

## "Bojjannakonda: Unveiling the Spiritual Legacy of Andhra Pradesh's Buddhist Enclave"

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### **Abstract:**

Bojjannakonda, nestled in the picturesque Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, stands as a testament to India's rich cultural heritage. This article presents a comprehensive study of Bojjannakonda, an ancient Buddhist site steeped in history and spirituality. The study delves into the site's archaeological significance, exploring its architectural marvels, artifacts, and religious significance. It examines the site's historical context, tracing its evolution from a vibrant center of Buddhist learning and worship to its present-day state. Furthermore, the article sheds light on the artistic elements, such as the intricate sculptures and remnants, offering insights into the craftsmanship of the era. Additionally, it explores the site's role as a pilgrimage destination and its impact on local communities. Through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing archaeology, history, and religious studies, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of Bojjannakonda and its relevance in preserving India's cultural legacy.

**Keywords:** Bojjannakonda, Buddhist site, legacy, archaeology, cultural heritage, spirituality, pilgrimage, artifacts, history

### **Introduction:**

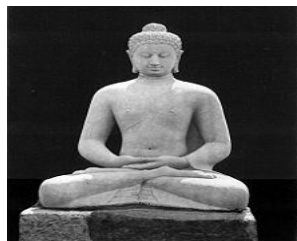
Birth - Buddha – Historicity – Buddhism:

Buddha<sup>1</sup> is the personal name which is (called in Sanskrit as awakened or enlightened). His name was Siddhartha and his family name Gotra was known as Gautama. Date of birth of his is generally accepted as 563 or 566 BC. He was born in kashatriya clan of Sakyas. His father was Suddhodana who was the chief of Sakyas. His capital was Kapilavatsu. His mother was MahaMaya or Maya. The mother died after seven days after the birth of Siddahrtha. Kaundinya a brahmin prophesied that he would renounce the world at the age of 16. Gautama was married

to his beautiful cousin Yesodhara. The sights of old man, a sick man, a dead man made him to renounce the world. The birth of his son Rahul quickened his decision.

It was during this movement he left the palace on his horse Kanthaka leaving his wife and son in the palace. This departure is known as great departure (Mahabhi Niskhramana).

Tathagatha:



He wandered in modern district Bodh-Gaya, Bihar, which known as Buddha Gaya and he went through several austerities which reduced him to a Skelton. Finally under the Pipel Tree (later known as Bodhi-Tree ) and got perfect enlightenment. He was referred as Tathagatha<sup>2</sup> and lived for 80 years and passed finally away in Nirvana about 480 BC. Thus several accounts of his enlightenment also appear in the sutras. One text, the Maha Pari Nirvana-Sutra (discourses on the final Nirvana) describes the Buddha's last days, his passage into Nirvana, his funeral and the distribution of his relics as stated above in the Buddhist sites in the Andhra Desa.

1. Buddhist Monuments – Beballa Mitra, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta

2. The New Encyclopaedia Britanica, Vol.15, 2007, Jacob E.Safra, Jorge Aguilar – Cauz

Archeology so far have identified more than 140 Buddhist sites<sup>1</sup>. Buddhist sites in Andhra Pradesh ranging in date from pre-Ashokan (4-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) to Vishnu Kundins time (4-5<sup>th</sup> Century AD), stretching from Dantapuram in the North to Nadalur in the South and Koti Lingala in the West to Bhattiprolu in the East. Interestingly, some of the sites had continued upto 14<sup>th</sup> Century AD as Buddhist Centers.

It is not out of place to mention here Dantapura in Kalinga Desa was one of the relics is excavated in Andhra Desa. It is said that 'Lord Buddha left Canine Tooth' was presented to Dharmadatta the then Kalinga King who raised a Stupa over the Tooth relic of Buddha, which was known as Dantapura<sup>2</sup>. The same fact was mentioned in the Cylone chronicle called Dalanda Vamsa.

