
CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO

On the Discovery of a Prehistoric Fossil Elephant in the Allahabad District

The news of the discovery of a 31 feet skeleton of some prehistoric animal in the Daiya estate (district not mentioned) was published in the *Leader* about six months ago. A similar report came out in some newspapers early in December last, but the place of occurrence was given as 'Datia State' in one paper and 'Doyra State' in another. On enquiry it was found to be Daiya estate towards the south-eastern part of the district of Allahabad.

The skeleton was found in the bed of a streamlet known as Tundiari Nala. The spot is about half a mile to the south-east of the village Murlipur (Lat. 24° 52', Long. 82° 3'). A part of the skeleton exposed in the bed of the streamlet was first seen by some cowboys during the last summer. The landlord of the estate, Raja Bhagawati Prasad Singh, got the skeleton dug out in parts, as soon as the discovery came to his notice. On local enquiry the author learns that the fossil animal was found lying on its back, the head and forelimbs pointing upstream and the hind-limbs downstream. Parts of the limb bones were missing. The tusks were not in organic connection with the head. A part of one tusk was lying in the same line with one of the hind-limbs. This was included in the measurement of the animal, which the villagers took to be a giant human individual. This mistake was possible because the skeletal parts are not well preserved and the facial features were concealed by the matrix.

The animal concerned appears to be a representative of *Palæoloxodon namadicus*, an extinct species of elephant which is supposed to be more closely related to the living African elephant than the living Indian

species. The type for this species is a very perfect specimen of a cranium figured (Pls. XIIA, XIIB) by Falconer and Cautley in the "Fauna Antiqua Sivalensis" under the name of '*Elephas (Euelephas) Namadicus*'. The specimen was obtained from the Narbada alluvium and is preserved in the British Museum. The bulk of the material referred to this species comes from different localities situated along the Narbada valley. But a specimen was discovered in the Godavari alluvium also. A few molars are reported to have come from the Irrawaddy valley in Burma, but no definite history of this find is available. Outside India, the species is known from China, Japan and Java. This species resembles a variety of *Palæoloxodon antiquus* of Europe, which is characterised by broad-crowned molars; and by some authorities they are regarded as identical.

The present discovery is particularly interesting in view of the fact that it has been made in a country covered by rocks belonging to the Vindhyan System. At the site of occurrence the streamlet cuts through a *Kankar* bed, which is probably an alluvium formed during the middle or the latter part of the Pleistocene epoch. This formation is exposed at the bed from where the skeleton was excavated, and also at the vertical cliffs on the two sides having a height of 12 feet and above.

The skeleton has been presented to the Geological Museum of the Banares Hindu University. An anatomical study of the specimen is in progress, and a description will be published in due course.

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