

Haritalyangar–Ghumarwin: A Potential Area for Heritage Tourism.....

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Section C: Looking Beyond

CHAPTER-3

HARITALYANGAR–GHUMARWIN: A POTENTIAL AREA FOR HERITAGE TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Introduction

By heritage we generally understand some rare cultural elements (paintings, art and craft and traditions, etc.) of recent or ancient history, or monuments or a religious shrines or royal buildings which acquired a value over generations, and we choose to preserve and pass on the same to future generations. By this definition heritage implies responsibility and stewardship –insuring continuation into the future. Heritage elements become symbols of pride and social esteem to the area or region or nation they belong to. They have shaped the past and present and will influence future development as well, and can contribute to the stability, growth, and economic development of the society or the region.

The cultural and historical elements have their own local peculiarities and a value and accordingly draw a limited or wider attention. Tourism is the commercial organization based on comprehensive planning to attract visitors for their enjoyment and for our economic benefit. Tourism based on heritage is active engagement in an ongoing process involving people, civic institutions, organizations and governments working together as cross-community/region as a diverse team which requires skills of management.

Although we commonly practice ecotourism and limited heritage tourism based on well known historical monuments and places. But, I emphasize here heritage tourism based on certain natural elements which in recent years have gained significance and attract the whole world. These are certain geologi-

logical structures, peculiar rocks that preserve plants and animal remains as palaeontological sites coupled with those containing ancient archaeological relics of past human activities revealing human natural history. All these are priceless gifts of nature and provide invaluable information which matters to the entire humanity and constitute natural heritage. Initially, these are not valued unless experts and media bring them in public notice, and then they suddenly draw international attention of scholars and heritage tourists. American and European tourists are seen greatly attracted by such ancient natural heritage. But, now many countries are sensitive to protect, preserve and display their natural heritage and drawing benefits of heritage tourism.

Heritage tourism has become very viable mean of creating new jobs and businesses opportunities such as setting up shops, increasing tax revenues, and diversifying local economy, besides providing scope other activities, entertainment offerings that the local market alone might not be able to support. Heritage tourism adds quality-of-life benefits and creates a feeling of civic pride since due to recognition of the local or regional uniqueness.

A national study completed by Mandla Research centre in Madhya Pradesh in the fall of 2009 indicates greater attraction towards heritage tourism. The *Cultural and Heritage Traveler* informed that 78% U.S. adults who travelled for leisure in 2009 (118.3 million travellers) were in fact heritage travellers. Heritage travellers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travellers, making them a very attractive target tourism market. They took frequent trips, with 25 percent taking three or more trips a year; took part in a wide variety of activities: 17 percent participate in four or more activities compared with 5 percent of all travellers. Other activities such as visiting state/national parks, participating in culinary activities such as sampling artisan food and wines, visiting farmers' markets and enjoying unique dining experiences rank highly with this target audience.

A Glimpse of Old World Heritage Sites & Tourism

In order to explore/realize the heritage tourism potentials of Haritalyangar-Ghumarwin area in Himachal Pradesh based on its natural geo-palaeontological, especially palaeoanthropological and prehistoric archaeological heritages, the author presents below a brief survey of a some famous sites personally visited that have attracted international tourism in different countries. Let him start with the certain notable sites in African continent he visited first under Gondwanaland

expedition during May-June 2006. He is leaving aside several heritage sites in western Asia and the well known pyramids of Egypt, and just touching those sites similar to Haritalyangar in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania only.

Ethiopia: The capital city Addis Ababa of Ethiopia has several attractions from human natural history points of view, but a great museum, the Ethiopia National Museum of (ENM) is a major tourist attraction. The most notable display here is a mounted skeleton of “Lucy” (*Australopithecus afarensis*) - the first clear-cut ancestor of human lineage. The discovery was made by American palaeoanthropologist Donald Johnson in 1970s. There are numerous fossil findings of human ancestors displayed here discovered from the Hadar region and Omo valley unraveling the earliest ancestors of mankind and first anatomically modern humans. Scientists and tourists from all over the world visit these sites and the ENM very frequently.

