

Sri Surjya Pahar : A Historical Archeology and Heritage of Assam

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Abstract:

The paper speaks about the historical archeology and heritage of Sri Surjya Pahar of Goalpara in Assam. Sri Surya Pahar is a spiritual site on the hilltop located in a district of Goalpara, Assam. The place is regarded as the sacred place for three religions that are Jains, Buddhists and Hindus. The region consists of several temples and something interesting is that the history of the place is not obviously recognized after many studies. Surya Pahar is one of the historical and archeological sites which are slighter identified by people across the state and the country, however, it has greater importance with historical significance. A very limited number of people are conscious of the sacred site, located 132 kilometres down the northwest side of Assam's Guwahati.

Keywords:

Sri Surjya Pahar, Historical Archeology, Heritage, Assam

Introduction:

Sri Surjya Pahar is centered on the hill which is abundantly filled up with Shiva Lingas. People have found 99999 Shiva Lingas were engraved here by Vyasa in order to construct a second Kashi and once it was one of the holiest pilgrimage places in the region. Surya Pahar translates to **Hill of the Sun** in English. The name implies that the place was connected with the cult of sun worship. The historical and archaeological importance explored from the area is kept in the local museum.

Review of Related Literature:

1. **Namita Nath** (2012) in her paper "*Phenological study of some tree species of Sri Surya Pahar of Goalpara District, Assam*" highlights that the work of tree species, their periodic stratification, life span all these are some significant methodical facets of a plant community. Plant phenological study has huge importance because it not only gives understanding about plant growth pattern but it also highlights the view on the effects of environment and selective pressure on flowering and fruiting behavior.
2. **Nabajit Deori** (2015) highlights in his article "*Stupas of Surya Pahar*" that Suryapahar an art historical site in the North Eastern Region. In each ways stones have sprung into existence, have made stairways to direct people.

Statement of the Problem:

There are many literatures on the importance of Sri Surjya Pahar but the historical and archeological impact of Sri Surjya Pahar is of great value. Surya Pahar is in Indian state of Assam. Throughout its antiquity, it was the sacred pilgrimage places and the junction of three to four religions of ancient India. The present historical and archeological discoveries support this inspection. For the period of Vedic period, it was also the confluence of three different language speakers of India, uniting, sharing, and integrating their cultures and languages. Surya Pahar region is very ancient and goes back to epic age.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the paper are-

1. To study the importance of historical archeology and heritage of Sri Surjya Pahar.
2. To highlight Surjya Pahar is a spiritual site.

Research Question:

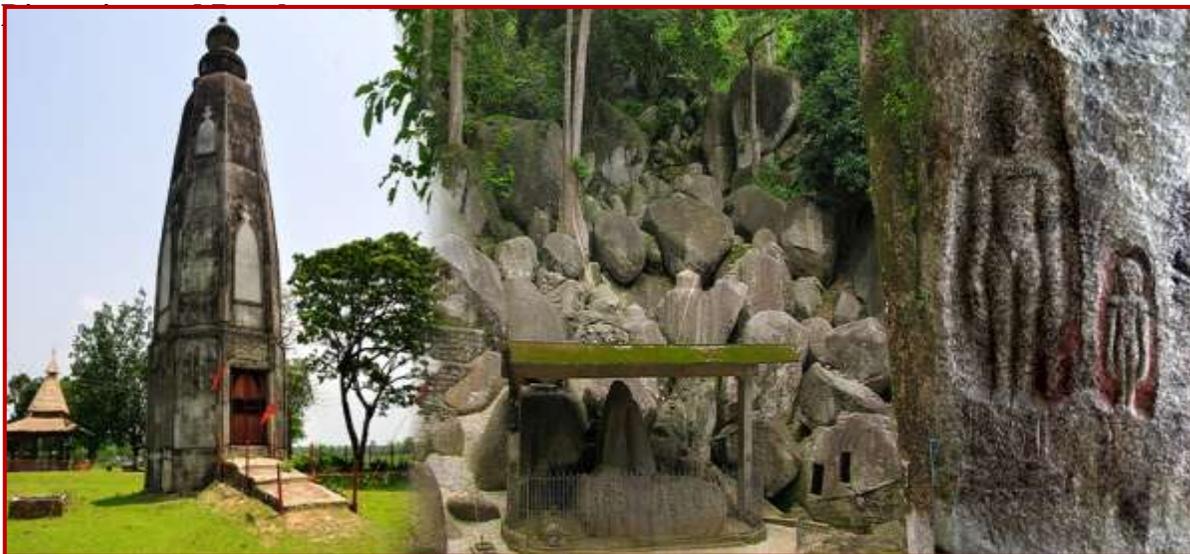
1. Is there any importance of historical archeology and heritage of Sri Surjya Pahar?
2. Is Surjya Pahar is a spiritual site?