The land in Andhra Pradesh, witnessed a great growth and expansion in Buddhist Religion<sup>3</sup>, Art and Architecture in centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era. Thus Andhra Pradesh received the faith in Buddhism, most probably only during the rein of Ashoka. These regions of Andhra Pradesh Buddhism include Salihundam (District Srikakulam) to Kanuparti (District Guntur) and from Gooty (District Anantapur) to Bhattiprolu (District Guntur) near the mouth of the Krishna in the east -Ramatirtham, Sankaram – Bojjnnakonda, Kotturu,Lingarajupalem, Nilavati, Arugolanu, Kodavali, Adurru, Guntupalli, Kapavaram, Alluru, Gummadidurru, Garikapadu, Gudivada, Ghantasala, Jaggayyapeta, Vidyadharapuram, Amaravati, Pedaganjam, Chinnaganjam, Buddham, Velpuru, RENTAL, Goli, Nagarjunakonda, Manchikallu, Uppugundur, Kondapuram, Panigiri, Yelleswaram and Gajulabanda to name only a few sites – teems with Buddhist remains.

Location of Bojjanna Konda – Sankaram:



VIEW OF BOJJANNA KONDA

1. A.Ramalakshman, IAS, ‘Dantapuram – An early Buddhist Site in Andhra Pradesh, Dept. of Archaeology.
2. A.H.Longhurst, Annual Report of the Archeological Survey of India 1919-20, Madras, 1920
3. Hanumantharao, BSL ‘Rise of Buddhism’, JHRS, Vol.24, P.85-92, 1956-58

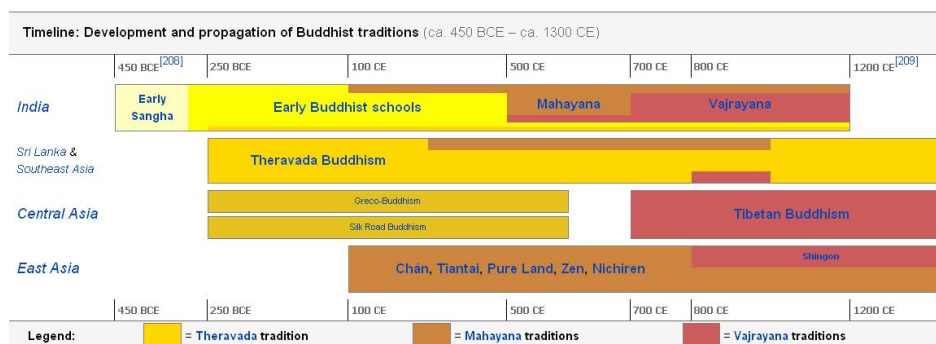


A Sitting Buddha Statue

Research paper

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Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda are two Buddhist sites which exist on adjacent hillocks near a village called Sankaram. It is located at about 45 km from Vishakhapatnam and just a few kilometers from Anakapalle. The sites are believed to date between 4th and 9th Century A.D, that was when at Sanakaram (Sangharam as it was called then) when the 3 phases of Buddhism (Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana) flourished.



The Article focuses on K.Sankaram which cover Bojjannakonda and Lingala konda. The name of the Sankaram derived from word ‘Sangharama’ which meant monastery. There are many monolithic stupas rock-cut caves ruins of prayer halls meditation halls, brick build structured edifices, resting places available on the twin hills of Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda. These two remarkable Buddhist remains were uncovered by A.Rea<sup>3</sup> in 1907 on the twin hills. These two places of Buddhist remains can be located near the village of Sankaram (lat.17°42’ N : long. 83 ° 2’ E ; District Visakhapatnam), 2 miles to the North of Anakapalli Railway Station near the river Sarada.

Location of Bojjannakonda – Sankaram – Anakapalli:

A municipality of 18,539 inhabitants lying on the trunk road and the madras railway, 21miles west land watered by the sarada, which river runs close by the town and is crossed by both the road and railway bridges. The place is badly-built and overcrowded, but is reputed to be extremely healthy and is a favourite place of residence with natives of the district. Its municipality is referred to in chapter XIV. It contains a hospital, a school, a travellers’ bungalow constructed on a highly original plan (opposite which is the much revered tomb of a woman who committed sati),a dharmasala and ,to the south, the remains of a fort called after the famous Payaka Rao mentioned in the account of Payaka Rao mentioned in the account of Payakarao peta on p.312 below. In this last are shrines to Bhogesvara and to the goddess Nukalamma,at the latter of which a largely-attended festival and buffalo sacrifice occur on each Telugu new year’s Day.

