



An overview of Mesolithic culture in Chitradurga region of Karnataka

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Abstract

Mesolithic division of The Stone age Culture is comparatively very new for India. Until 1895, the development of man was divided into three broad divisions like Stone age, Copper age and Iron age. In the Stone age, Very recently the term 'Mesolithic' was introduced by Jacques De Morgan made a difference between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Culture.

Keywords: Mesolithic, culture, Palaeolithic and Neolithic culture, stratigraphic, technology, Chandravalli Bramhagiri, Nunkimale, Halekere, (Chitradurga), Yadiyapura, Sannati, Jeevargi, Chandravalli and Bramhagiri, deforestation and re-occupation

Introduction

Mesolithic division of The Stone age Culture is comparatively very new for India. Until 1895, the development of man was divided into three broad divisions like Stone age, Copper age and Iron age. In the Stone age, Very recently the term 'Mesolithic' was introduced by Jacques De Morgan made a difference between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Culture. It stands for a great change in the tools as well as change in the climatic conditions.

Mesolithic culture represents a phase of transition between the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene. This stratigraphic aspect cannot be separated from the concept of the Mesolithic. In India while ascribing Mesolithic status to the finds of microlithic industry anywhere. It is important to consider the chronological aspect. Changes in environment from Pleistocene to Holocene necessitated this change in cultural adaptation in developing new and more efficient foraging methods. The Mesolithic transition took place at least twice, if not more, between 12000 and 5000 years BC. First transition was at the time when the Mesolithic population had to adopt to post-Pleistocene environment with Palaeolithic technology. The other transition came when the hunting foraging method of living was to give way to horticultural adaptation.

In this transitional period where the food gatherers of Palaeolithic age tempted to food and the nomadic life slowly tempted to be settled for the collection and production of food. The men of Mesolithic age had mainly depended on hunting, but some parts, they settled and systematic life had begun. The weapons and implements of Palaeolithic period were in use with them, but they abundantly produced the small tools, and used them for minute purposes. In some countries the appearance of this age is much doubted. It is an ill-defined and short period in the history of pre-historic age. The Mesolithic culture characterized by certain important features.

1. The use of microliths or small stone tools.
2. The tranchet technique is applied for making tools

3. Bone and antlers were also used for making tools.
4. Agriculture and manufacture of pottery had its first appearance in some places.

In Karnataka a large number of Mesolithic sites have been reported. very often microliths are found on bare surface of the hills of granite rocks. Some tools were found below a layer of black soil in a reddish horizon. Classical evidence of Mesolithic settlement lying between Paleolithic and Neolithic layers come from Sanganakallu of Bellary District. A large number of factory sites are known from Shorapur Doab located on or close to the streams flowing into the Krishna and Bhīma rivers. The material is almost exclusively chert. Mr. and Mrs. Allchin of London University was traced a site at Kibbanahally in Tumakur District in 1951, and this site too produced a large number of Microliths. Particularly side scrapers. From Jalahally near Bengaluru on the granite hills was explained by Prof. Todd in 1948. This site contained a variety of small and beautiful microliths of milky Quartz and rock crystal.

Until now, there are about three hundred Mesolithic sites known from Karnataka. Chattanahally, Shettihally, Kattebelagali, Maranaya Kanahally (Hassan-Dist). Hanagallu, Arekoppa (Haveri-Dist). Theerthahally, anaveri, Talale (Shimoga). Hemmige (Mysore). Jalahally, Siddapura, Ragigudda (Bengaluru). Manjari, Kudachi (Belagaum). Budihala, Golasangi, karadimatti (Beedar). Badami, Mahakuta, Kudalasangama (Bagalakote). Kuditini, Sanganakallu, Toranagallu (Bellary). Uppinangadi, Munganaya kanakote (Dakshina Kannada). Kibbanaballi, Huliurudurga, Madanaya kanahally (Tumakuru). Chandravalli Bramhagiri, Nunkimale, Halekere, (Chitradurga). Yadiyapura, Sannati, Jeevargi, Kodekal (Gulbarga). Gokarna, Kumata (Uttarakannada). Haladi, Barakuru, Karkala (Udupi) are the important among the sites.

