices; Baireddipalli Mandal; Chittoor District; Andhra Pradesh; South Indian Archaeology; Social Memory

1. Introduction

The study of Hero stones deal with the concept of eternity associated with the dignity of a human being in his/her life-time performance during their life and it is such an outcome of remembering such people who sacrificed their life for the welfare of an individual or for the society mean the form of erecting hero-stones as memorial stones in the outskirts of villages or in the fields which can be dated mostly during Medieval period. These are found be either in the form of sculpture/s is as it was an a custom and tradition that emerged in the past as mentioned above into a separate historical entity in different parts of India (Settar and Sontheimer 1982) in which South India forms part and hence takes an important place as a specific feature associated with socio-economic and religious feature of the then human society which are witnessed still now in many corners of India like Andhra Pradesh.

Hero stones are found in three forms engraved on stone along with sculpture, epigraph and sometimes both and are categorized as hero stones, sati stones and memorials to those who died observing a religious vow. The practice of setting up hero stones to commemorate warriors who laid their life for the cause of the society as it forms the basic theme associated with the remembering their attitude towards the society they lived and performed their welfare activity for the sake of the society. Here it is the stress on commemorating the fame of such persons as warriors in setting up hero stones, while it connected to the funerary practices already existing in the society (Allchin and Allchin 1982: 243-45; Thapar 1981:293-316).

In this context the present paper deals with Hero stones found in Baireddipalli Mandal of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. Its main objective is to understand the specific type and distribution pattern of hero stones in the villages where they are found in view of socio-economic and religious features associated with the tradition in historical perspectives like other areas of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh regarding Hero stone study (Chandrasekhar Reddy 1994).

The Area (Baireddipalli Mandal):

The present area, Baireddipalli (13.0833°N; 78.616°E), forms part of Palamaneru Taluk of the south-western portion of present Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. It is bounded by Venkatagiri Kota Mandal in the south-west; in the north-east by Palamaner Mandal and bordered to Tamil Nadu State on the east and west by Karnataka State, which comes under Madanapalle revenue division since 1985. At present there are 25 villages under its Mandal jurisdiction with an extent of 169.50 sq.km. The physiographical character of this Mandal comprises hills, plains and uplands which normally increases in elevation between 600-900 meters from east to west and forms part of Ayirala-Paddur Forest Region or Mahendragiri forest range extending in zig-zag shape from north-west covering the eastern part. The area is occupied by Archaeans of Peninsular Gneissic geological complex with acid intrusive of Proterozoic Age compositions of granite and quartz veins. The area is drained by many hill streams and almost all are of non-perennial in nature, however there is a water-fall area at Kaigal which gets abundant water due to hill-streams, especially during rainy season. The climate is dry and healthy as it possesses varied topography and the temperature range from 12° C and 40°C, minimum and maximum respectively and the annual precipitation of the area is 9350 mm. The area is predominately covered with red soils with portions of alluvial soil cover along the stream banks. Black soils are noticed to limited parts in the area and the vegetation cover belongs to dry tropical deciduous thorny scrubs and tropical dry evergreen forests. Historically this area was under the hegemony of many minor and major dynasties such as Banas, Cholas, Nolamba Pallavas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Vaidumbas, Vijayanagara and Western Gangas.

A total number of 35 hero stones were located (Sandhya Rani 2021) at 15 villages in this Mandal which belong to various themes being depicted on granite slabs. Most of them are found in the outskirts of these villages proper.

The list and number of hero stones found at each village are given in the brackets as follows and some of these important heroes stones are described according to their important themes which are categorized as per Table.1:

1. Belupalli(4)
2. Chilampalli(1)
3. Chukkavanithopu(1) *
4. Gajipeta(1)
5. Gollachimanapalli(2)
6. Kadathatlapalli(2)*
7. Kaigal(1)*
8. Kuppanapalli(2)
9. Mandapalakunta Nellipatla(4)
10. Murariappli(1)
11. Nellipatla(3)
12. Pathurunattam(1)
13. Ramanapalli(2)
14. Thertham(9)*
15. Thoradi(1)

HERO STONES

3. *Chukkavanithopu (13°.17866' N; 78°.59962' E)

This village is situated on the Peddachellaragunta-Gajipeta road in the Peddachellaragunta panchayath and the hero stone (Fig.3: 105 x 63 x 15 cm) lies beside Gangamma temple.