Importance of the Study:

Based on the stylistics antiquities found it is dated to be built around 9th -12th centuries. Therefore, Sri Surya Pahar is a significant site of historical, archeological and cultural heritage.

Research Methodology:

The paper is based on secondary sources like research papers, articles, journals, newspapers, periodicals, paper clips, internet, website etc.



View of Sri Surjya Pahar

1. The significance of the Sri Surya Pahar site lies in the fact that this is the only site in Assam that has remains of three major Indian religions – Buddhist, Hindu and Jain. There are a lot of rock-cut, early historic stupa stating back to 100BC–100AD, rock-cut figures of Hindu deities-Surya, Vishnu, Ardhanarisvara on low relief and numerous rock cut Siva Lingams. There are small rock-cut caverns, rock-cut figures of Jain Tirthankara -Adinath

and Neminath under a rock shelter and there are relics of a brick temple, a stone temple, and a stone paved water stream known as Ganesh Kunda.

2. The name of 'Sri Surya Pahar' implies that the place was connected with the cult of sun (Surya) worship. A lot of literary sources corroborate that among other Hindu deities worshipped in ancient Assam, 'Surya' (Sun) occupied an important place in its cultural history. Many indications are found in the Kalika-Purana about two seats of sun worship in ancient Assam. One of the places has been identified as Sri Surya Pahar which bears the iconographic importance of the cult as well.
3. It is very importance that Jainism could not get any extraordinary footing in the North-East region of India during its long history. Apart from for the lonely instance existing inside the natural caves at Sri Surya Pahar, scarcely any other Jain remains have been found so far in the region. It was almost certainly the followers of Rasbhanath whose foot prints are at Sri Surya Pahar. The iconography of jain descriptions found here is slight different near their hands, but are observed naked as per jain's traditional iconography.
4. On a huge area right from the extreme northwestern grade of the Sri Surya Pahar hill up to one kilometer further south, there are observed as many as 25 votive stupas of different forms and sizes cut out of granite boulders. These stupas are noteworthy for it shows two points: initially, there was Buddhist impact in ancient Kamarupa. It is in contrast with the commonly held belief that Buddhism was not common in the cultural history of ancient Kamarupa. The Buddhist impact in ancient Kamarupa was much earlier than in the rest of the country.
5. The history of survey archaeology dates back to the nineteenth century. The colonial officers and businessmen for instance James Fergusson and Alexander Cunningham and many more contributed to the expansion of widespread surveys in Indian archaeology. The survey methodologies used throughout those surveys laid down the foundation for the village-to-village surface survey in India. Cunningham led surveys crossways the rural scenery of north and central India with a spotlight on exploring huge scale historical sites which were stated by a seventh century Buddhist monk, Huen Tsang.

6. Sri Surya Pahar is an archaeological site just about twenty kilometers southeast of the Goalpara district headquarters, and about 150 km west of the capital city of Guwahati in Assam. The place is extending across fifty four acres of land that covers parts of an Archaean granitic hill on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. The hill is locally identified as the *Satali Pahar*. The whole preserved area was taken as one geographical element and survey was taken from the outer border of the area.

Major Findings:

The major findings of the paper are-

1. Sri Surjya Pahar is a historical and archeological site with its great value for the researchers and scholars for their research.
2. Surya Pahar as the name advocates implies its relation with the cult of Surya (Sun) worship.
3. The Sun God has occupied a particular and very noteworthy place in the cultural and religious life of the people living in that region.
4. Surya worship is prevalent in many of the textile pieces of proof like the Markandaya Purana and Kalika Purana.
5. The houses in the region built with exclusive designs have great archaeological importance.
6. The remains of the Jains assigned to the 9th century are also stored in the place in the form of rock carvings and inscriptions.
7. A twelve-armed Vishnu sculpture is found along with a number of other figures such as Adinath, Adityas which were recognized by Archeologists.

Conclusion

Sri Surya Pahar is under the protection of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) and the temples are extending over a vast land area surrounded by ponds and plants. Archeological Museum is established by the Archeological Survey of India in the region that platforms the exceptional object for example utensils and sculptural items that are recovered from there at the time of excavations. Archeological Survey of India (ASI) started excavation works in Sri Surya

Pahar in the year 1993. However, the preliminary works were carried out for brief periods yearly which, nevertheless, exposed startling relics counting heads of deities by means of Karanda Mukuta, Kirtimukha, vestiges of stupa, terracotta mortar-pestle and vessels used in rites, designed tiles, Apsaras, Purnaghat, etc.

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