Chitradurga is one of the District, which lies in middle part of Karnataka. Taking its extreme limits, it is situated between 13°

34° and 15° 02' North latitude and 75° 37' and 77° 01' East longitude. Its greatest length from North to South is about 85 miles and the greatest breadth from East to West is about 100 miles. It has an area of 4,170.9 miles. The district is bounded on the North by Bellary district and the East by Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. On the South-East and South-West, it is bounded by the districts Tumakur and Chikmagalur. On the West and North-West, the districts of Shimoga and Davanagere form the boundaries.

It has its own historical importance. There is evidence of human inhabitants right from the pre-historic age. Robert Bruce Foote who was the father of pre-history, was traced some palaeolithic antiquities for the first time in this region in 1960's. Talya and Janakal are most important among the palaeolithic sites in this District. A large number of Mesolithic sites have been also reported here. Brahmagiri, Nunkimale, Halekere and other sites are prominent. The local Mesolithic culture called the 'Roppa culture' has been found to be similar to the 'Campiguan culture' of France, belonging to the period from 8000 B.C TO 6000 B.C.

Chandravalli and Bramhagiri are most important pre-historic sites in this region, as well as history of south India also. The valley of Chandravalli is situated immediately to the South-West of the fortified hill of Chitradurga. During the British Government period, a number of lead coins were collected here in the course of digging up in a drain to lead out the rain water, and were sent to the British Museum. Some of them were published by E.J. Rapson in the British Museum catalogue of the coins of the Andhras. Lately, Dr. M.H. Krishna who was the Director of Archaeological Department of Mysore, was planned to excavate here. The result of this was found some lead coins belonging to the Satavahanas, Roman silver coins and ornaments of gold, silver and copper along with few Microliths. The earlier forms of pottery and the evidence of iron-smelting in the caves point towards there being a possible pre-iron age. The neoliths and some microliths were collected in the water courses and in the caves of Neralagondi and Baralagondi suggest the existence of man in the Chandravalli valley during the Neolithic times and also it some extend to Mesolithic age. Even though Chandravalli site is belonging to the Neolithic-Early historic period, some sort of microliths were also found in the lower level.

Bramhagiri is another important pre-historic site in this region which is situated in Molakalmuru taluk. It has carried a place on the archaeological map of India since as early as 1892 when B.L. Rice made the famous discovery of Asoka's edicts round about this place. Finally, excavations were carried out in May 1947 by the Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the Archaeological Department of Mysore State with the object of correlating the local culture. Over three thousand antiquities were discovered during the excavation and several (Eight) strata of a long occupied site were noted. About eight feet below the surface level Iron objects were found. Just below this strata, about one hundred microliths and twenty three amorphous flakes were found. The material used includes jasper, agate, carnelian, flint, common opal and rock-crystal. With due allowance for the fact that,

even in an evolved microlithic industry. Specialized implements form only a minute proportion of the whole, it must be affirmed that the Bramhagiri industry is crude in the extreme and rarely exhibits any effective attempt at retouching.

The implements may be divided into the seven categories, such as—

1. Double edged blade without retouch (64)
2. Blade with battered back blunted by steep retouching(6)
3. Crescentic blade with battered back (1)
4. Narrow leaf-like blade with point at both ends and battered back. It was a cross between a crescent and a point (1)
5. Burin (1)
6. Chisel-ended blade (2)
7. Side scrapers (4)

The men of Microlithic age were evidently hunters, fisher and food gatherers. They lived in caves and rock shelters as early men did. The group sense became more during this age. But the idea of family had not still emerged, but the group relations had finally set in this period. At first the skin of hunted animals became the first covering sheet for men. Skin cloths were often used during this period. The Microlithic men like their predecessors gave much attention to the art and artistic activities, paintings, drawings and sculptures in different areas suggest the fast growth of the art.

Conclusion

The article focus upon the genesis of microlithic artifacts in archaeological context in the region of study. In the course of field survey it was found that the raw material used in the manufacture of microliths are easily available in the raw outcrops of the surrounding areas. These are mainly rocks of fine or medium sized grains of quartz, chert and sandstone. Unfortunately the present day population pressure has had its effect on past settlements many of which have been lost in deforestation and re-occupation by modern settlers.

The evidence of this Mesolithic stage in Chitradurga as well as Karnataka is both qualitatively and quantitatively richer than that of the preceding stages of the stone age. The Mesolithic hunter gatherers were the most successful colonisers.

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