Kenya: Kenya National Museum (KNM) at Nairobi displays numerous fossil remains and archaeological findings of prehistoric hominids and early men discovered in various parts of East Africa. There is one famous site at *Olorgesailie* located 95 km southwest of Nairobi in African Rift Valley named after the famous palaeoanthropologist LSB Leakey who discovered the site. He found fossils of *Homo erectus* along with in situ Early Acheulian handaxes displayed at the protected site. A small Site Museum is also developed there exhibiting the replicas of the findings of the site maintained by a trained permanent Guide. The precious original fossil findings however are kept in a strong room in Kenya National Museum (KNM) in Nairobi.

Tanzania: The famous site of *Olduvai Gorge* is located before the Ngorongoro Crater at the southern end of the well known Serengeti safari of Africa where the Masai pastoralists graze their cattle. The site was accidentally discovered in 1911 by Wilhelm Kattwinkle- a German entomologist in a steep-sided ravine in the Great African Rift Valley. It has yielded fossil remains of several human ancestors; earliest is *Homo habilis* as old as 2.5 million years with his crude Olduvai pebble choppers dated to 2 million years ago. Some layers have yielded handaxes as old as 1.5 Mya to 700 Kya made by *Homo erectus*. Fossils of a primitive hominid *Paranthropus boisei*- nicknamed ‘Nutcracker Man’, dated to 1.1 Mya were also found there. The *Olduvai Gorge* site is viewed as the “Cradle of Mankind”. A good site museum displays the replicas of findings recovered from there where as the originals are in the state headquarters. Thousands of visitors and scientists visit the site.

France: I got the opportunity of a study tour to France in 30th June to 18th July 2009 provided by famous prehistorian Professor Henry de Lumley who is the director of the famous *Institut de Paléontologie d'Humaine* (IPH) in a beautiful architectural building. It has a museum that houses numerous original skulls, fossils and archaeological specimens of Europe. It has its laboratories, library and conference hall. The institute is patronized by Prince Albert II of Monaco.

There are a number of heritage museums in Paris which draw many scientists and general tourists. One important is the *Musée de l'Homme*, located near the famous Eiffel Tower in Paris. It houses original fossils of the Neanderthal man and numerous other specimens and attracts numerous tourists. Another great is the museum of natural history which portrays history of life; the gallery of reptiles and mammals is quite impressive, and receives a number of visitors.

Close to the Mediterranean coast southern France is more notable for the original prehistoric sites and five important human natural history museums maintained by the Centre *Européen Recherché de Pre-historique* headed by Henry de Lumley at Tautavel. They got prominence due to several prehistoric sites, located in southern France, visited by numerous tourists and scientists from all over the world. I mention some below.

A new grand museum was inaugurated at Tautavel during my visit on 10th July 2007. It has come up due to the famous Arago Cave in the beautiful Pyrenees mountain ranges discovered by Marcel de Serres, a professional geologist at the University of Montpellier who found animal bones considered *antediluvian* (prehistoric) at the location in 1828. Stone tools were found quite late during 1963 by Jean Abélanet. Thereafter Henry de Lumley initiated excavations and discovered Tautavel Man (*Homo erectus tautavelensis*) in 1969 about 450 Kya old.

The Musée des Merveilles is a new wonderful creation by Henry de Lumley in the Valley of Marvels located at Tende in southern France where the tourists stay at night for the next morning visit to the snow-bound and beautiful icy lakes of Alpine mountains famous for the Bronze Age petroglyphs on the rocks.

Lazaret Cave site is another important tourist and scientific attraction in town Nice, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. It is a Lower Palaeolithic (Acheulian) site having yielded prehistoric animals and a partial skull of

*Homo*² *heidelbergensis* as old as 200 Kya. Excavations began there in 1970s and are still going on. The site has developed into a good museum and research centre.

In the same town there is a big human natural history museum, *Musée de Terra Amata*, which at regular intervals organizes exhibitions and conferences. Herein, besides various natural history displays, the evidence of pits made for camp shelter along with the fire hearths by the prehistoric man are prominently displayed. High on the mountain top there is another double storey museum, *Musée de Forte Drete*. It is very rich in prehistoric collections of animals and displays of the Neanderthal man of Europe.