Research paper

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Sankaram : A Village of 441 inhabitants about 11/2 miles north by east of the Anakapalle travelers' bungalow. In the fields belonging to it are two low, contiguous, rocky hills, running east and west, which are locally known as the Bojjanakonda and contain some of the most remarkable Buddhist remains in the presidency. The western of these hills is formed of a series of rock strata which have been thrust over into a vertical position, and along its crest these crop out in four or five low, parallel, walls of rock which have weathered into a Buddhist stupa of the usual pattern. The Villagers, not recognizing what they are, call them the Kotilingalakonda, or 'crore of lingams'. In three places the strata have compacted to form a solid mass of rock on the crest of the hill, and this has been cut, with immense labour, into three huge stupas, the biggest of which is about 30ft. in diameter and of corresponding height.



ROCK-CUT LORD - BUDDHA - STATUE AT BOJJANAKONDA NEAR ANAKAPALLE OF VISAKHAPATNAM DIST IN AP



This is believed to contain inscriptions made during Asokan era

#### Description of Stupas of Bojjannakonda:

These sites consists of many monolithic Stupas, Rock-cut caves and other structural remains. Bojjannakonda<sup>1</sup>, eastern one is the beautiful one of the two hills. It presents a picturesque broken appearance with its main stupa. This is impressive in its present desolate and bare state

crowning the top hill and dominating the myriads of stupas. They are mostly rock-cut and rarely brick built with different terraces in tiers, one above the other. The stupas are offered by pious pilgrims. It is interesting to note that excavator found these traces of steps which have a projection on the Eastern side. A terrace is described as drum which is extremely narrow.

The main stupa was roughly rock made and encased with Brick work. The stupa consists of a platform about 80' ft square and 11 ft. 9 inches in diameter and 7 ft. 6 inches high with doom of 60 ft. 8 inches in diameter. The bed rock of doom has a height of 4ft 7 inches, while the remaining portion is made of brick work.

Immediately to its East there exists the main shrine-cum-monastery<sup>2</sup>. The apsidal shrine, together with the paved hall or court yard in the front, two apsidal halls near the entrance and row of cells on three sides and extending upto the halls, is located on the Eastern end of the elevated rock-cut terrace, 11 ft. 9 inches above the lower terrace (the height corresponding to that of the platform of the main stupa) and approached by a flight of steps. The floor of the apsidal portion of the shrine is raised 9 inches higher. On this floor rests a rectangular pedestal with a socket presumably for an image (now missing).

1. Buddhist Monuments – Bebala Mitra, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta, p.218

2. Ibid, P.219

3. A.Rea, 'Annual Report Archeology Survey of India', p.2, 1908-1909

The entire complex is made of brick. The outer brick work of the shrine being moulded like that of the platform of the main stupa. This belongs to post Christian era or even as late as 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D<sup>1</sup>.

It is found that the vertical wall of the upper terrace is a row of cells, mostly residential which are distributed to the South, East and North sides. The majority of the antiquities, discovered in the site are coins, seals, sealings, inscribed tablets, pots and various objects of utilitarian purpose. They were all found in the black earth.

Bojjannakonda's site consists of many monolithic stupas, rock-cut caves and other structural remains. Out of the many caves, four are considered to be sanctuaries, three contain relief sculptures of lord Buddha in meditating poses. The cave is entered by a door way and is flanked on Each side by huge dwarapalas and its chamber is rectangular in shape and is divided into Twenty Compartments by four cross rocks of 16 massive pillars.