Fig.3: Hero with sword, Sati to his left.

The standing Hero, with hair style like that of Buddha, placed his left leg bent little away from the right leg. He raised his right hand with a sword held upside down and left hand being touched the thigh. He has broad ear lobes with ear rings, two bracelets each on upper arms and elbows, two chains, small and big, with dollars, without garment on the chest and wore a cloth covering his shame but rest of the body lacks garment. No ornaments over his anklets but from the right side of his waist a specially made weapon, like that of an axe, seen hanging up to the ground. Sati stands left to him with bun hairstyle, ear rings and two chains over the neck, small and big, invisible upper garment and raised her right hand with a pitcher and left hand being held on the waist. She has a waist belt and two bracelets

each over the upper arm and elbow. She wore a sari below the waist up to knees looking like fish fins and she is depicted as if she stepped in front. This hero stone is enshrined at the centre of four pillared mandapa in the form of a dolmen locally called 'Daddilam'(Shrine or Gudi) and the pillars possess 'nagabandhas' (twisted panel of cobras). The village people worship the hero stone with turmeric and vermillion dots all over the two figures and the slab. They lit oil lamps on festive occasions. Gold was recovered from this place in the remote past as it belongs to historical period as per villager's version.

6. * Kadathatlapalli(13°.05007' N; 78°.60852' E)

This village is situated in the Vengamvaripalli panchayath and there are two hero stones located on the left side of the road leading to Devarakonda in the field of N.Narayananareddy, a resident of the same village towards left side of a footpath.



Fig.6: Hero on the horse, two Sati and boy.

The first one is a dolmen type of shrine (Fig.6) locally called 'Daddilam' (with four slabs, being vertically erected in which the central slab poses Hero and others and over laid by a top slab, opening towards east). Hero is on the horse holding its reins in his left hand and raised right hand with a spear. He has a crown on his head, ear rings, wide opened eyes and moustaches, a large chain in the neck spread across up to navel. He wore an upper garment like that of a full shirt and possessed two bracelets each at the elbow and upper arm. Hero looks serious and kept his left foot in the stirrup of the horse. The horse is well equipped with bridle and the cloth on which the Hero sat is decorated with designs of circular and other bands, whereas rest of its body, legs, neck, etc., are decorated with cloth of special kind, hoofs and tassel type of tail are prominently depicted. Behind the hero stands Sati with fold hands in *Anjalimudra* with ornamented bun hairstyle held behind her head. She has both a small and a big chain in her neck and wore an upper garment covering over both arms. She also wore a designed bangle type of ornament on both arms in the middle besides bracelets on either side of it. She has a waist belt

and sari as lower garment covering up to feet without nose stud. In front of the Hero, another Sati stands by raising her left hand with a flower and held a pitcher in her right hand. She has bun hair style, ornamented crown, two chains, small and big, spread up to navel, a waist belt, nose stud, upper garment over the chest covering both arms, two bracelets each on elbow and upper arms. Sari formed the lower garment spread upto feet with a border.

A boy is standing below the horse head lifting a spherical body, like that of a globe, and held reins of horse in his left hand. The overall picture of this hero stone looks alive as it is well depicted.

Whereas, the second hero stone is located (Fig.6a: 13°.05187' N; 78°.61125' E: 94 x 114 x 22 cm.), a little away from the first one, possessing Hero and Sati figures, the former stand with a sword in his left hand and a spear in his right hand. His upper garment is not visible without ornaments over the neck but a sheath of a sword attached to his waist. Both arms have bracelets, one each, at the elbow and upper arms. Dhoti formed the lower garment spread up to knees. Sati stands left to him, with bun hair style held behind the head, two chains in the neck, one small and big, invisible upper garment and poses a flower in her raised left hand and right hand is broken in the process of treasure hunt in search of gold at this place.



