

Archaeological remains of Phuket and Bodhgaya: A cultural study of India and Thailand๕

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Chapter 3

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To expose the material culture of Bodhgaya, Indian in past and present, archaeological operation around the regions had been carried out since last century. We got the significant response to๕ if and traced the deposit of different successive cultures around Bodhgaya. Though most of the earlier works were not scientific. Yet, they provide adequate materials for the study of ancient Bodhgaya. The latest excavation at the site of Bodhgaya heaped use in ascertaining the cultural sequences, chronology and the potentiality of the site<sup>1</sup>. In this context we have based on the excavated site of Taradih, which revealed five successive cultural periods, extending from c. 1100 B.C. to C 1200 A.D.

Period I, represented cultural deposit of the chalcolithic complex just over the natural soil which is of greenish yellow here. It measured nearly 70 cms. is compared of yellow compact alluvial earth, evidences revealed by operations showed a developed rural economy in which agriculture, hunting and fishing played an important role, which was similar to that of sunup cultural. The evidences of rammed floors, huts made of wattle and daub have discovered. Ovens of various sizes came across at different levels of the period. Iron in any form was not encountered where as a fish hook of copper and a blade of carnation were picked up from this level.

The pottery in general was wheel made and well fired but eh hand made specimens were not altogether wanting<sup>2</sup>. The ceramics, although dominated by red ware specimens, were yet considerably represented by Black-and-red, light red, orange to cohere in color, on the sherds of red ware as well as on red portions of the black-and-red ware. Jars were made in tow parts, the rim portion was shaped on wheel while the profile was modeled by hands and then both the parts were carefully luted having no slip over them.

The main pottery types included dish-on-stand, bowl with a pedestal base, bowl with globular body and out curved or featureless rim, ring based bowl, perforated bowl, spouted vessel, deep and shallow dish, small vase, small to medium size jar with a sharp carination at the neck, flared out rim etc. the shoulders of a few jars of red ware showed a significant applique designs consisting of twisted rope, pinched, applique designs consisting of twisted rope, pinched, applique designs knob patterns, post firing scratched design etc. some pieces of Black and red ware, red ware and black ware bore white paintings in the form of wavy lines and straight and oblique strokes dots.

Among notable antiquities of stone, were a Neolithic Celt a commotion blade a queered and a few pestles and a hammer like object. The important finds of bone were represented socketed as well as tanged arrow-heads, barbed arrow heads, points, chisels etc. the discovery of a single copper fish hook was very significant it not only qualified the site for its chalcolithic characters but also hinted at its fishing economy during the period under review. The notable finds of Terracotta were bead and comical objects. A few disc shaped bead having perforation at the centre were also noteworthy.

With a view to bridging the great hiatus that stretched from the end of the Harappan chalcolithic culture to the beginning of the historic period, archaeologists made a great efforts by taking up excavations at a number of sites<sup>3</sup>. Excavation at Taradih established the main focus of the chalcolithic culture of Bodhgaya as excavations at Sonpur and Chirand indicated the efflorescence of the chalcolithic culture Chirand indicated the efflorescence of the chalcolithic culture in Bihar. Chirand proved to be a veritable rich site of the culture in the Post-Harappa period. Sonpur in the Gaya district is another promising site<sup>4</sup>. Limited excavations at Taradih in the Gaya district yielded remains of the chalcolithic period.

Although the excavated remains from Chirand, Sonpur, Taradih and other sites can not stand in favourable comparison with what have been unearthed at Ahar, Gilund, Navadatoli, Jorwe etc; yet with the objects discovered, a palpably understandable picture can be drawn of the material culture of the people who resided in Bodhgaya during the chalcolithic period. Moreover, the people of Bihar (Bodhgaya) at Taradih in the chalcolithic period enjoyed the benefits of the same culture as at Ahar, Gilund, etc. however, the picture of the material culture of the chalcolithic Bodhgaya may also be reconstructed with the aid of what have been found at the other comparable sites.