Lingalakonda:



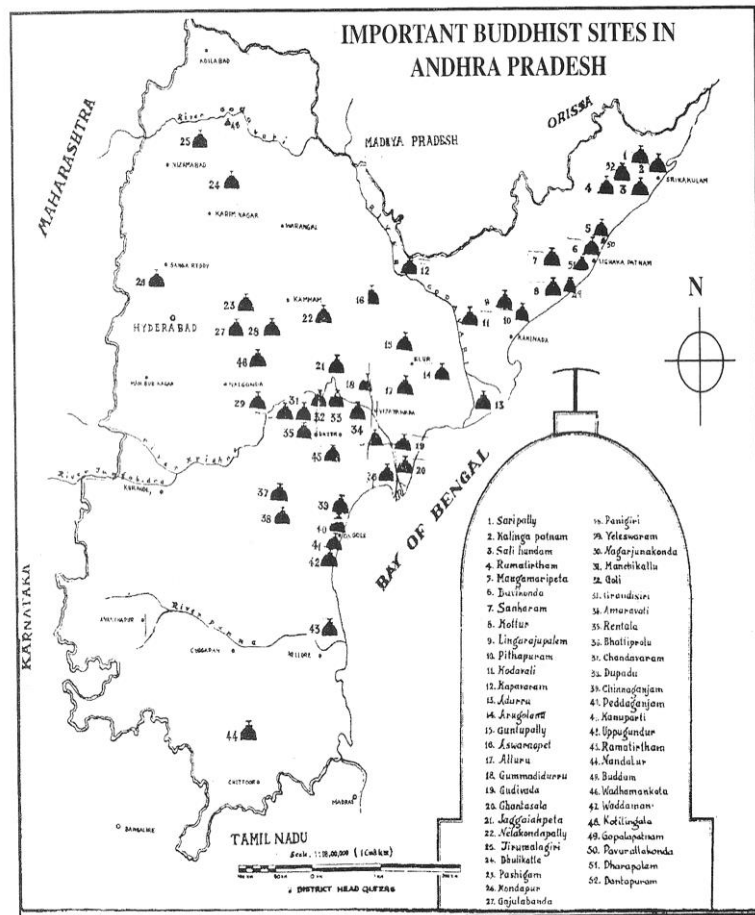
Lingalakonda<sup>2</sup> means the hill of lingas – popular imagination finding in the stupas the semblances of lingas. The central portion of this hill is studded with numerous rock-cut stupas in tiers, dominated by a row of seven stupas standing on a common platform, the latter having the decoration characteristic of this site – sunken panels between pilasters with projected mouldings below and above.

1. Buddhist Monuments – Beballa Mitra, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta, p.218
2. Madras District Gazetteers, Viziagpatnam by W. Francis, ICS, Madras, P.233, 1907

The other objects of interest on this hill are the Main Stupa, rock-cut with a verandah immediately on its east and a rock-cut oblong sanctuary with a votive stupa in the centre. The main Stupa is fashioned mostly out of the live rock and only one-eighth part of the dome was a brick where the rock fell short of the requirements. Its slightly battered drum has neither a platform below it, nor any projection at cardinal points.

Thus the study of the Buddhist sites Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda Aare very interesting. The archaeological excavations took place in 1907-1908 by A.Rea .The article deals about the stupas, caves, domes, platforms rock-cut caves of Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda. Siddhartha wonders in Bodh-Gaya, Bihar and finally attained Tathagatha. After the attainment of Tathagatha ,the Buddhist in Andhra Pradesh expanded Buddhist religion by establishing stupas, relics and rock-cut caves . It is said about 134 places of Buddhist sites were excavated .

The main purpose of the article is to focus Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda near Anakapalli and in Visakapatam district. These remains have been highlight in the article has uncoverd by A.Rea in 1907 on the two hills of Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda. A beautiful picture of Gauthama Buddha ,is shown in Bojjannakonda and also view of meditation by Gauthama Buddha have been highlighted at the appropriate place.of the article



Review of Literature

The following reference followed -

Researchers and Scholars:

Prof. Walter M. Spink: Known for his works on Indian art and archaeology, particularly related to Buddhist sites.

Prof. Nayanjot Lahiri: Author of books focusing on Indian archaeology and history, often covering ancient sites in India.

