

CHAPTER - II

ANTIQUITY - PRE-HISTORY OF BELGAUM DISTRICT.

PURANIC ASSOCIATIONS :

Many places in the district have been connected with puranic and methological traditions. There are five Ramathirthas in the district, 1) In the Soundatti Fort 2) at Mallur in Ramadurga Taluka 3) Near Kanabargi in Belgaum taluka 4) at Ramathirtha in Athani taluka and 5) Near Halashi in Khanapur taluka, and these described as places visited by Rama who must have also stayed these for sometime. Ramadurga Fort is ascribed to Rama and Sabarikolla near Sureban is described as the place where Shabari had lived and met Rama. Sogal is described as the place where one "Sugolamuni" performed penance. Yedur on the banks of the Krishna is claimed to be a place where Daksha performed a sacrifice, which was later obstructed by Veerabhadra. Godachi is Soundatti taluka also lays claim to be the Site of this event. Shirasangi in Soundatti taluka is described as "the place where sage Rishyasringa had stayed". The Yellamma Gudda (Forest) near Soundatti was "the site where Jamadagni had lived and the dramatic events of his son

Parashurama be heading his mother Renuka at his father's bidding is said to have taken place". Goddess Yellavva of Soundatti is identified with Renuka and worshipped. Jamboti near Khanapur is associated with Jambavati lord Krishnas consort and Jambavata's daughter. Saptasagar, a pre-historic site is claimed to be the place where the Saptarshis had lived and performed the sacrifices. The Mugutkhan Hubli Narashimha temple is claimed to be the place where Sage Chavana had performed a sacrifice. Many passage chamber tombs that are found at Konnur of other places are ascribed to the Pandavas.¹

PRE-HISTORY OF BELGAUM DISTRICT :

The region of Karnataka occupying culturally and geographically and eminently strategic position in the Deccan plateau of being environmentally the most favourable for man's existence and living. However very little was known about the life and culture of people of the period, prior to the rise of Kadambas in Karnataka. Excepting the edicts of Ashoka (273-235 B.C.) alone but significant inscription (1st Century B.C.) is from "Vadgaon Madhavapur". (A suburb of Belgaum). We have also the Shatavana and Roman Coins accidentally discovered in Karwar and Banavasi (U.K.district) Yeshavantapur (near Bangalore) AkkiOalur (Dharwad district) etc., on the one hand and ptolemy's (130 A.D.) references to the contemporary port of commercial importance. On the other there are absolutely no sources literary and epigraphical providing even a general account of the peoples and culture in pre-kadamba period.

The year 1873 is indeed very remarkable when Robert Bruce-Foote discovered old stone age (Early Palaeolithic) tools in the Malaprabha basin at Khyad, Dhanak Sirur (Bijapur district). Similar stone-age sites were found at Kibbanahalli (Tumkur district) by Sampat Aiyangar in 1924 and Jalahalli near Bangalore by K.R.U. Todd. In the Cauvery valley at T.Narashipur and Sangankallu near Bellary, Bruce-Foote located New stone-age (Neolithic), human habitation sites with Fragments of Pottery vessels well ground and polished stone tools, etc., During 1900-45, the pioneering investigations

especially by Dr.M.H.Krishna of Dept. of Archaeology of the erstwhile Mysore States at Chandravalli and Brahmagiri (Chitradurga district) were notable. The discovery of antanae copper swords close to a Chalcolithic (Copper-stone - Age) site in Kallur (in the area of which now the dept. of Geology and Mines has been, of late tracing deposits of copper ores at a low depth near Raichur by the Dept. of Archeology of the former Hyderabad state was another major events. Spotting a chalcolithic site at Saptasagar (Athani taluka) and an early historical site at Vadagaon Madhavapur (both in Belgaum district) by R.S.Panchamukhi of Kannada Research Institute, Dharwad was particularly note-worthy.²