Fig. 6a: Hero with sword and spear, Sati to his left.

7. * Kaigal (13°.07781' N; 78°.55753' E)

This place is situated in Lakknapalle panchayath and the hero stone (Fig.7: 112 x 110 x 23 cm.) lies on the road side leading from Baireddipalli to Venkatagiri Kota, near Kaigal waterfalls.



Fig.7: Hero on galloping horse, Sati to his right.

It contains Hero on a galloping horse and raised his right hand with a sword as if he was involved in a battle field by holding the reins of the horse in his left hand. He has crest hair style tied over the head, long and large ear lobes with rings, long and short chains in the neck, the former one has a dollar attached at its centre. He wore bracelets over both arms, invisible upper garment and a dagger hangs over his waist. He kept his feet in the stirrups of the horse; however, the right foot is clearly visible as the left part lies below the other side of the horse. He wore lower garment visible below the waist tied tightly over both legs and shoe type of footwear over both feet. Fore limbs of the horse are raised, whereas, hind limbs rest on the ground having clear hoofs and held its head towards front with broad eyes. Ears are erected vertical and it seems that the horse was sneering and running fast, hence kept its tassel tail erected at the back. The horse is beautifully depicted with bridle, reins and the seat on which the Hero sat also been covered with a cloth. Sati stands behind the Hero on a specific platform, with bun hair style, a clear line over her hair dress is seen with a head ornament (*papitibilla*), nose stud, ear rings, small and big chains, the latter being spread over her chest covered by upper garment. She has a waist belt below which sari forms the lower garment and held right hand over the waist, whereas the left hand holds a pitcher. There used to exist a large village namely Ganagandlapalli in the forest area beyond Kaigal falls and the people used to cross the water falls to reach it. One can see a shallow bowl in front of the Hero stone as oil lamp while worship on festive occasions by the villagers.

14.*Theertham (14: 13°.1063' N; 78°. 5616' E)

This is a village panchayath situated and there are a group of nine hero stones formed into shrines located in a local irrigation tank on the foot path leading to Kotrepalli. This group of hero stones are locally known as Nallarayappa Gudi, hence belongs to both Kotrepalli and Theertham villages. On Sankranthi festival the villagers worship these hero stones by offering boiled pulse rice known locally as 'pongali'(boiled rice with green gram in Telugu).



Fig. 14: Hero stones (9) shrine at Theertham

The first hero stone (Fig.14a: 114 x 109 x14 cm.) contains Hero on a horse, a boy (attendant) below the horse and a woman behind the horse. Hero, on the horse, raised his right hand showing a lengthy sword and held horse reins in his left hand. He wore a crown, ear rings but no ornaments over his chest and also bracelets on both arms. From chest to feet one can see a garment covering the entire body and kept his right foot in the stirrup of the horse depicted as if it was galloping by raising forelimbs and keeping hind limbs on the ground. It has bridle and middle part of its body is covered with cloth and raised its tail. Its hoofs are clearly depicted and it kept its head down by neighing as well as indicating that it is a stallion. Below but behind the horse tail, a woman stand with bun hair style, large ear rings, nose stud, a small chain in the neck and wore blouse as upper garment tied



Fig.14a: Hero on galloping horse, Sati and boy.

between the breasts below. She raised her left hand showing a flower and a pitcher in the right hand. Her novel part is clearly visible and below the waist lower garment is spread up to feet with its border seen between the legs and no ornaments over arms and ankles. Below the forelimbs of the horse there is a boy standing possessing crest hair style, designed ear rings and held his right hand stretched having a pitcher in its fist as well as left arm being raised showing a dagger. He did not wear upper garment but has thread like two belts over his waist and no bracelets on both arms. Below the waist Dhoti forms lower garment tied between the legs but looks dropped below without anklets. Left forelimb of the horse is touching head of the boy.

