Palaeolithic cultures of Kothapaliyam and Kurakalava in Southeastern Andhra Pradesh

Key words: Palaeolithic Cultures, Southeastern, Andhra Pradesh, India.

The present paper of Palaeolithic Cultures in Southeastern Andhra Pradesh is based on surface collection of 40 Lower Palaeolithic artifacts from Kurakalava and 125 Middle Palaeolithic artifacts, 85 from Kurakalava and 40 from Kothapaliyam respectively. Both sites are located on the Swaranamukhi river, 17 kms east of the town Tirupati.

Over 50% of the Lower Palaeolithic artifacts of Acheulian tradition are handaxes; the other are chopper-chopping tools. Among the Middle Palaeolithic artifacts, scrapers of various types (44%) predominate. The Lower Palaeolithic artifacts were mainly produced from cores and those of the Middle Palaeolithic were mostly made on flakes. The material used in the preparation of tools was coarse to medium-grained quartzite of different shapes and the techniques employed and the environment in which the people lived were similar to those at other sites in the country.

Geological Background

Kothapaliyam and Kurakalava, situated between east latitudes 13°30' and 13°45' and north longitudes 70°30' and 79°45', are small villages on the banks of Swarnamukhi river and are about 200 meters east of the Tirupati airport and 17 kms of Tirupati, the great pilgrimage town in Andhra Pradesh. The artifactual evidence comes from two sites named after these villages. Both the sites are located about one km north of the villages, 33 kms southeast of Renigunta Railway Station.

The area (Figure 1) has small streams, apart from the rivers of Rallakavala and Swarnamukhi, respectively west and southwest of the sites, which form the drainage system. The Rallakavala originates from the northern side of the Palakonda Hills and from the north-eastern side of the Velikonda Hills. The former meets the main river of this area at about 305 to 457 meters above the sea level. The area consists of large strips of saline soil unsuitable for cultivation. The area comprises gritty soil and small pebbles. The annual rainfall in the area is moderate. The environmental conditions as well as the fauna, flora and water resources in the past favoured the survival and development of Early Man.
Early Evidence from Southeastern Andhra Pradesh

The first Palaeolithic in India was recognized by Foote (1916) from Pallavaram, slightly west of the Madras-Trichinapally high road. Other earlier works were accomplished by Brown, Cammiade and Burkitt, De Terra and Paterson and many others. After these works, our knowledge of the Culture-sequence very much improved thanks to the great amount of new evidence from different parts of the country. The Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic Cultures show a nearly uniform pattern of development in tool typotechnology as also raw material used in all parts of the country.

The first systematic work in this part of the state which include Chittoor District was carried out by Murty (1966) who discovered a number of localities on the bank of the Rallakalava river near Renigunta characterised by evidence of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. No other work was accomplished until the mid-seventies, when a large number of Palaeolithic sites came to light due to the efforts of Rami Reddy and his associates (Rami Reddy & Bhaskar, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983; Rami Reddy & Munikrishnaiah, 1979, and Rami Reddy & Bhaskaramma, 1981) and of many postgraduate students.