Nevertheless, Bruce Foote postulated a sequences of three cultural stages on the pre-history of India in general: Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Iron-Age many sites were dug of the cultural remains were collected, Neither their broad chronology nor aspects of cultures could in some detail be unambiguously known.³

The Pre-historic development in Belgaum district has been summarised by Dr.A.Sundara, Director of Archeology and Museums, Government of Karnataka, as follows.⁴ The river valley and hill ranges with many gorges and caverns in the district were very favourable sites for the habitat of the pre-historic people. A few Lower palaeolithis sites, the earliest stone age cultural stage of man, have been traced in the upper Malaprabha and the Ghataprabha valleys as well as their tributaries. For instance at Sutagatti in the Ghataprabha valley (Belgaum taluka) and Tallur Soundatti taluka) on the Malaprabha are found stone tools of the early palaeolithic culture. Besided near Gokak (in Ghataprabha valley) Some of the animal fossils (of the early palaeolithic period) were also found. But relationship of these fossils with the contemperory human cultural remains if any are yet to be investigated.

The stone tools of these site are made of quartzitic sand stone, the most common medium used for making tools by the early palaeolithic man in this region as known from the other sites. In these river valleys as elsewhere the most common tool types are hand-axes and 'U' shaped cleavers, technically of

mixed-Acheulian type. Dr. R.S.Pappu of the Deccan collage post-graduate and Research institute has noted that, the lower Acheulian tools are found at Halagatti, Sunnal and Chilamur and tools of the Acheulian type are located at Kolachi, Chilamur, Chinchkhand, Gonnagar and Sureban in the Malaprabha valley.

At Gonnagar, in a cave, tools of the Middle Palaeolithic stage were traced. Dr.Pappu had demarcated heavy concentration of the middle palaeolithic sites between Yadawad (Gokak taluka) and Lokapur (Mudhol taluka) in Bijapur district. Many more middle Palaeolithic sites have been located at Kolagi, Kundargi, Lolsur, Mamadapur & Pachapur. Dr. A.Sundara had collected many middle palaeolithic tools in a hill valley near Shabharikolla (with 10-11th Century temple unusually having Shalashikhara) in 1966.

The fact is that the upper Palaeolithic stage in India has not yet been clearly and fully established over a major part of the country. In this region also upper palaeolithic sites are sparsely noted. The only one site is in Yadwad with Scrapers, burils, flakes, simple and backed blades, corls etc..

At Gonnagar, Shabarikolla and Megundeshwar are found mesolithic cultural remains. In a cave behind the shabarikolla temple was noticed by Dr.A. Sundara a painting of a circle with dots inside.

Neolithic sites in this region comparable to those in Sangankallu and T. Narashipur (on the cauveri valley, Mysore district) have not been traced so far in this region. Numerous chalcolithic sites have been located by Dr. A. Sundara in the upper Krishna valley, at "Kadoli, Examba, Kudachi, Satti, Saptasagar" etc.,. Comparatively speaking these sites are very rich in black-on-red painted pottery of varieties in Karnataka but are different from those of the Godavari Valley. They are similar to those from the earliest phase of the Neolithic in Chalcolithic stage in Brahmagiri i.e., Brahmagiri Ist A. Another variety intimately akin to that of Savalda in Tapi valley, pottery with painting in ivory black, white kaolin and brown are those found at Satti. Among these sites Satti and Saptasagar in Athani taluka, Kadoli, Eksamba, Kudachi in Chikodi taluka are noteworthy.

In some of these sites are traced remnants of mounds of scoriaceous ash, examples are of Kudachi, Konnur, Eksamba etc.. Even since the discovery and the interpretation of these ash-mounds by Robert Bruce-Foote in the last decades of the 19th century in the Raichur Doab Sporadic and scientific investigations have been and are being carried out on finding out the causes for the formation of such a ash mounds, the cultural associations, purpose and date especially, by Dr. F.R.Allchin, V.R.Reddy, S.N.Rajguru, Majumdar and Sundara. Accordingly various theories such as that these mounds are due to the periodical burning of cowdung accumulated in cattle-pens of the Neolithic people, Iron smelting activities etc., are current. However the occurrence of the ash mounds in the Krishna valley of the Belgaum region, according to Sundara, Seems to indicate the course of the defusion of this activity along the valley towards the Doab and it is probably associated with either the used of Sawalida pottery or the Iron-Age Megalithic passage chamber builders.