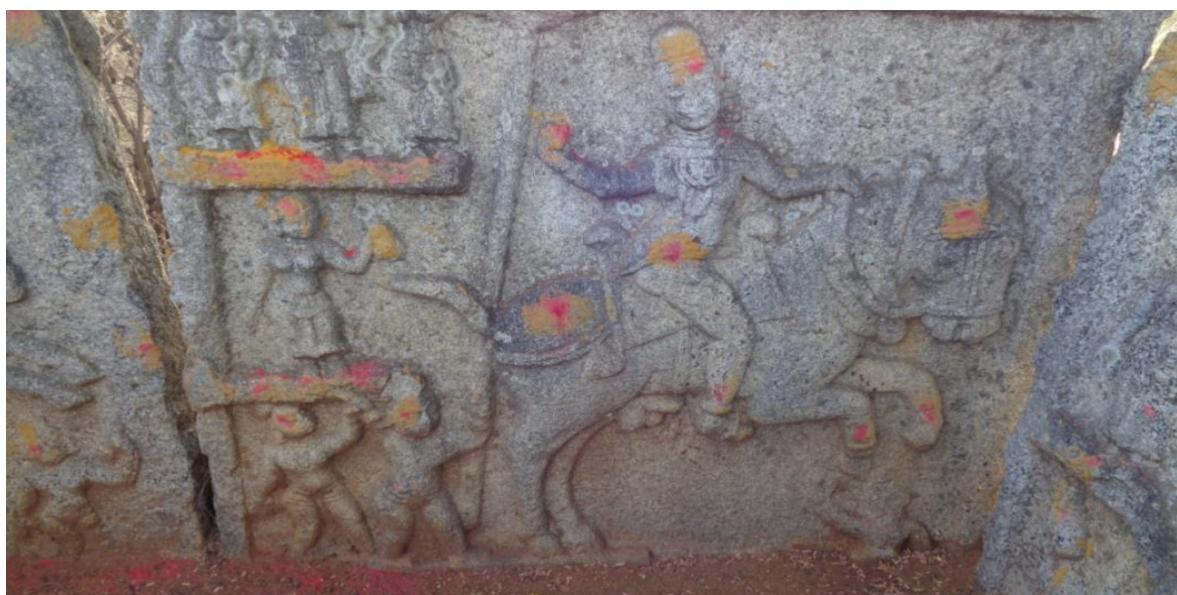


Fig.14b: Hero on galloping horse, five Sati and two men.

The second hero stone (Fig.14b:126 x 132 x 18 cm.) consists Hero on the horse, five women and two men. Hero has crest hair style but designed like crown and wears designed ear rings, jacket as upper

garment spread over his chest which has designs prevalent in historical period as kings, ministers and soldiers used to wear as well as his chest is depicted with a cloth having ornamental designs like symbols, idols, crescent designs, etc. Hero held reins of the horse in his left hand and kept his right hand high with closed fist. He wore a special jacket on his belly tied over the waist to which attached a dagger. Both arms have bracelets at elbow and upper arm and the lower garment spread up to thighs below which has pant type of garment up to feet. His right foot having anklet lies in the stirrup. Horse carry the Hero keeping its head down which is tied with two rows of belts to mouth and nose with a special belt over its neck. A special cloth was arranged for the Hero to sit on its back and overall the horse is well equipped for riding. There is a weapon arranged at the horse back above the cloth which has a leafy construction. The thigh portion of the horse has two belts like bands and the presence of testis indicate that it is a stallion. It possessed four hoofs, open eyes, hence well decorated horse and stand on its hind limbs on the ground lifting both forelimbs. Behind the horse, on the top, three women are standing in similar height and posture. All of them held a flower in their right hands raised and pitcher in their left hands. They are standing on a platform and all of them possess bun hair style, ornaments in their neck, ear rings, upper garment over their chest, sari as lower garment, bracelets on the arms and anklets.

