

The discovery of ancient sites at Kathua & Samba districts in Jammu and Kashmir: A preliminary study

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The present research paper draws attention towards the recently discovered ancient and archaeological sites in Samba, a district in the strife torn Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. This aim of this study is to show how proper showcasing of native heritage with all its cultural attractions can inculcate a renewed sense of pride among the local community members and also how it helps to relate to the national consciousness.

The ancient sites in focus are at village Rehi in sub-division Ghagwal, district Samba. Ghagwal town which is also known as “Narsingh Dham” is situated in the Jammu-Delhi national highway (NH1A) at a distance of 52 km east of Jammu. There is also a small river called Beh, just 3 km east of Ghagwal. Rehi village is situated on a small hill in the north of national highway 2 km from the Behi river bridge. A beautiful temple of Sajyoti Mata Vaishno Devi in Rehi village is quite visible from the road. Other ancient sites are situated at Bhaiya and Krishanpur villages of Kathua district of Jammu region.

The study has great importance in the light of the ongoing scholarly discussions among historians and archaeologists in the subject of chronology of Hinduism and Buddhism in these districts of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. A number of field trips to these sites have not only revealed a great wealth of local art, architecture, including iconographic styles but also the craftsmanship of local artisans. A number of figures are also carved in stone blocks which belong to Hindu period and a bronze statue of Crown Buddha is also found at one of the sites. A natural spring (Gagan) is also found in Rehi village. This paper outlines the different periods from Stone tools and the possible course of the development of Buddhism, Shaivism and Shaktism in the area. With the note that along with the much needed research works for the comprehensive academic exposition of the said sites, a program is also required to showcase the soft power of the native heritage for the locals as well as outsiders.

Keywords: *Rehi, Bhaiya, Krishanpur, Shaivism, Shaktism, Buddhism*