The post-Hrappan chalcolithic people of Bihar appear to have resided in extremely modest structures which they erected themselves. The chalcolithic people of Bodhgaya constructed their house out of perishable materials like reed and bamboo which were probably locally available to them. The reed or bamboo were erected in a manner so as to serve as well to their house which were finally finished off and plastered by mud. At Ahar and Navadato on the west and Pajndu-Raja dhaibi on the east similar methods of house construction were also employed by villagers. Chirand has also yielded remains of multi armed hearths, but in the post chalcolithic level.

No doubt, the people took a cultivation as means of their livelihood as proved by the impression of paddy husks in the section of the potteries. This fact is further supported by the discovery of pestles and a quern at the site from period I. therefore, agriculture, fishing and hunting seem to have been the main stays of their daily life. The numerous potteries of different wares and types clearly indicate that creative genius of the contemporary potters<sup>5</sup>.

The main pottery types include dish-on-stand, bowl with pedestal base, bowl with globular body and out curved or featureless ring, rim based bowl, perforated lipped bowl, spouted vessels, shallow and deep dish, small vase, small to medium size jar with sharp carination at the neck and flared out rim etc. potteries were beautified by appliqué designs. The shoulder of a few jars of red ware showed significant appliqué design consisting of twisted rope. Knob, patterns, pinched appliqué and cut design, the thumb pressed design, nail pressed design. The posts were also decorated by post firing scratched design.

A fairly good number of painted black-and-red ware along with painted red ware and black ware were found from the site. Painting had been found both on the interior as well as on the exterior of the pot. Potsherds bore white or creamish white painting on the red and black surfaces. It is significant to quote here that the black and red ware of this site bore painting on the exterior of the pot also, a feature hitherto unknown from any site of the eastern region<sup>6</sup>.

The hitherto unknown from any site of the eastern region. The painted designs were wavy lines and oblique strokes etc. to judge from the customs prevalent even these days, the potters seem to have performed this process, while their women gave finishing touches to the potteries, and also painted the designs. Long necked jar, vase bowl, dish and basin are among the principal types noticed in the black-and-red ware. Dish was probably less popular at Sonpur but more in Bodhgaya in black and red ware. While long necked jar was very common at Ahar and, it is conspicuous by its absence at Sonpur. Similar was the case with the dish on stand which has been reported from Chirand as well as from Taradih.

The majority of bowl and earthen lamp from this period at Bodhgaya may have served some kind of clarified butter, scented liquid or milk on a sacrificial altar or figure of deity which they may have worshipped.

Pottery since very early times have been utilized by the village potters as a medium for expression their artistic talents, and the potters of the chalcolithic Bodhgaya do not seem to have lagged behind in this respect. The painted design, are of extremely rudimentary character and at the same time they are not many. It is mainly the group of parallel lines and cluster of dots which took the fancy of the potters-artists and which in combination with certain geometric forms helped them to create variegated patterns pleasing to the eyes. Rope, thumb pressed, oblique strokes and criss-cross designs in appliqué have been noticed on the potteries from Chirand and Sonpur too. Sonpur has also yielded certain black-and-red waresherds with graffiti marks though not from the earliest strata.

The chalcolithic people of Bodhgaya do not seem to have taken much interest in the preparation of terracotta figurine. Only a few seals and sealing as well as leads have been reported<sup>7</sup>.

The materials discovered in Bodhgaya from the period under review revealed that the people lived in very oldest houses made of wattle and daub which they constructed with their own hands and had fancy for ornaments made out of clay, stone and steatite. Sizable number of heads, stone and terracotta, were collected there. The semiprecious stones such as agate, chalcedony, carnelian etc. were used for manufacturing beads of various shaped like barrel, cylindrical and disc etc. the beads were well polished and finished. These beads might have been used in the various forms of necklaces, etc. in the same way the bone pins might have been used as hair pins and ear pins or other might be serving as antimony rods for decorating etc lids.

They used earthen lamp for their ritual purposes and earthen vessels were used for the storing grains water and some thing like that which was produced by the village potters, cultivated grains, also eat meat and fish and improved their economic status by trade and commerce and also by manufacturing trade goods of copper and bones. Moreover on the basis of the above mentioned evidences it can be said that Pre-Iron People of Bodhgaya (Tradih) were quite fashionable to use these material forms and they took delight in pursuing the art of painting and design. This flourishing culture may be dated c. 100 B.C. to c. 600 B.C.