There is a woman standing below the three women mentioned above and have bun hair style, large ear rings, raised left hand holding a pitcher, whereas right hand is held down, a small chain in the neck, blouse as upper garment tied below her breasts, wore a sari with designs between. Below the waist a belt is held like a border above her feet. She stands above a platform below which another woman and a man are depicted. She raised her left hand showing a pitcher, whereas right hand held down with bun hair style, ear rings, two necklaces below which two chains spread up to chest. Beside this woman a man is depicted standing holding a lengthy chakra (umbrella) held high. There is no upper garment but poses Dhoti as lower garment. Below forelimbs of the horse there is another male figure with crest hair style, looking like a boy in *Anjalimudra*. All these figures in this hero stone are decorated with vermillion and turmeric dots and worshipped with oil lamps.

**Fig.14c: Hero on galloping horse, two Sati and man.**

The third hero stone (Fig.14c: 110 x 108 x 15 cm.) contains Hero on the horse along with another man and two Sati. He has crown on his head, ear rings and a chain in the neck with a dollar at the centre. He held his right hand high showing a lengthy sword and left hand with reins of the horse. He did not wear an upper garment but has bracelet each over elbow and upper arm portions. He has lower garment up to thighs below the waist without a weapon over it and kept his right foot in the stirrup. The horse has no decoration over its body but looks in running posture with reins over its nose. It has a cloth on its back where hero can sit and held its head down with erect ears and looking with opened eyes. It is a male horse as testis are predominantly depicted and stood on its two hind limbs by raising both forelimbs with hoofs being depicted prominently visible. Behind the horse a woman stand with bun hair style held behind her head, ear rings, nose stud, two chains, small and big, one above the other, blouse as upper garment tied below, between the breasts and raised her left hand showing a flower and held her right hand down with a pitcher. She wore a waist belt below which is the sari held up to feet. She has bracelets over both arms at the elbow, upper arms and ankles. She stood on a platform below which stand a man near the hind limbs of the horse and a tall chatra beholden in his hands. He has crest hair style, ear rings and indistinct upper garment. He did not wear bracelets but poses lower garment, Dhoti below the waist up to knees and held both feet apart. Below the forelimbs of the horse there is a woman standing with a pitcher in her left hand raised and twisted but held close to her head and empty right hand held straight below.

She has bun hair style, ear rings, chain over the neck, blouse as upper garment which is not stretched up to her novel, whereas she wore sari as lower garment up to knees. Both hands have bracelets over elbows and no anklets.



Fig.14d: Hero with bow and sword, Sati to his right.

The fourth hero stone (Fig.14d: 92 x 108 x 22 cm.) contain Hero and Sati, the former is standing with crest hair style and without ornaments over his neck. He stretched his left hand holding a bow and held his right hand high showing a lengthy sword which has prominent handle. Both arms have bracelets over the elbow and upper arm portions, no upper garment but a waist belt of thick cloth attached to it and a sheath of sword is visible prominently. Below the waist up to knees there is lower garment and without anklets. Sati stands right to Hero with raised left hand showing a flower in it and held a pitcher in her right hand. She has bun hair style at the head back, nose stud, ear rings and a chain in the neck. She did not wear an upper garment, both arms have bracelets over elbows, sari as lower garment below the waist and poses anklets over both ankles. This hero stone is worshipped by the villagers on festive occasions by decorating it with vermillion and turmeric dots.



Fig.14e: Hero on galloping horse, four Sati, man and boy.

The fifth hero stone (Fig.14e: 110 x 124 x 24 cm.) contains Hero on the horse, one man, one boy and four women (Sati). Hero on the horse has a spear in his right hand and held reins of the horse in his left hand. He has a crown on his head, large ear rings, a chain in the neck, without an upper garment, two bracelets on both arms at the elbow and upper arms and wore lower garment spread up to knees. He kept his right foot in the stirrup, possessing a sheath of sword on his waist but lacks anklets.

