

A Glance on Archaeological Remains of Karnataka

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Archaeology is a subject which study of human cultures through the material remains. Both archaeology and history are concerned with the study of the human past. History is only dependent on the written documents. Archaeology on the other hand, is able to probe further back and study human history even prior to the time of the written records. The greatest achievements of archaeology have been in the study of pre and proto history where it is the sole source of knowledge. In recovering information about the origins on mankind and of cultures.

Karnataka is situated in the heart of the Deccan plateau. It has cultural remains of high antiquity indicative of the life of primitive man. Hundreds of Pre and proto historic sites have been reported from different parts of the state. In the early of the 19th C AD Robert Bruce foot was taken his exploration in the south India, particularly in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. He explored some stone tools on the basins of the river Kaveri, Tungabhadra, Pennar and Palar. We can say therefore, that the study of the pre-history in India began with South India, particularly Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. For the first time, Bruce foot discovered some Palaeolithic tools at Pallavaram near to Chennai. Since then scores of sites have been reported from different states in India.

For the purpose of study, we can divide the history in to two stages. One is pre-historic age and another is historic age. The history of mankind before the invention of alphabet is called pre-historic age. It covers a time span dating from the earliest tangible evidences of man made tools and artefacts to the beginning of written documents. The prehistoric settlements in Karnataka can be studied in their progress from Palaeolithic period to Megalithic period through the investing Microlithic and Neolithic period. After the invention of the alphabet is called historic age. Karnataka has abundant of archaeological remains of all the periods.

Palaeolithic age :

The Palaeolithic age is also called as the old stone age. It covers a long period of human history. This period covers from 2.5 million years ago to 10.000 years. The habitation of the Palaeolithic period is generally inferred from the distribution of the tools they left behind. In many places, specially in river basins and valleys. For the purpose of study, the Palaeolithic period is also divided in to Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic. These represents developmental stages in the life ways of early men.

Robert Bruce foot had discovered Palaeolithic tools at some sites like Kadur, Lingadahalli, Nyamathi in Shimoga district, Khyada in Bijapur District. Another most important Palaeolithic settlement was discovered at Kibbanahally in Tumkur District. Latterly, he conducted systematic explorations in the Krishna, Malaprabha and the Ghataprabha basins have led to the discovery of more than fifty sites related to this age.

The Lower Palaeolithic Period is represented by two major types of tools called hand axes and cleavers. Excavations of Lower Palaeolithic sites is a majour landmark in the history of Indian archaeology. Along with some stone tools, animal fossils have also been recovered from these sites. Number of sites are noticed in this regarding. Out of them, Anagawadi (Bagalkot), Hunssgi, Yediyapur (Gulbarga),....and others are important.

The Middle Palaeolithic Period is represented by scrapers, points, borers and other tools. The credit for the first identification of the Middle Palaeolithic culture in India goes to H.D.Sankalia. He noticed flake industry at Nevasa on the Pravara River of Maharashtra in 1995 AD. Since the time of this distinct identification of the Middle Palaeolithic culture in India, a large number of sites of this culture have been located in Karnataka and the earlier discovered industries with similar features. The Middle Palaeolithic sites are generally located in the same area where the Lower Palaeolithic sites. This indicating that, the culture of Middle Palaeolithic is evolved from the Lower Palaeolithic culture. Numerous occurrences of Middle Palaeolithic artefacts associated with high level gravel have been reported in the middle Krishna valley. These artefacts are made on chert. The Shorapur Doab also is significant for the distribution of this culture. The artefacts are made of chalcedony, chert, jasper, quartzite and agate nodules that are locally available in the region.

The Upper Palaeolithic Period is succeeds the Middle Palaeolithic and precedes the Mesolithic. It is dated around 40.000 B.C to 10.000 B.C. This period is witnessed to shift in stone tool technology as well bone tool technology. Parallel sided blades, points, barbs, and Bone tools are also noticed in this period. Salvadagi, Maralabavi and other sites are important in Karnataka in this regarding.

Mesolithic age:

Mesolithic Stone Age is followed by the Palaeolithic Stone Age. This period represents a transition, lasting only a few thousand years, between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic period. The basic life pattern of man remained the same as hunting and gathering. There was a considerable increase in number of settlements during this period.

Many of Mesolithic sites have been found in Karnataka. Very often microliths are found on bare surface of the hills of granite rocks. The earliest phase in the excavated site at Sanganakallu near Bellary. This site consisted of a crude microlithic Industry of quartz, associated with a few heavily painted flakes of trap and sand stone. Mesolithic sites have also been found at Jalahally near Bengaluru, Bramhagiri in Chitradurga, Kibbanahally in Tumakur Districts are prominent. Sampath Iyengar noticed number of points, arrow-heads and other microliths in Jalahally site. M.H.Krishna noticed parallel-sided flakes and pen-knife blades at Bramhagiri site. A large number of sites are noticed Shorapur Doab located on Krishna and Bhima river terraces.

Besides the microliths, several other type of tools are found at many sites. These are usually made on flakes. In place of the blunting of the margins as in microliths. These tools are made by secondary trimming along the margins. Out of these, scrapers, end-scrapers, bifacial points are important. There is also evidence of the use of bone and antler tools by this people. These microliths were used as composite tools, in harvesting wild grasses yielding grains, fishing etc.