China: Beijing Museum of Natural History is a great attraction to visitors who visit China. Here, I highlight a 200 – 500 Kya year's old famous prehistoric site of Zhoukoudian, near Beijing that witnesses by thousands of international tourists, sightseers and scientists. It is the famous Peking man's (*Sinanthropus* = *Homo erectus*) site and has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. It has developed into a spacious Fossil Park which exhibits the activities of the prehistoric man alongside animal displays in life-size models. A good Palaeoanthropology Museum and Research Centre is located at the entrance itself. Scientists' memorials with their findings/discoveries written on the marble are also displayed on the side. Of course, the landscape of the site is also beautiful and attractive. China has meaningfully utilized the potentials of the site, and also developed many other prehistoric sites in Southern China which attract scientists and other tourists alike. The Chinese scholars and common people are quite sensitive and boastful of their national ancient heritage.

Indonesia: is very famous for prehistoric sites of 'Java Man' (*Pithecanthropus*=*Homo erectus*) and museums displaying human natural history. One famous site and museum is at Sangiran and the other two are at Trinil and Sambumacan in Java, which are international crowd pullers. Another recently discovered site in Indonesia is of the tiny 'Hobbit'- a new species of man (*Homo floresiensis*) that lived in a vast lignite cave in Flores Inland until 18000 years ago, which is also propitiated by local tribe, the Rampasasa Pygmy. Numerous tourists visit the cave every year and almost all archaeologist and palaeoanthropologists have visited and debated on it in an international seminar; I got the opportunity to present and chair the stormy session on the 'Hobbit' in July 2007 held in Hyatt Regency. Indonesians sell replicas of their fossils as well as their dummy models in the form of key rings, toys, and show pieces.

Indian Natural Heritage Attractions

The above is a brief glimpse of the prehistoric sites developed into human natural history museums and fossil parks which have significantly contributed to heritage tourism. India does have numerous historical places, palaces, monuments, ancient tombs, forts, stupas, temples, mosques, churches and Gurudwaras and associated museums under state governments and under the Archaeological Survey of India. But, very few prehistoric sites have been developed to attract heritage tourism; most sites remain unprotected.

For instance, the only site that has yielded earliest human fossils in South Asia is Hathnora in Narmada valley in Madhya Pradesh, i.e. Narmada Man's site stands unprotected and without any site museum. I took several initiatives through the Anthropological Survey of India and the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) at Bhopal. But, nobody bothered since there are so many historical archaeological museums the ASI is more interested in. The IGRMS earlier started as 'Museum of Man' has a little emphasis on prehistory and primarily developed as an ethnographic museum of contemporary tribes and their cultural artifacts, and their dances and dramas. Only a few natural history museums are in India and located in big cities. Unlike the so many mentioned above there is no site museum which represents the detailed natural history of humankind developed at or close to the site having yielded many of such fossil findings of our ancestors. In other words, the prehistoric heritage potentials of the country are yet to be exploited for heritage tourism in the form of human natural history museums, fossil parks and heritage research centres.

Of course, India has cared to develop some geo-heritage fossil Parks which attract international tourists and scientists mentioned below.

1. **The Ghughua National Fossil Park in Madhya Pradesh:** It is a unique priceless treasure trove of plant fossils (gymnosperms and palms, and monocot angiosperms) spread over to seven villages of Mandla District (Ghuguwa, Umariya villages); some shells of mollusca were also found there. The plant fossils were discovered by Dr. Dharmendra. They are dated to between 40 to 150 Mya; the earliest period is either Jurassic or Cretaceous when the Pangaea was splitting into Laurasia and Gondwanaland supercontinents and the great Tethys Sea was extended to the area. Realizing the great scientific importance of the fossils found in

his area, the government of Madhya Pradesh notified this area as the Ghughua Fossil National Park in 1983 spread over to 27.34 ha in Ghughua.

2. The Tiruvakkarai National Fossil Wood Park in Pondicherry: It is located 1 km east of Tiruvakkarai village on the road between Tindivanam and Pondicherry. It is a geological park containing 20 million year old wood fossils; 200 fossil trees of various shapes ranging between 3 and 15 metres in length and up to 5 metre in girth lie strewn and half-buried in the soil and scattered over 247 acres (1km²). The fossil park is maintained by the Geological Survey of India has fenced within nine separate enclaves. Only a small portion is open to the public. Scientists speculate that the trees did not originally grow at that site, but were transported there before they were petrified. Sonneret, a European naturalist, first gave detailed account of the fossils in 1781.