The horse is well decorated with all riding equipment like bridle and saddle with specially decorated cloth over the neck. Keeping the head down it is in galloping action by raising forelimbs and kept hind limbs on the ground. Its back is covered with a cloth on which the Hero sat and it possessed four prominent hoofs, a short tail and it is a stallion as its genital parts indicate. In front of the horse, but above, a woman stands with bun hair style raised right hand showing a flower and left hand kept down. She has ear rings, a chain in the neck, without upper garment, sari as lower garment below the waist and no ornament on arms and legs. Above but behind the horse there are three women standing on a platform who are similar in all features and stature poses bun hair style, nose stud, ear rings, ornaments in the neck and their upper garments are indistinct. They all wear sari below the waist up to knees which have border in between. Their arms have bracelets at the elbow, left hands have pitcher and raised their right hands showing flower.

Behind, but down below, the horse a man stands with a chakra (umbrella) holding it at its upper part with his left hand and bottom part of it with right hand. The chakra is a tall one held above the Hero's head and the man has crest hair style without upper garment but Dhoti formed lower garment up to feet below the waist. Below the forelimbs of the horse there is a boy standing who has a turban on his head and held his left arm high whereas right arm down. This hero stone is also under worship.



Fig.14f: Hero on galloping horse, three Sati and man.

The sixth hero stone (Fig.14f: 112 x 134 x 22 cm.) contains Hero on a horse, three women and a man. Hero held his right hand high showing a spear and holds reins of the horse with his left hand. He has a crown on his head, ear rings but no chain in the neck, body covered with upper and lower garments, both arms have bracelets over elbow and upper arms and kept his left foot in the horse stirrup. The galloping horse has kept its head down, ears stiff, small bushy tail, without a cloth over its back. Below its forelimb, a woman stands with bun hair style, ear rings, chain in the neck, upper garment, waist belt and sari formed the lower garment. Her both arms have bracelets but no anklets. She held her right hand high with a flower and a pitcher in the left hand. Behind the horse two women are standing above a platform in similar heights but different stature. They both have bun hair style, two chains in the neck, indistinct upper garment, waist belts and sari formed the lower garment up to knees. The first woman held her left hand with a pitcher and right hand high, whereas, the second woman holds similar objects in opposite manner. Below the hind limb of the horse there is a man standing with a chakra held high in his arms.

He has crest hair style without chain in his neck, bracelets over arms, legs and upper arms. He has a lower garment below the waist.



Fig.14g: Hero with bow and sword, two Sati and man.

The seventh hero stone (Fig.14g:124 x 109 x 19 cm.) contains Hero and two Sati figures. The standing Hero has a bow in his left hand held exactly at the centre of it, whereas, raised his right hand with a sword held high holding its handle. His both arms have bracelets over elbow and upper arm portions wearing a crown on his head but no ear rings as well as chains in the neck. He did not wear an upper garment; waist has a sheath of sword and below the waist the lower garment covers both thighs but not legs which are kept apart. Below the bow there are two women standing and among them, the first woman (standing left side) has empty left hand but raised her right hand having a dagger. She has bun hair style over her head, without chains in the neck, without bracelets or bangles, without blouse as upper garment but has a sari as lower garment. Whereas, the second woman (standing right side) held her left hand high with a pitcher and her right hand kept down. She has bun hair style, ear rings, chain in her neck, indistinct upper garment, waist belt below which sari formed the lower garment up to knees and no ornaments on both arms. This hero stone is also worshipped with vermillion and turmeric decoration.



Fig.14h: Hero with bow and sword.

The eighth hero stone (Fig.14h: 82 x 59 x 21 cm.) contains standing Hero held with a bow in his left hand erected straight and a sword in his right hand held high. He has crown on his head, ear rings, without any ornaments in the neck as well as upper garment. His waist is tied with a thread like belt to which attached a sheath of a sword on the left side and Dhoti formed lower garment tied between the legs and dropped down as a border. There are no bracelets over arms but legs have anklets on feet held apart. This hero stone is also worshipped as usual like other ones.



