

Prehistoric rock art site in Pansaimal needs govt attention

A visual treat of prehistoric hunting and gathering community can be evidenced in form of rock art at Pansaimal in Sanguem taluka. Located on the banks river Kushavati, this exquisite site if developed into a tourist spot, can help generate revenue for local villagers, writes **NIBEDITA SEN**.

Generally exquisite stone age rock carvings are associated with Mohenjodaro and Harappa, but Kevan - Dhadole, Usgalimol of Pirla village in Sanguem taluka has brought Goa on the map of rock art in India. In fact, it may turn out to be one of the most exciting rock art sites in the world. It has opened new vistas and thrown up challenges to archaeologists to interpret the new symbolism connected with it. Villagers suggest that efforts should be made to upkeep them.

The mystical rock carvings were discovered on May 8, 1993 by the villagers of Pansaimal which is also referred as Usgalimal. It is situated at about 75 kms from Panaji and 16 kms south from Rivona in the Sanguem taluka in south Goa.

The site is hidden behind an old iron mine. One can easily get to the carvings as a board has been erected by the Archaeological Society of India (ASI) along the roadside for advertisement. "These rock carvings are now one of the most important prehistoric sites in western India as they are thought to date between circa 8000BC - 2500BC from the Upper Palaeolithic period," said Rivona sarpanch Suraj Anand Naik.

"The hunting and gathering communities sought to express themselves by creating forms on rock faces. The carvings are chiselled on laterite stone locally named Dudhanfatar. The local Velip community of Kajur village performs some rituals at Dudhanfatar annually but none of them were aware of the rock carvings on it which are either covered by dust, water or moss," the sarpanch complained.

Throughout the monsoons, the river Kushavati swells and cover the shelf of laterite and when the water recedes, the direct heat of the sun evaporates the dampness. Sadly, the constant heating and dampening has contributed to reinforcing the hardness of the rock.

"The area is neglected by the government. When my mother was the sarpanch of Rivona ward number two, there was a plan to build a retaining wall surrounding the Kushavati river so that the water was refrained from coming up and hitting the rock carvings. Nearly 50,000 tourists come here yearly to explore Pansaimal. In 2014, roads were made but not till the site," Naik resented.

"I have forwarded a file to the Department of Archaeology and also sent a covering letter from South Goa MP Narendra Sawaikar requesting the department to mend the roads and make Usgalimol a tourist site. Two security guards has been deployed but they are not seen at work. What is Archaeology department doing? Panchayat has taken up garbage cleaning and so you can see the place is clean. If this place is maintained, it can earn good revenue for the villagers as well as State government," Naik said.

"People come here for merry making and drinking. They litter all around. We don't want this type of tour-



'Protected' areas declared by the department of archives and archaeology.

ists. At least 15 serious tourists who have studied about the place visit Pansaimal everyday. We don't even have guides to tell the story of the place, let alone security," expressed a Colomb villager Tulsi Velip with displeasure.

Although Pansaimal is full of carvings depicting the symbols of fertility cult, religious cosmology, triskelion, engraving of animals like Zebu bull, deer, gaur, scene of mating animal in sitting posture, bison with wound marks, x-ray type animals etc, but very few Goans know about it. "My ancestors lived here. I have recently come from abroad but I am born and brought up in Goa. I never knew that this area has a historic reference," said a resident of Rivona Linda D'Souza.

"The department has only erected a protected site board. But nothing has been preserved so far. This is a neglected tourism spot. Government can earn revenue if this area is protected. Without the permission of the Archaeology department no one can do anything. Villagers jointly clean the spring and gutter once a fortnight. We have constructed this gutter and beautified the stands so that villagers can wash their clothes easily," complained Suresh Kepekar.

Taking cue from the historical importance, the Di-



Antelope-Kajur fighting with X-ray bull.

rector of Archives and Archaeology Blossom Medeira, informed that the rock carvings and its environs were created by Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic humans who were familiar with tool making techniques. But unfortunately, the sites having rock engravings in India are open and shelter has not been provided at any of the Rock engraving sites. Speaking about the cleanliness of the site she mentioned, "Vegetation and debris clearance is carried out periodically by the department. But the sites having Rock engravings in India are open and shelter has not been provided at any of the rock engraving sites."

"The site of rock engravings at Pansaimal was pro-



A rock carving depicting symbol of a Labyrinth. Photos by Atish Naik

ected in the year 1999 (published in the Official Gazette, Series I No 9 dated 27-5-1999). There is a full-time monument attendant looking after the site. Besides the Archaeology officers carry out monthly inspections," said Medeira. According to her, the 'protected' area means any archaeological site and remains which is declared to be a protected area by or under the Goa, Daman & Diu Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1978 and Rules 1980," said Medeira.

Although she preferred to answer about the Pansaimal site being taken up to tourism department but refused to answer about the budget allocated for the same. She said, "The process of including Pansaimal rock art site and Rivona caves under the heritage circuit has been taken up with the Tourism Department."

"Under the scheme Monument Mitra, Pansaimal rock carvings came as one of the suggested sites by the archives department. I can speak only about protecting it from archives and archaeological grounds but making it tourist friendly depends on the Tourism department," said Minister of Archives and Archaeology Vijai Sardessai.

When GT investigated and found that Vijai Sardesai was unaware about the plight of Pansaimal and had never ever visited the place, GT inquired with Tourism Minister Babu Azgaonkar if there is any plan to take up Pansaimal as a tourist site. Azgaonkar replied, "Pansaimal is under Department of Archaeology. If they tell



A pre-historic rock carving at Pansaimal.

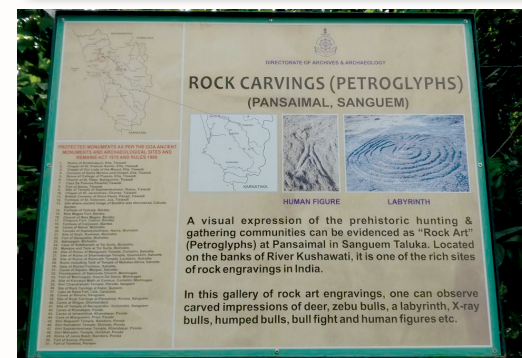
us to take care of it, we can do that."

"Unless we develop the hinterlands of the State, Goa will be known only for its cheap booze and beaches. I have planned a Shilpa Gram where maximum tourists can visit to know about the cultural history of Goa," said Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude when he was approached with a proposal of protection of Pansaimal area as a tourism spot.

(Page by Gurudas Naik)

Demands of the locals

- Pansaimal site should be maintained and developed as tourism spot
- Protection wall should be built fencing River Kushavati
- Security and a tourist guide should be deployed



LOCALS SPEAK



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SURAJ ANAND NAIK,
Sarpanch, Rivona



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LINDA D'SOUZA,
Rivona resident



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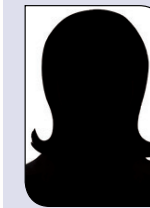
SURESH KEPEKAR,
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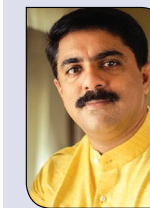
TULSI VELIP,
Colomb villager

AUTHORITIES SPEAK



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BLOSSOM MEDEIRA,
Director of Archives and Archaeology



I can speak only about protecting it from archives and archaeological grounds but making it tourist friendly depends on the Tourism department."

VIJAI SARDESSAI,
Minister of Archives and Archaeology



Pansaimal is under Department of Archaeology. If they tell us to take care of it, we can do that."

BABU AZGAONKAR,
Tourism Minister



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GOVIND GAUDE,
Art and Culture Minister



A rock carving depicting human figure.