



The Prehistoric sites of Devanahalli Taluk-An Overview

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Introduction:

Pre-history is the period of time before written records. As there are no written records of this period. Rock paintings, Stone tools used by these peoples, fossils and other excavated materials are the sources to know about pre-historical period. Prehistoric age refers to the time when there was no writing and development. It consists of five periods, such as, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Iron age.

The State of Karnataka, the heartland of South India, is one of the richest regions where prehistoric and protohistoric peoples flourished and left behind their remains in considerable quantities. But unfortunately, very little systematic survey of the state, for the remains of the earlier ages has been done and hence, we have to depend to a large extent on the reports of the people who came across them in a casual way or those interested themselves in their study as a part-time hobby. Evidence of Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Megalithic cultures have also been found in Karnataka.

Bangalore Rural District was formed in 1986 and situated in the South eastern part of Karnataka. It is spread across four Taluks, i.e., Doddaballapur, Devanahalli, Hosakote and Nelamangala. Many prehistoric sites have been located in the district. Devanahalli is located about 35 km to the North-east of Bangalore. It was the Birthplace of Tippu Sultan, and it is the site of Bangalore International Airport. Devanahalli Taluk is known for prehistoric sites (Mesolithic, Megalithic etc.) The prehistoric sites of Devanahalli Taluk have been discussed as below.

Managondanahalli: It is a village in Devanahalli Taluk, and it is about 12 km from Devanahalli and about 50 km from Bangalore. The Managondanahalli site is on the foot of a granite hillock, dotted with megalithic comprising cists with stone circles and a few menhirs of irregular granite blocks leaning in different directions. It is one of the oldest and largest surviving megalithic sites. A few of the cromlechs here were excavated by the Archaeological Department of Mysore in 1916-17 and found to contain pots of different sizes and bowls. A big pot and a smaller one with legs, unearthed from another cromlech here, are included in the exhibits of the Mysore Archaeological Museum. Some of the finds are figured on Plate XV of the Mysore Archaeological Report for 1916-17 (MAR 1917). The site gathers importance because this is the only evidence of the megalithic period. Over the years, these megaliths have been destroyed. The villagers looking for treasure have dug underneath the rocks. The farmers have used it as an agricultural field, and harvested a crop recently. In the bargain, the relics are being destroyed. While quarrying destroyed nearly 80 percent of the megalithic structures, farmers tried to meddle with the remaining ones. The ASI, Southern Circle, Bangalore, brought to light a late stone age site at Managondanahalli, yielding scrapers, blades and flakes on quartz and rock-crystal. (IAR 1970-71).



Avati: Avati was the capital of chiefs known as Avati Prabhus. The Avati hill was once fortified. On it are several ash pits containing huge bones and ancient pottery. In the valley between the Avati hill and Kolugudda are several cromlechs, each situated within a circle of rough stones, the top slab being about on foot thick and nine or ten feet square. It is a wonder how these gigantic slabs were got to their place. It appears that during Arthor Cole's time a few of these cromlechs were opened by having the top slabs broken to pieces and the contents consisting of pots, iron sandals, spears and huge bones removed to Bangalore. The ashpits and cromlechs bear testimony to the great antiquity of the place (MAR 1914-15, P.No.18-19) In between the Koliigudda and a small hillock, in the plain valley are big stone dolmens of the pre-historic period (BRD 1989, P.No.795).

Ardeshahalli: It is located at distance of 16 km from Devanahalli appears to be an ancient place. There was a vast ash mound in front of the Ishwara temple, indicating that it was pre-historic site (BRD 1989, P.No.794).

Chickajala: It is now in Bangalore North Taluk and about 15 miles north of Bangalore. It has megalithic tombs, spread over considerable distance. This was first located in 1881 by Captain Branfil. Some of these stone chambers have slabs of the length or breadth of over four metres, and one or two of these sealed chambers had opening (passage) to the east. The skeletal remains, pottery and iron implements have been found in these tombs. Some of these artefacts have been taken to Madras Museum (BRD 1989, P.No.40). Chickajala noticed a cemetery of cist circle, the cists having portholes on the east. The capstones of the granite slabs are massive, some of them being as large as 15 ft by 15 ft. (BKG 1972, P.No.139).

Huttanahalli: It is now in Bangalore North Taluk, and about 18 miles north of Bangalore. The excavations carried by Major Wauchope, led to the discovery not only of iron implements, but also of pottery vessels, which were found deposited with human bodies in burials. It is a polished ware, either completely black, or light red with black patches, and belongs technically to the group exhumed from certain graves in the Tinnevely and Salem Districts, samples of which are now in the Indian Museum. The Huttanahalli pots (Plate CXXIX, 1-8) comprise thick-rimmed vessels and wide-mounted pots and pans, most of which bear shallow incised marks, as in the case of the Hyderabad pottery noticed by Yazdani. (IAR 1930-34, P.No.259) The Huttanahalli site contained iron objects, including long spearheads and celts, one of which measured 10 ½ in x 5 ¼ in. It had pointed projections on both sides above the cutting edge resembling the copper celts and had a genetical history extending back to the stone age, pottery consisted of black polished and the black-and-red wares, consisting of carinated bowls, deep conical vases with rounded bottoms, globular-bodied, wide-mouthed, deep saggar-based basins, wide-mouthed concave-necked bases, carinated at the shoulders and deep bowls or vases with open mouths having on the straight rim 5 to 6 grooves and vertical strokes at regular intervals, resembling a railing pattern and having four pellet-like or button-shaped legs, besides remains of human bodies, (BRG 1972, P.No.143).

Sonnappanahalli: It is about 14 miles north of Bangalore, the cists at this place having portholes 2 ½ ft, in diameter (BRG 1972, P.No.140).



Devanahalli: The Director of Archaeology, Mysore State, reports cists and stone circles on both sides of the road leading to Devanahalli (IAR 1960-61).

Koira and Hosur: These are known for Megalithic burials and Menhirs. The burial ground of the megalithic period at Koira, damaged by unregulated mining. Urbanization and cultivation of land.

Conclusion: Urbanization has affected archaeological sites in Devanahalli Taluk. Chickajala site has gone missing because of rapid urbanization in the past two decades. While a residential layout occupies the megalithic site in Chickajala. Most of the cultural vestiges are located in private properties, and that makes their protection difficult. Unfortunately, the local population also does not understand the importance of these sites and implications of its damage. Protection of megalithic sites is a matter of concern as destruction will erase a piece of history. In some sites, farmers have used it as an agricultural field and harvested a crop recently. Villagers looking for treasure have dug underneath the burials/rocks.

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