Fig.14i: Hero on the horse, Sati, man and boy.

The ninth hero stone (Fig.14i: 114 x 123 x 19 cm.) contains Hero, Sati, man and boy. Hero sat on the horse holding reins in his left hand and raised his right hand with a sword. He has a crown on his head, designed ear rings, ornaments over the neck and wore a jacket type of upper garment covering the chest and arms up to his waist. Both arms have bracelets over elbow and upper arm and his upper garment has printed designs over it. His waist has cloth belt held with a small dagger having prominent handle clearly visible and pant type (trousers) covering both legs. There is another dagger arranged below the knees to his right leg with anklet and he held his right foot in the stirrup. The standing horse kept all its limbs uniformly on the ground, held its head down, reins over its nose, seat cloth over which the hero sat, its teeth are clearly seen as it opened its mouth and it is a stallion as its genital organs clearly indicate. Above the Hero but behind the horse Sati stands holding a pitcher in her left hand keeping it on her waist and held her right hand down with prominent fingers seen clearly. She has bun hair style, tied behind the head, ear rings, and two chains over the neck, small and big, without distinct upper garment but sari formed the lower garment held as a border at its middle part covering up to feet. Both arms have bracelets over elbow with ornaments over anklet and she stands a platform. A man stands below the Sati figure, underneath the tail of the horse, and held a chakra high. He has crest hair style, without ear rings and other ornaments over his chest. Dhoti formed his lower garment and did not pose ornaments over rest of his body. A boy stands in front of the horse touching its forelimbs with his right hand. He has knot hair style, indistinct upper garment, a cloth belt over the waist without ornaments over rest of his body.

Table 1: List of categories of Hero stones in Baireddipalli Mandal

SL.NO	NAME OF THE VILLAGE	C1	C-1A	C-1B	C-1C	C-1D	C-1E	C-1K	C2	C-2A	C-2G	C3	C-3B	C-3D	C4	C-4A	C5	C6	C-6A	C-6B	C-6C	C-6D	C-6E	C7	C8	C9	C10	C-10A	C15	C26	Total
1	BELUPALLI	1	1						1																					3	
2	CHILAMPALLI		1																											1	
3	CHUKKAYANITHIOPU											1																		1	
4	GAJIPETA						1																							1	
5	GOLLACHIMANAPALLE					2																								2	
6	KADATHATLAPALLE																1	1												2	
7	KAIGAL																		1											1	
8	KUPPANAPALLE								1	1																				2	
9	MANDAPALAKUNTA NELLIPATLA	1																												4	
10	MURARIPALLE																													1	
11	NELLIPATLA															1														3	
12	PATHURNATHAM								1																					1	
13	RAMANAPALLE																	1												2	
14	THEERTHAM	1				1	1											1		1	1	1	1						9		
15	THORADI																1													1	
	TOTAL	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	34																				

CATEGORY:

C1: Hero with bow and sword
C-1A: Hero with bow and sword, Sati and boy.
C-1B: Hero with bow and sword, Three sati to his right.
C-1C: Hero with bow and sword, sati to his left.
C-1D: Hero with bow and sword, sati to his right.
C-1E: Hero with bow and sword, two sati and a man or without a man.
C-1K: Hero with bow and sword, three sati, three cows, two dogs, three women dancing.
C2: Hero with bow and arrow.
C-2A: Hero with bow and arrow, sati to his right.
C-2G: Hero with bow and arrow in action, sati to his left with a spear in her right hand and a sword in her left hand, two children, three dogs and three cows.
C3: Hero with sword.
C-3B: Hero with sword, two sati to his left or on either side of him.
C-3D: Hero with sword and dagger, sati to his right or left.

