

New Insight in Palaeolithic Archaeology

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In peninsular India, usually tools are first found on river banks therefore, it is legitimate to say that man during the Stone Age lived on river banks, but gradually as scholars began to explore the jungle and hilly areas in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, or the sandy plains of northern Gujrat, it was found that man lived in the caves or rock-shelters and in Sandy plains which enclosed a pond.

The large Ganga plain has almost special geographical features everywhere and sharp differences in different areas. Keeping several factors in view, the entire Ganga plain has been divided into three sub-divisions: (i) The Upper Ganga Plain (ii) The Middle Ganga Plain (iii) The Lower Ganga Plain. As the title of the present paper indicates, the Middle Ganga Plain has been chosen for the present paper.

Easy availability of water and grain, and very often the raw material was a prime consideration in the selection of habitation sites. Ganga has been cradle of Indian culture and civilization. As Sir Mortimer Wheeler has correctly put it, if the Indus gave a name, it may almost be said that the Ganges gave India a faith and is at least as worthy as her sister of our solicitude (Wheeler, 1949: 100). The Middle Ganga Plain is bounded by the Ganga – Yamuna confluence in the west and the west Bengal and Bihar border in the east, Himalaya in the north and the Vindhya in the South. The area includes modern eastern Uttar Pradesh and parts of Bihar. One of the factors, river system, on this basis the Middle Ganga Plain is further divided into the Ganga Plain North and the South.

The Ganga Plain south is also further sub divisible into the west of Karmasa, Karmasa east interflaves, Lower Son Valley and Ganga plain (Singh, 1971: 84). The changing climate condition during early and middle phase of Holocene in the Middle Ganga Played a significant role in the revolution of early farming cultures. Cockburn (1888) located Paleolithic tool in the Singrauli Basin and Mirzapur district. The Universities of Allahabad (Verma 1965) and Banaras in 1960s and 1970s resulted in understanding the evolution of prehistoric cultures of the region. The growth of population in Vindhya is attested to by the discovery of new settlements. In peninsular India, usually, tools are first found on river banks and therefore, it is legitimate to say that man during the stone Age lived on river banks. But gradually, as scholars began to explore the jungles and hilly areas in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, or the sandy plains of northern Gujrat, it was found that man lived in caves or rock-shelters and in Sandy plains which enclosed a pond. Easy availability of water and game, and very often the raw material, was a prime consideration in the selection of habitation sites. There were obviously temporary camping sites, and not permanent settlements. Hence so far they have not yielded such data as hearths, chariot, ash, bones of animals left after eating and physical remains of man himself. And it is heartening to find that the stone tools found in excavation confirms not only the change in tool type but also the material used. This is now certain that neither the Early man nor his successor lived only along the banks of small and large rivers, always in open. Camps - probably temporary - were made wherever raw material was easily available. Such camping sites, away from the river bank's might have become more common, during the middle Paleolithic period.

and later. For now the tools required were much smaller, so that they could be produced wherever wanted or even carried by man from place to place.

The exploration in the Ganga Valley, comprising the district of Allahabad, Varanasi, Pratapgarh Jaunpur and Sultanpur to the north of the Ganga covering an area of about 11,000 sq k.m, have yielded interesting evidences regarding the arrival of Stone Age Man in Ganga Valley. The Mesolithic people had started exploiting the edible wild grains for their consumption from the Mesolithic sites of Pratapgarh district. We can form an idea of mobiliary art activity from the evidences which we get in the form of stone and bone implements. This movements also continued at least upto the chalcolithic stage. In middle Ganga plain the earliest Neolithic settlements was established at Senuwar, later it developed into a Chalcolithic culture, the Neolithic Chalcolithic king as an intermediate phase. Pottery as well as carbonized grains, from some of the sites appears to denote only that the earliest Neolithic Phar in which only rice was cultivated, was present only in Senuwar. In the early phases the people used to make handmade pottery but the use of wheel turned pot has also been reported from senuwar, from the upper phase of Neolithic. Copper objects have been found in Senuwar, including wire, fish hook, needle etc.

Occurrence of bone tools, like celts, scrapers and arrowheads is very important feature of the middle ganga plain Neolithic. Excavations at Chirand have yielded plenty of such objects. It may be noted that with the exception of Neolithic sites of Kashmir, Chirand is the only Neolithic site in India to produce lone object, both in quality and variety (Mishra 1999)

The earliest evidence of semi sedentary population living in small huts has been found at Chopani- Mando. The pattern of settlement like a beehive continued from Epi Palaeolithic up to Advanced Mesolithic. The Neolithic settlement of Mahagara, marks a considerable advance in the pattern of settlement which is a result of change economy leading to the emergence of the family living in separates house units planned around the cattle pen to give protection to the domesticated animals Domestication were present in the Vindhya from very early times, cattle, right from lower Paleolithic and sheep/goat from upper Paleolithic. A very large number of skeletal remains of cattle, sheep and goat is found in wild condition in the Mesolithic levels. The evidence of wild and domesticated cattle in the same level at Koldihwa and Mahagara is significant. This evidence presents a clear stage of transition from the wild to domesticated. The sheep and goat are fully domesticated in the Neolithic period, pointing to an earlier stage of transition from the wild stage to domestication. We gave a broad picture both of the protection rock imagery of the Vindhya and Uttar Pradesh. We also have an idea of environment, technology and subsistence behavior in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene period pertaining to hominids, habitations in the highlands of the Vindhya as well as lowlands immediately neighboring them.