The second period of occupation is marked by the appearance of N.B.P. and Iron. The technique of the pottery making was highly developed during this period. The deluxe pottery like N.B.P. was prepared at that time whose preparatory technique is still mysterious, which on looking seems like deep colored glass and gives metallic sound on striking. Apart from these, coins and many fancy goods of semiprecious stone. Copper and Iron reintroduced<sup>8</sup>. Moreover keeping these materials and its associated in views this period was divided into two subcultures like Period II and Period II B.

The II was marked by the appearance of Iron. The Black and Red ware, Black ware and red ware of the earlier period continued in this period but much improved in qualities and fabrics. These ware made of well levitated clay and were well fired. The core of these specimens did not show any mixture of paddy husks with clay. Their fabric ranges from medium to fine.

The pottery of this period also gave metallic sound when over stricken with fingers. Large ceramic specimens showed the evidence of paddy husks and examples of the black-and-red and black wares possessed very thin film of glaze on this surface. The black slipped ware and grey ware also appeared in association with Iron. The noteworthy pottery types included vase, handi, imless handi, storage Jar, Lota shaped bowl. Bsin lipped bowl, lid-cum-bowl etc. a few pot sherds also bore-grafftti marks.

The remains of lime coated rammed floors and hearths were also noticed in course of excavations. Among the notable antiquities of Iron, mention may be made of arrow heads, pin, points, nose-stud, etc. a bangle of copper and ring also yielded from this period. The discovery of Iron Slage from this level indicates a considerable advancement in the field of metallurgy<sup>9</sup>.

It was distinguished by the appearance of the Northern Black polished ware. The black-and-red ware still continued but in a lesser frequency. Several new shapes of red ware and black slipped ware made their appearance during this period. The note worthy types included vase of out curved thickened rim and out curved beaded rim dish with sharp carnation, the waist bowl with everted rim, bowl with horizontally splayed out rim, basin with beaded rim, lipped basin, lid cum bowl, flat based bowl, trough etc.

Among the important stone antiquities mention may be made of beads of semiprecious stones, ball, pestle, top of nose stud, etc. The worthwhile object of bone included arrow-head, pin, point, stylus, bead etc. while the terracotta objects represented by symbol learning sealing, bead, ball, earlobe, sangle etc. the note worthy objects of coper included bead bangle, needle, rod, earring etc.

The N.B.P. pottery has been described as the deluxe ware of its time. The surface bears highly lustrous mirror like polish with various shades, such as steel-blue, black, silvery golden, pinkish and sometimes in bi-color in golden and silvery. Sonpur and Bodhgaya claimed to bte the only site in Bihar, from where very fine specimens of this pottery have been reported in abundance. Probable it was a trade pottery.

The period also witnessed use of Iron on mass scale. Tools and implements of this metal included lance, arrow head knife, nail etc. the use of copper also increased. Among the terracotta figurines mention may be made of a dancing girl, whole skrit was flouncing, is a good example of delicate taste. This period, however showed all traits of Sonpur II, rather we can say that the Bodhgaya people were materially more advanced than their counter part of Sonpur. Moreover this period can be dated between c. 600 B.C. to c. 200 B.C.

Scientific excavation and exploration conducted so far in Bodhgaya throw considerable light on the evolution and development of early history and culture of the area. The remains of the earliest peasant communities of Bodhgaya were in the chalcolithic stage of evolution and flourished in the last of the second millennium B.C. they have been unearthed at Sonpur and Taradih. The people lived in huts and practiced agriculture, domestication of animals hunting and fishing for their subsistence. They knew copper, but still used stone tools. In the subsequent phase, iron was introduced, which gave the people a new power and a new sense of security<sup>10</sup>. This mental was used on mass scale, which facilitated large scale agriculture and military operation. Coins was also introduced as a medium of exchange which boosted trade and commerce. Here large scale agriculture, trade and moneyed economy played a vital roe lint he emergene of market or cities and facilitated the rise of magadhan imperialism in the sixth century B. C.