Dr. Himanshu Prabha Ray: Renowned for her research on Indian archaeology, including Buddhist heritage sites.

Dr. George Michell: Expert on Indian architecture and art history, might have works encompassing Buddhist sites.

Books:



"Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Religious and Social Change, c. Third Century BC to Fifth Century AD" by Julia Shaw.

"The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhara" by Kurt A. Behrendt.

"Buddhist Architecture" by Huu Phuoc Le.

"The Art and Architecture of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain" by Benjamin Rowland.

"The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta" by Anand Krishna.

While these resources might not exclusively focus on Bojjannakonda, they often delve into broader aspects of Buddhist sites, including those in Andhra Pradesh. Academic databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and university libraries might also contain research papers and articles specifically dedicated to Bojjannakonda or related aspects of Buddhist archaeology in Andhra Pradesh.

The significance of studying the Buddhist site Bojjannakonda in Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh, India lies in several key aspects:

**Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Bojjannakonda represents a crucial piece of India's cultural history, showcasing the influence of Buddhism and its architectural and artistic expressions. Understanding and documenting this site contribute to the preservation of India's diverse cultural heritage.

**Historical Insights:** Investigating Bojjannakonda offers a window into the historical evolution of Buddhism in the region and its socio-cultural impact. This study can reveal details about ancient practices, rituals, and societal structures, enriching our understanding of the past.

**Archaeological Significance:** Unearthing and analyzing artifacts, sculptures, and architectural remnants from Bojjannakonda provides valuable insights into ancient craftsmanship, construction techniques, and artistic styles prevalent during the site's period of prominence.

**Religious and Spiritual Relevance:** The site's significance in the context of Buddhist pilgrimage and worship can shed light on the spiritual practices of the time. Understanding the religious significance of Bojjannakonda contributes to broader discussions on the spread and influence of Buddhism in ancient India.

**Tourism and Local Economy:** Investigating Bojjannakonda's significance can also have practical implications. Highlighting its historical and cultural value can attract tourists, fostering local economies and encouraging the preservation and sustainable development of the site.

Overall, studying Bojjannakonda provides a comprehensive understanding of its multifaceted significance—ranging from cultural and historical preservation to religious and economic importance—and contributes to the broader narrative of India's rich heritage.

Absolutely, here are some potential objectives for studying the Buddhist site Bojjannakonda:

**Archaeological Exploration:** Conduct comprehensive excavations and surveys to uncover and document artifacts, structures, and historical remnants at Bojjannakonda. This aims to understand the site's layout, architectural features, and the material culture of the ancient Buddhist community.

**Historical Contextualization:** Contextualize Bojjannakonda within the broader historical narrative of Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh. Trace its historical evolution, establishment, flourishing periods, and potential reasons for decline, offering insights into the socio-political and religious dynamics of the time.

**Artistic and Architectural Analysis:** Analyze the artistic elements, sculptures, inscriptions, and architectural styles found at Bojjannakonda. This objective seeks to decipher the symbolism, craftsmanship, and cultural influences reflected in the site's art and architecture.

**Religious Significance and Practices:** Explore the religious significance of Bojjannakonda within the Buddhist tradition. Investigate its role as a center for religious practices, rituals, and teachings, shedding light on the spiritual life of ancient Buddhist communities.

**Community Impact and Preservation:** Assess the current state of Bojjannakonda and its impact on the surrounding communities. Develop strategies for preservation, conservation, and responsible tourism that both protect the site's integrity and benefit local inhabitants.

**Dissemination of Knowledge:** Share findings through academic publications, exhibitions, and educational programs. Disseminate knowledge to the wider public, fostering awareness and appreciation for Bojjannakonda's historical and cultural significance.

By pursuing these objectives, researchers and scholars can illuminate various facets of Bojjannakonda, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of its archaeological, historical, religious, and cultural importance in Andhra Pradesh's heritage landscape.

