

## *Chapter-VI*

### **CERTAIN TIME BOUND ARCHAEOLOGICAL OPERATIONS**

#### **(1) SALVAGE ARCHEOLOGY:**

The new branch of Archaeology has assumed great significance due to developmental programmes along the major river valleys. Consequently the rise of Hydro-Electric dams across the ancient river valleys caused submergence of vast areas of ancient landscape abounding in Temples, cultural remains, sites and Monuments. India is the initiator of such Salvage Archaeology projects. The first one was undertaken at Nagarjunakonda (1954-61), and the second one at Srisailam (1976-82). Mega dams were raised across the river Krishna and its tributaries.

It is relevant to recall a great policy decision made by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru (1961) on the Nagarjunakonda heritage. "I remember some years ago, when we had a difficult task almost where a matter of conscience arose before us while we were considering what we should do about Nagarjunakonda in the south. There was this buried city gradually coming out and there was the proposal to erect a dam there and

in respect of nearly 108 villages in Mahboobnagar and Kurnool districts of A.P. Huge temples and Monuments right from the early historical period were excavated, below the foundational levels recording, for the first time, the ancient agamic and ritual modes observed while setting up the temples at these sacred tirtha sthalas.

A circumstance that envisaged stripping of monuments of sanctity and great antiquity down to their foundations of such a large scale is unknown earlier to the archaeological pursuit. One can see now at the Alampur town and its precincts along the river course, but on a higher place, the transplanted temples of great artistic merit and structural magnitude like the Kudali Sangamesvara (PL.VIII) and Paranasasi group of temples. While dismantling the temples of Papanasi group certain rare Sthapatya and agama modes observed by the builders were carefully documented and these practices were observed while reconsecrating them above submergence level. The sacred Kalastas (PL.IX) and the symbolic offerings in them were noted and preserved for posterity.

We may remember here that great works undertaken in the Aswan Dam Project in the Nile valley (1959 onwards), wherefrom the world famous Nubian Monuments have been physically removed and transplanted on higher grounds follow the pattern and standards set in the salvage operations at Nagarjunakonda.

## (2) UNDER WATER ARCHAEOLOGY:

It is different and more difficult than the Field Archaeology on the earth. This requires special equipment for under water investigations and much training in diving besides thorough grounding in the archaeological methods. The recording and recovery of sunken ships and ship wrecks and the traces of such materials is a fascinating pursuit and India has developed a special group of archaeologists.

In our country Marine Archaeology has gained momentum (Aug. 15, 1979) due to the efforts of Dr. S.R. Rao who established a Marine Archaeology centre with the technical and financial assistance from the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa. The Marine Archaeological Explorations (1982-84), at Bet Dwaraka by S.R. Rao brought to light the city of Mahabharata fame with several important finds. The port city of Pumpuhar of the times of Early Chola kings, submerged in the Bay of Bengal, has been chosen as a prominent site for under water explorations. It is stated that a major Port town of 300 B.C. extended over 4 Km. on the South East coast of Tamilnadu.

### REFERENCES

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before us while we were considering what we should do about Nagarjunakonda in the south. There was this buried city gradually coming out and there was the proposal to erect a dam there and create a big reservoir which would give water to irrigation and other things all around. Here was a conflict between the claims of today, the sense of practical utility and the claims of the past and we were severally troubled by it. But ultimately it was, I suppose, inevitable that we decided in favour of the present, even though at the cost somewhat of the past. Although when we look more deeply into the matter, that turned out to be the best way of preserving the past also because these old relics at Nagarjunakonda were gradually fading out, crumbling into the dust and ashes and we decided that they should be recovered bodily and placed on a little island in the middle of the lake which would not be submerged and preserve them in such a way as really to prevent their decay". In this regard we may quote extracts from an appeal made by the Director General of UNESCO (March-1960), to all countries.

"These monuments whose loss may be tragically near do not belong solely to the countries who hold them in trust. The whole world has the right to see them endured". Thus an international campaign to have the World Heritage Monuments was launched.

Archaeological salvage operations of an unprecedented scale were planned in these areas resulting in the physical removal and transportation of excavated sites, standing monuments and Temples. Some remarkable sculptures, inscriptions and architectural members of great beauty and artistic excellence have been preserved on the historic hill named Nagarjunakonda. The country's first island Museum with open air exhibits such as transplanted monuments, scale models thus came to existence and special care (PL. VII) was taken to retain the original ecological