The earliest evidence of man in the Phuket region is recorded as in so many lands. In cave paintings in nearby Phang Nga Bay. These and other archeological evidence indicate a prehistory dating back to Neolithic times. Who the early artists were is not known, but it is most likely that the first dwellers were Negritos, an ethnic group indigenous to parts of Malaysia Indonesia and the Philippines. Subsequent southward migrations of monkhmer people from Burma and the chao Phaya river basin added new racial, cultural and religious elements to the resident population.

It is beloved that in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Phuket islanders had contact with traders from India. Certainly it is known that in this period there was an extensive seaborne trade between India and the Far East. Ships voyaged across the Bay of Bengal during the nothersast monsoon for the seasonal wind change that allowed them to continue northeastwards to china. Cave paintings at Phi Phi, twin islands south-east of Phuket,

include drawings of Chinese junks, which suggests that trade with china was established quite early in the region's history.

Because of the primitive style of those early sailing craft, and their reliance on weather conditions, it is almost certain that the safe harbors of Phuket. Chinese and Arabian sailors are also thought to have been familiar with the island<sup>11</sup>.

Phuket may even have been known to western society of the classical period by an early cartographer, Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria, produced a map of southeast Asia in the second century A.D. his chart showed an unnamed prominence of land which could be Phuket Island.

The name Phuket would not have appeared on that or any other ancient chart, however, as it is of fairly recent origin. The old name for the island was Jukcelaon or Janselone or thought to be a corruption of the Malay word for cape or headland, together with the proper noun salang hence saland Headland. Local inhabitants and early Siamese chroniclers, however, called the island haland, presumed to be a variation of slang.

The most interesting of the island's early inhabitants were the so-called sea gypsies, known as Chao Talay in Thai. These were semi-nomadic seamen of undetermined origin, whose reputations as pirates gave the island a bad name with honest seamen. Their unsavory reputation is, however, disputed by at least one authority on sea gypsies, David W. Hogan, who points to the placid nature of today's gypsy population and suggests that their forbears were probably pressed into the service of visiting pirate vessels, rather than their being the ringleaders in unlawful activities. Certainly the Chao Talay are now timid and reserved people, suspicious of the modern world which is encroaching upon their lives at unmanageable speed.

The term sea gypsy is in fact, a misnomer as is commonly used to refer to three diverse ethnic groups the Moken are truly nomadic spending most of their lives on the sea. The other two groups live in coastal villages. Nowadays, however, cultural distinctions have been blurred by intermarriage and contact with mainstream Thai society.

The oldest sea gypsy village is to be found at Rawai Beach, where the inhabitants make a meager living from the sale of fire and sea shells. a substantial settlement at Ko Sire is more prosperous than the Rawai Beach village, while a third tribal village, at Sepen, is the poorest of the sea gypsy groups.

All of the sea gypsy villagers are animists, who make regular offerings to their guardian spirits and the spirits of the sea. Twice each year, in the 6th and 11th lunar months, they hold festival during which the villagers send model boats sailing out to sea symbolically driving away bad luck this ceremony bears a strong resemblance to the Thai Loy Krathong festival in which the celebrant cleanses the spirit while honoring the Mother of Waters. Both ceremonies typify the great emphasis placed on water as a life-giving element in many Thai festivals and ceremonies.

Although not all sea gypsies make their livelihood from the ocean nowadays some work in study jobs in the tin mines the sea remains in their blood, and it is sad that they have difficulty in sleeping unless they can hear the sound of the sea. Although they now appear to be a reserved and somewhat subdued people, some evidence of their forebear's fearlessness remains.

This can be seen, for instance in the amazing courage and daring displayed by those who scale the sheer cliffs of Phi Phi and other offshore islands in search of the edible birds nests for which the Phuket area is well renowned These birds' nest have long been prized by Chinese gourmets and have been a profitable export from Phuket for centuries<sup>12</sup>.

What the future holds for these folk and their traditional way of life is impossible to guess. Suffice it to say that they will have made a lasting impression on the culture, and the charm, of the island.

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