Certainly, here are some potential findings that studying the Buddhist site Bojjannakonda could uncover:

**Architectural and Artistic Insights:** Discoveries of unique architectural features, structural layouts, sculptures, and artistic motifs can provide insights into the design aesthetics and craftsmanship of the ancient Buddhist period in Andhra Pradesh.

**Historical Context and Evolution:** Uncovering historical layers through excavations and analyses might reveal the site's timeline, evolution, periods of prosperity, potential reasons for decline, and any cultural or religious transitions that occurred at Bojjannakonda over time.

**Religious Practices and Rituals:** Understanding the religious practices, rituals, and the daily life of the Buddhist community at Bojjannakonda can shed light on their spiritual beliefs, ceremonies, and the role of this site within the broader Buddhist network in the region.

**Cultural Exchange and Influences:** Discovering artifacts, inscriptions, or evidence of trade and cultural exchange can indicate connections between Bojjannakonda and other regions or civilizations, revealing the extent of cultural influences on the site.

**Community Impact and Significance:** Assessing the impact of Bojjannakonda on local communities, both historically and in the present day, might uncover the site's significance beyond religious and historical aspects. It could include economic, social, or cultural impacts on nearby populations.

**Conservation Challenges and Opportunities:** Identifying the state of preservation, conservation challenges, and opportunities to sustainably manage and protect Bojjannakonda for future generations would be crucial findings to ensure the site's longevity.

These findings, once discovered and thoroughly analyzed, can contribute significantly to the understanding of the site's historical, cultural, and religious significance, while also informing conservation efforts and enriching the broader academic discourse on ancient Buddhist sites in India.

### **Summary:**

The study of Bojjannakonda, a prominent Buddhist site in Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh, unravels a tapestry of cultural, historical, and religious significance. Through meticulous archaeological excavations and analyses, this research has unearthed a wealth of artifacts, architectural marvels, and insights into the ancient Buddhist community's life.

Findings reveal an architectural finesse characterized by unique structural layouts and intricate sculptures, indicative of the rich artistic heritage prevalent during the site's zenith. Historical investigations trace Bojjannakonda's evolution, highlighting periods of flourishing Buddhist influence, potential socio-political shifts, and clues to its eventual decline.

The religious significance of Bojjannakonda emerges as a center for spiritual practices, rituals, and teachings within the Buddhist tradition. This study sheds light on the spiritual beliefs, daily rituals, and the societal importance of the site within the broader Buddhist network in Andhra Pradesh.

Moreover, the impact of Bojjannakonda on local communities, past and present, underscores its multifaceted significance beyond religious and historical realms. Understanding its cultural exchange, trade connections, and societal impacts contributes to a comprehensive appreciation of the site.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the study of Bojjannakonda stands as a testament to India's diverse heritage, offering a window into the ancient Buddhist civilization's ethos and contributions. Its architectural splendor, historical nuances, and religious sanctity underscore its importance in preserving cultural legacies.

The findings not only enrich academic discourse but also underscore the urgency of sustainable conservation efforts. Preserving Bojjannakonda is not merely safeguarding a historical site; it's nurturing a repository of knowledge for future generations and fostering cultural appreciation.

As we conclude this study, it becomes apparent that Bojjannakonda is not merely a physical space; it embodies a living history, resonating with spiritual echoes of an ancient civilization. It is imperative to continue endeavors that ensure its preservation, enabling future generations to marvel at its beauty and glean insights into our rich cultural past.

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2. A. Ramalakshman, IAS, 'Dantapuram – An early Buddhist Site in Andhra Pradesh, Dept. of Archaeology.

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*Research paper*

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3. Hanumantharao, BSL 'Rise of Buddhism', JHRS, Vol.24, P.85-92, 1956-58
4. A. Rea, 'Annual Report Archeology Survey of India', p.2, 1908-1909
5. Buddhist Monuments – Beballa Mitra, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta, p.218
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7. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.15, 2007, Jacob E. Safra, Jorge Aguilar – Cauz, Chicago

## Summary of the Article

### A STUDY OF BUDDHIST SITE – BOJJANNAKONDA IN VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT IN ANDHRA PRADESH

**Dr. R. Saikumar,**

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