C4: Hero on the Horse, two sati and boy (with a sword in right hand and reins of horse in the left hand).
C-4A: Hero on the Horse, sati, man and boy.
C5: Hero with sword and spear, sati to his left.
C6: Hero on golloping horse, sati to his right.
C-6A: Hero on golloping horse, three Sati and a man.
C-6B: Hero on golloping horse, sati and boy.
C-6C: Hero on golloping horse, five sati and two men.
C-6D: Hero on golloping horse, two sati and a man.
C-6E: Hero on golloping horse, four sati and man.
C7: Two Heroes, one sitting and another standing postures.
C8: Hero, Sati and Siva Linga .
C9: Hero showing right palm, Sati to his left.
C10: Hero on platform.
C-10A: Hero on platform with bow and sword.
C25: Hero head left or right hand over the chest and with left hand down below with clear palm and fingers.
C26: Sati(four) stone with flower in right hand.

DISCUSSION

Hero stones (Table.1) in the present paper deal with non-inscriptional ones, hence their exact historical period may not be feasible, however similar hero stones reported from the adjoining areas of Kolar district of Karnataka and Madanapalli taluk of Chittoor district, especially in the south-western part of Chittoor district issued by these local chiefs, especially Vaidumbhas on the basis of palaeographical features assigned to about 8th, 9th and 10th CE. They represent commemorating ones, i.e., the death of warriors who took part in battles and also in connection to cattle raids. These rulers appears to have been warlike chiefs more frequently involved in fighting with their neighbors namely the Lonkulias, the Cholas of Renadu, the Banas of Perumbanappadi, and the Nolambas of Nolambavadi (Sandhya Rani 2021:191).

The sculptural representation of hero stones (Table 1) comprised hero, sati, men, women, boys, girls, animals (cow, horse, dog), weapons, ornaments (depicted across the body of hero and sati and horse decoration of metals), weapons like bow and arrows, swords, dagger, etc., indirectly suggest the socio-economic aspects of the then existing society like dress pattern of human beings especially Hero, Sati, Women, Men, boys, girls, etc., weapons, fashion of head-dress, Leather objects like horse reins, waist threads, horse seat, stirrup, etc, and other horse decoration seen over the sculpture of hero stones give an absolute information regarding the artisan classes in the historical period of present study like gold smiths, blacksmiths, smiths of metals much as copper, silver and other precious stones (embedded in the Ornaments), leather workers, weavers, barbers and other communities engaged on various occupations related to agriculture and pastoralism (Sandhya Rani 2021:202). Therefore, it was an example of Hindu society and its social hierarchy consists of four-fold social strata. The religion that prevailed was Saivism as Linga worship can be noticed in one of the hero stone. However, the main theme of the depiction of Hero and Sati forms being representing the importance of service to the society being recognized and respected by the society, hence importance of human life which can be remembered even after ones death, it could be family members, society and relatives in commemorating a life, especially men, a belief life after his death for a common social cause and the existence of Sati custom being depicted perhaps only in the form of sculpture since inscriptional evidence is lacking. The depiction of Hero on a horse which is being depicted with all decoration, suggests that the men from the area were actively involved in battle fields hence they were perhaps involved in cattle raid protection and give protection to village settlements too as the area was perhaps prone to frequent cattle raids and molestation of women.

References:

1. Allchin, F.R. and B.R. Allchin. 1982. The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 243-245.
2. Chandrashekara Reddy, R 1994. Heroes, Cults and Memorials. Andhra Pradesh, 300- 1600 A.D. Madras: New Era Publications.
3. Sandhya Rani, M. 2021. Herostones: A Hisotrical Study with special reference to Palamaner Taluk in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh., Ph. D Thesis, Dravidian University, Kuppam.

4. Settar, S and G.D. Sontheimer (Eds.), 'Memorial Stones' Dharwad – New Delhi: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnatak University – South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany, pp.183-197.
5. Thapar, R. 1981. Death and the Hero, in Mortality and Immortality: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Death, (S.C. Humphreys and Helen King Eds.) London: Academic Press, pp. 293-316.