3. Saketi Siwalik Fossil Park: It is a solitary fossil park in a very long Siwalik belt and confined to display the Upper Siwalik fauna. It is situated at Saketi, near Kala Amb 14 km from Nahan in H.P. The location is 8 km from the national high way and not well maintained from tourist point of view. It is the only animal fossil Park in India which displays in life-sized models made of fiber glass and resins of a few mammals that lived during 3-1 Mya but a good number of original fossils are in the museum show cases. They are used for generating scientific interest in the public and for facilitating special studies by visiting research scholars from all over the world. The idea of establishing the Siwalik Fossil Park came in early as 1969 with a view to preserve the fossil sites. But, human natural history is neither preserved/found in the rocks of this area not there has been any attempt to portray that.

Why Haritalyangar-Ghumarwin?

Himachal is well known as *dev-bhumi*, but hardly a few know that Himachal is the most ancient *adim-bhumi* too and a centre of origins of human lineage and mammals. The credit for this goes to the Middle Siwaliks of Haritalyangar area extending down to Ghumarwin that brought Bilaspur on the world map over 125 years for the fossil remains of our 10-8 million years' old apes and 'ape-men'. American scholars gave them very fascinating names after Hindu pantheon gods and deities such as *Ramapithecus*, *Sivapithecus*, *Bramapithecus*, *Sugrivapithecus*, *Gigantopithecus*, and *Krishnapithecus*.

Initially, a large number of species were distinguished, but palaeoanthropologists have gradually merged many. The first four are now merged in *Sivapithecus*, which is most recently viewed as the last common ancestor of the Sumatra-Borneo Orangutan and the earliest hominid lineage (Sankhyan, 1985; Grehan & Schwartz, 2009). *Krishnapithecus*, earlier known as *Pliopithecus*, falls in the ancestral lineage of the gibbons.

During 1968 under a joint Chandigarh-Yale (USA) expedition a complete lower jaw of a giant female ‘Ape-Man’, now dated to about 8 million years old, was discovered and was given the name, *Gigantopithecus bilaspurensis* (Simons and Chopra, 1969). It was a very sensational discovery since earlier a similar giant ape-man was discovered in the caves of southern China which lived with early humans (*Homo erectus*) until 120 Kya; scholars believe him still alive as the ‘Yeti’ or ‘Himalayan Snow Man’. Even if a female it weighted about 500 Kg; even Hanuman was not of that size. It was discovered in 1968 in a Chandigarh-Yale University Expedition to Siwalik Hills. There is fossil evidence that it first emerged at around 10 million year ago in Haritalyangar Siwaliks and survived there until about 6 Mya. But, due to gradually turning colder climate in the Siwaliks, he like other ‘ape-men’ left the Siwaliks and took shelter South China. Some scholars also re-name *Gigantopithecus bilaspurensis* as *Indopithecus giganteus*, but *G. bilaspurensis* gives the identity to the place (district) and we retain that.

Animal Companions of the ‘Ape-Man’: Living with the ‘ape-men’ were Innumerable fauna with enormous diversity not seen anywhere in the world. They included several species of primitive giraffes (later migrated to Africa), many species of primitive elephants, rhinoceroses, three-toed horses, zebra, hippopotamuses, hyenas, antelopes, deer, cats, lions, bovids, suids, rodents, lorises, tree shrews, tarsiers, insectivores, etc. etc. They reveal a long 15 millions’ evolutionary history of mammals and the history of the changing climate and ecology. This helps in predicting the future climate, global warming and the future of human species.

The Siwaliks Region: When we travel through the lower part of Himachal Pradesh from Bilaspur to Kangra we see the low-lying hills known as Siwaliks, also spelled Shivaliks. They are comprised of inclined sedimentary rock layers of sandstone, shale and variegated clays, elevating from 2,000-3,900 feet MSL. They constitute a long belt of about 2500 x 15-24 km with about 1800

m thickness spreading from the River Indus in the west to the River Irrawaddy in Burma in the east, then turning southeastward.