The earliest evidence of intentional disposal of the dead in Karnataka is known from the Mesolithic period. Both of rock-shelters and at open air sites the dead were buried within the habitation area.

These people were started to show interest on art. We have some evidence for the art of painting in Karnataka. Most of the paintings are in shades of green, red, purple, chocolate, orange, white etc. The most common subject of the paintings is wild animals like, humped cattle, buffalo, boar, rhinoceros, elephant, tiger, leopard, monkey, dog and other animals. We have some paintings like hunting by individual hunters as well as by groups of hunters. The hunters use spears, bows and arrows.

This period is dated around 8.000 B.C to 3.000 B.C. It is significant that Mesolithic people were lived in Caves as well as on the sand dunes in Karnataka.

Neolithic age:

The Neolithic culture is also called as New Stone Age culture. These people were started to use fine and polished stone tools in their daily life, hence this period is called as Neolithic period. It came after the

Mesolithic culture. It is very difficult to say when and how the Neolithic period was started in India. Some North East Indian regions received the impact of higher culture much earlier than the others. The first site was found as early as 1842 in the Lingasugur area of Raichur District in Karnataka.

Number of Explorations and Excavations were undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India as well as the state department of Archaeology. These two institutions were carried out several excavations after independence in Karnataka. Some of the important Neolithic culture sites in Karnataka are, Brahmagiri, T.Narasipura, Sanganakallu, Piklihal, Maski, Tekkalakota, Hallur, Jalahally, Hemmige, Hulikallu etc.

Features of the Neolithic culture :

- These people were started to their settled life on the river basins
- These people were used polished stone axes, adzes, chisels etc, along with microliths on a large scale, copper objects on a restricted scale.
- Their dwellings were simple huts, circular or rectangular on plan
- Latterly, they were started to built their houses by using stone and mud bricks
- They practiced primitive agriculture.
- It is generally believed that, they grew wheat and barley. Rarely Ragi also.
- They began to Domestic the animals such as cattle, sheep, goat, buffaloes, ass, horse, pig, dog etc.
- They used gray pottery vessels of various types sometimes with painted desines.
- Their main economy of life was tending cows and sheep and carrying on a primitive kind of agriculture.
- small industries such as pot making, weaving, etc were carried on in this period.
- They buried their dead in dug-out pits or in four points joined to on a another in the case of children

This period is dated around 3.000 B.C to 1.000 B.C. According to Allchins synthesis, the age of Neolithic period is bracketed between 2.500 and 1.000 B.C (phase-1 : 2.500 – 2000, phase-2: 2.000 – 1.600, phase-3:1.600 – 1.000)

Megalithic age :

The Megalithic period represent the most important stage in the cultural development. This period is witnessed to the establishment of systamatic agricultural society and economies based on diversification of occupations. The Megalithic communities gradually came under the influence of the Mauryas. The burial practices tipical of the Megalithic period continued in to Historical period.

The term *Megalith* is derived from the Greek words *megas* and *lothos*. It means huge and stones respectively. During this period, the people were used huge stones for built their dead burials, hence it is called as megalithic age. This was the last phase of the prehistoric age. It is characterised by the heavily built up stone circles containing burial chambers associated with black – and – red pottery and iron implements.

More than 700 megalithic sites were noticed in Karnataka. Banahally, Byranapada, Bramhagiri, Godachanamalki, Guledagudda, Teradala, Tadakanahally, Konnur, Komaranahally, Maski, Ihole, Hallur, Hirebenakal, Sanganakal and others are the main sites.

Types of Megalithic Burials :

The most distinguishing feature of the megalithic period is the creation of Megalithic monuments for interring the skeletal remains of the dead. These monuments are varied in types. The stone circle burial, the cairn circle burial, the pit circle, the port holed chamber, the dolmens, the terracotta sarcophagus burial, the menhirs, the alignments, urn burials etc.

This culture has revealed that pastoralism played a major role in the Megalithic economy and hunting of wild animals and finishing also added to the subsistence. Bones of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, pig, horse and other animals proved are that, these people were continued the culture of Neolithic men. Wild animals bones are also found at various sites in Karnataka.

Megalithic society is mainly based on the society. Agriculture is turned as one of the prominent occupation. They cultivated rice, barley, wheat, millets, horse gram, red gram, etc. Remains of these seeds were found at various sites in Karnataka.

The Megalithic sites like Tadakanahally, Komaranahally and others, especially burials have yielded an enormous amount of metal objects. These metals are made up of copper, bronze, iron and some of gold. These objects were helps to understanding the metallurgical technology of the Megalithic people. The habitation sites like Banahally, Naikund and others have also yielded evidences for iron smelting. Gold ornaments are also reported in some Megalithic sites like Mahurjhari and others.

Majority of the Megalithic burials do not have complete skeletal remains. But only a fragmentary bones and in some instances nothing is found. In the secondary burials, fragmentary bones were collected from the deceased which was laid on the open ground exposed to the natural forces and were buried some time after the death. And the last type of burial is called ceremonial burial(cremation). This type of burials were commonly found at various sites throughout Karnataka.

Another noteworthy change of megalithic people is found in the use of pottery. They use variety of pottery in their daily life. Black, Red, Black and Red, Russet are most important.

In summary the megalithic culture of Karnataka can be dated to the 150 B.C to 50 A.D. Megalithic tradition continued to exist even during the 500 A.D.

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