The upper Paleolithic culture is always associated with Homo-sapiens. The Upper Paleolithic evidences are not many when we compares them with the rich occurrence of culture from Lower Paleolithic period. The question of whether habitation at Vindhya pointed sits was only during Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and chalcalithic, or whether they belong to all or only some of the successive chronological periods remains outstanding it is no doubt indicated by such things as Neolithic ground and polished tools and megalithic burials. The painted tied images also certainly point to later period of habitations.

The available evidences indicates a evolution from upper Paleolithic to Mesolithic. This evolution was gradual. The first colonizers of middle Ganga plain were the upper Paleolithic or Epi Paleolithic and Mesolithic people of the Vindhya. Excavation at Jhansi and Hetapatti near Ganga River in Allahabad have resulted in putting the Neolithic culture in western part of the Middle Ganga Valley. The preceding Mesolithic culture of the Ganga Valley contains food processing equipments made on sand stone, quartzite but no pottery, but in Vindhya it is associated with hutments and hand made pottery also.

Ceramic industries of Neolithic culture also provide some evidence of their food producing economy. Big sized jars ,wide mouthed medium sized jars and basin, spouted bowls, spouted vases were used for containing and serving liquid food.

The Neolithic people were using ornaments and other art objects. Teracotta beads and shell pendants, beads of semiprecious stones and bones, pendant and ear rings of bone, bangles of terracotta and bone(from Chirand) and beads of bone and steatite from Sohgauna can be called ornaments of Neolithic people. Hand made pottery, hunting, food producing ornament and settlement marked suggest that the Neolithic society of the Vindhya and the Ganges plain were self sufficient . The availability of animals, birds,fish and tortoise attracted stone age hunters to the north of Ganga from their original place of the Vindhya. But in Ganga valley stone for making tools was not available , so they would have been compelled to return to Vindhya for raw material. The explorations in the Ganga valley, comprising the district of Allahabad, Varanasi, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur and Sultanpur to the north of the Ganga covering an area of about 11,000 sq. km. have yielded interesting evidences regarding the arrival of Stone Age man in the Ganga Valley. stone implements have been collected from 198 sites. stratigraphically these tools are related to the last formation of the Bhagor, the old alluvium of the Ganga. As the tools have been obtained throughout the sandy formation, The topmost formation of the alluvium, it can be clearly presumed that the Stone Age man started coming to the Ganga valley when Fluvial deposit was in process of formation. The lithic assemblage of different sites contains nodules, nodules, cores, flakes and finished tools, the last one often in different stages of manufacture suggesting thereby that the tools locally were manufactured. A study of colour base chert is interesting. The microlithic the assemblage of the Banda District is made on the white chert the Allahabad and Varanasi are on grey and black chert so for none of these sites of the Ganga valley has yielded microliths of white chert. On the basis of the interrelationship of raw material it may be safely presumed that the immigrants to Ganga Valley came from south, the Vindhya areas and carried the nodules with them. The microlithic assemblage of the Allahabad and Pratapgarh Districts, however, is based on greyish chert which has been extensively used in the Vindhya area of Allahabad and Mirzapur.

If the Neolithic period of India is considered primarily on basis of economic characters, than the food production is vital one, and in this process the role of some tools is not as essential as generally thought. There are some tribal groups in India who still practice a primitive form of agriculture without any specific technology connected with tool types in the rice cultivation. In the Middle Ganga Plain, excavation at a lake side settlement of Lahuradeva have brought to light the rice cultivation, without any role of stone tools, during 7th millennium B.C. The conventional ideas of Neolithic terminology for the beginning of agriculture need to be reconsidered by archaeologists and anthropologists. The literature on early agriculture in Indian archaeology of Ganga Plain has now been cluttered with unlikely explanations and outright

errors. Since nothing can be proved finally in archaeology, the quest being instead of high levels of probability it is desirable to categorise evidence as qualified by authenticity, abundance, kind interpretation and integration, although they may be labelled differently by qualified archaeologists. The study of Urbanisation as a distinct historical development by now has become an established fact for the studying Indian economic history. It is being increasingly realised that urban growth is a complex process involving certain basic socio economic changes at the primary level. The urban centres not only represent a distinct development in technology and economy but, in turn, also inaugurate a new societal type having almost universal relevance and impact. Thus, urbanization is decidedly an indicator of the socio economic and cultural level of a civilization, a point which needs better appreciation in the ancient Indian context.

The accessibility of metals and more complex alloys made human more creative. Originally tools were used for hunting, defence and food production but as time passed and the skill of making tools and using them grew they soon became a means to conduct war at individual and group levels.

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