Once upon a time the Siwalik region was occupied by the so-called Indo-Brahm or Siwalik Sea- a part of the ancient Tethys Sea in the entire Himalayan region over 20 million years ago and had separated the ancient supercontinents, the Laurasia and the Gondwanaland. Sediments from the rising Himalayas along with the remains of the fauna and flora including human antecedents inhabiting the Sub-Himalayan region gradually filled the Siwalik Sea in sedimentary layers. When these layers uplifted they exposed the treasures of the fossilised bones, skulls and teeth of the ancient animals and plant remains.

A Region of Excitement & Mystery: While Haritalyangar gives us excitement about our remote ancestry shared with great apes, much still lies hidden in the Siwalik deposits; they go on yielding something new all the time. However, their disappearance from the Siwaliks is still debated and their counterparts also lived in Africa and unfold the subsequent story of hominid evolution between 5 and 2 Mya. But, stone cultures of the Palaeolithic man are wide spread in the Siwalik slopes and streamlets of Haritalyangar, Lehri Sarail, Bhapral, and terraces of the Sir Khad and its tributaries at, Kasohal, Tarontara, etc. in Ghumarwin area (Sankhyan, 1979, 1983). All these indicate a date of over 300 Kya. Some of my recent unpublished collections indicate entrance of the Acheulian man into the Siwaliks of Ghumarwin area via River Satluj and its tributaries, Sir, Sukkar and Sirhali. I have earlier collected numerous Acheulian tools from the Central Narmada valley (M.P.) and distinguished two types of fossil early humans (archaic *Homo sapiens*)- a ‘large robust’(Sonakia, 1984) with European affinities (Kennedy et al., 1991; Cameron et al., 2004) or Chinese affinities (Lumley and Sonakia, 1985), and another very unique ‘pygmy’ type found nowhere, and appears ancestral to present Andaman pygmy lineage (Sankhyan, 1997, 2005, 2012a, b).

In a recent visit to the forested outskirts of Ghumarwin area I noticed a natural prehistoric rock-shelter along a small monsoonal streamlet in the Siwalik ridge sloping in the east of the new Court-Helipad area. It goes in line with my earlier stone tool evidences and confirms that it was the habitat of the prehistoric man. A panoramic Middle Siwalik (as exposed at Haritalyangar) landscape here looks ideal place for the late Miocene Fossil Park of the ape-men and his associate animals.

Much Heritage Lost: Unfortunately, many precious fossil

findings have gone out and adorn American and British Museums of Natural History, the Peabody Museum, the Senkenberg Museum, etc. and the sites are under destruction in the hands of the ignorant agriculturists who sell the precious heritage for a few rupees.

The ignorant Himachal Pradesh is continuously plundered of its precious ancient bio-cultural heritage due to lack of institutions and public awareness. But, we cannot afford to remain ignorant and insensitive any more, and must save, preserve and display whatever is available, and explore further.

Need for the Fossil Park & Natural History Museum

So, at the long last a group of Indian scholars and notable people at Ghumarwin realized the necessity to set up a '*Palaeo Research Society*' (पेलियो रिसर्च सोसायटी) (registered in July 2012). The Society intends to set up a *Palaeo Research Centre* to explore and collect geo-bio-cultural antiquities and preserve and display the same by developing a Natural History Museum. It also intends to portray in 3-D '*the World of Human Ancestors*'- presenting a unique panoramic scenario of their natural journey since about last 15 million years to the present. The Proposal has since gone to the Govt. Of H.P. and India and there is general acceptance. A piece of Govt. land in the panoramic environment and landscape is also available

The Fossil Park–cum - Museum would be a unique scientific instrument of mass awareness, heritage protection, education and research. It will develop a scientific vision about our long existence in time and space and make us understand the secrets of human origins, extinctions, expansions and future trends. Such wisdom cuts across the continents, cultures and races and potentially serves humankind in a befitting way. As discussed, the Fossil Park and Natural History Museums have attracted and would attract national-international tourism and shall benefit the region economically and be a symbol of national pride and prestige. Nonetheless, there are also a number of eco-tourism and religious tourism attractions in District Bilaspur and adjoining areas.

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