The beginning of the Iron age in Karnataka in general is marked with the use of Iron in every day life replacing stone for making tools and weapons. Earlier at Konnur an extensive megalithic sites had been noticed. The megalithics toms in most of the sites are passage chambers. There are two distinct type of passage chambers as known from the ground plan, Orientation and mode of construction, typically represented in Konnur, and Soundatti and therefore designated as Konnur and Soundatti types. At Hunnur, Ghodgeri etc., there are large sized oval shaped barrows each cancelling many passage chambers tombs, probably representing family vaults through the ages. One such a barrow in Hunnur was excavated in 1969 by the Archaeological Survey of India. Pottery Vessels and bits of iron objects have been found in these tombs. One of these tombs have been transplanted and erected near the circuit house in Hidakal. The tomb generally is trapezoidal in plan with a passage oriented invariably southwards or between south west and South east. It is usually raised from above the ground and occasionally, partly buried or almost completely buried depending upon the nature of the spot. The chamber consists of six

undressed, thick & huge slabs, five on the sides and one on the top. If three slabs cover the three sides, on the south, there will be two orthostats lesser in width than the slabs on the other three sides. Between the two orthostats will be a gap leading to the chamber. This central gap or opening is approached by a passage formed by two flanking slabs, set up vertically. The entire structure is surrounded by stone rubble and earth heaped upon upto the capstone on the sides. The whole structure looks like a round barrow. These chambers are found in hundreds at Konnur in Gokak taluka and also in places like Ainapur, Hidkal, Ghodageri, Savalagi, and Godachinamalki. There are tombs of slightly different types found at Sindhogi, Tallur and Soundatti also. These chambers were tombs and the passage is meant for the periodically offerings to the deceased by the relatives of the dead. The dates have been fixed as between 1200 to 700 B.C.

The pre-historic man of the palaeolithic Age was a nomad, a food gatherer or food hunter, using stone tools prepared by flaking. A distinct change is discernable after the mesolithic age. During the mesolithic age as known from the investigations elsewhere in India for example Sahar Naharai, Lekhania (Uttar Pradesh) Longhanaj (Gujarat) etc., people seem to have developed certain traditions that bound them together and started dwelling at one place for a longer period collecting wild grains, Constructing hut like dwellings preparing ear-ornaments on animal bones and pottery vessels, etc., They had also developed fairly an elaborate ritual for disposing of the dead.

In the next stage tools, systematically flaked, ground & polished with sharpened working edges were produced and these were used for clearance of tree and plants and for agricultural operations. Consequently people become well settled and economically better. Very soon copper ores were prospected and smelted & the metal was used for preparing tools besides polished stone tools and this stage is described as Chalcolithic. Domestication of animals and developed cultivation improved the standard of life and pottery vessels were decorated with paintings in different colours and lapidary ornaments made on

metal such as gold and copper as well as semi-precious stones like chalcedony, chert, Jasper, etc., were manufactured and used for necklaces etc..

In the Iron-age, altogether a different variety of pottery both in types and fabrics were prepared and used. A variety of iron implements, such as agricultural tools, sickle, knife, weapons like swords, Javelins and arrow-heads, vessels such as plates with loop handles etc., were in use. These indicate an advanced stages of the material life of man ready for developing full-fladged cities of the beginning of the historic period.

Notes & References:

- 1) Kamath S.U., Belgaum district Gazeteer. P.72.
- 2) Kamath S.U., Karnataka State Gazeteer. Vol.I.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Kamath S.U., Belguam District Gazeteer. P.73.