

Jai Mangal Garh/ Jaimangalpur

This is one of the most famous and early explored archaeological sites of the district under Cheriya Bariyarpur block of Manjhaul Sub-Division. It is almost 21 kms north of the district headquarters and around 5 Kms north east to the sub-divisional headquarters. The Manjhaul-Garhpura road passes 1 Km west to this site. The famous Kabar Lake encircles this mound.

Jaimangal Garh is the second largest mound of the district only after Nawalgarh. It is situated on the south-eastern flank of the vast Kabar Lake. At present, the mound is famous as a shaktipeeth and for an old temple of Jaimangal Devi. It is a set of two mounds. The western part is separated by the main eastern part with the help of moat which encircles the eastern part of the mound. This part is fortified with bricks. The residential

area on this mound inside the fort used to have extra-protection due to the moat. The western part outside the fortified area has frequent evidence of residential existence.

This mound came into light when late Prof. R.K.Choudhary thoroughly explored it and published an article on it in G.D.Colege Bulletin-2 as early as in 1950. In 1959, during an excursion of the noted historians, three rows of wooden posts-five posts in each row and each at a distance of 7.5 feet were observed by Dr. R.S.Sharma in the middle of a tank which was being excavated by the local authorities for public use. After a brief survey Dr. Sharma drew conclusion that these posts were remains of ancient bridge constructed probably to connect the settlement site with stupas in the north-east. It might be a unique feature of this site.

In 1976-77, the tank east to the main temple yielded remains of ringwell. The Directorate of State Archaeology took a trench on this mound and conducted vertical excavation but the report is still awaited. Another effort was made by the State Archaeology recently which does not seem justifying the prosperity of this mound.

The site has yielded few black stone sculptures as well. A four handed Vishnu in Sambhanga posture is placed in a newly built temple on the top of the mound near the old temple of Jaimangal Devi. A well decorated crown, ajannlambi vanmala etc are apparent. The right lower hand of Vishnu is exposed in Abhaymudra. The deity in holding Sudarshan Chakra, Shankha, Shrifala and Gada (in the armpit). Garuda

Deva is also present there in worshipping posture. The sculpture seems to represent matured Pala or Rajputa period.

Hersai (Herson) Stupa

This archaeological site is situated in Hersai Village on Manjhaul-Gadhpora road, almost 1.5 km from Jaimangalgarh. It is almost 1 km north-east to Jaimangalgarh mound across the Kabar Lake.

Indian culture has enjoyed a remarkable dimension throughout the ages. Our diversified cultural profoundness is reflected by our unparalleled heritage. Stupas constitute a laudable part of this heritage. 'Mahaparinivvan sutta' has a references of Buddha preaching Ananda – "Chatu Mahapathe rajjo chakkavatissa thupang karoti" . (As Chakrabarti kings have 'Thupas' built on their tomb (Samadhi) his stupa also should be made on his Samadhi lying at a quadrivial). This shows the glory of Stupas.

Northern Bihar, like other part of our country has some remains of stupas. The region of Begusarai district is emerging as an important ancient Buddhist site on the basis of iconographical and other archaeological findings. The clay stupas, a rare type of this architectural legacy of this region suggest it to be an important link of ancient Buddhist Circuit of this region. Herson (Hersain) and Dihi of Begusarai have caught the severe reflection of local historians and history loving people due to their stupas. It is remarkable that the stupas at both places belong to clay built category. Situated under Manjhaul subdivision, almost

20 Km N.E. to the district headquarters, Harson (Harsain) is a village on the Eastern flank of the famous lake known as Kawar. It lies almost $86^{\circ} 10' 37''$ E and $25^{\circ} 36' 12''$ N with a remarkable landscape. The famous Jaimangal garh is situated to its S.W. and Kawar lake to its West & N.W. It is at present a group of four stupas lying to the west of Manjhaul Garhpura road. Almost 500 m. from the road, this set of stupa is a silent evidence of the glory of this region.

As said earlier, it is a set of four stupas – all clay built, which segregates it from other stupas of the region. The central stupa is the largest one with the height of 65 feet and the diameter of 360 feet (110m Diameter, Height 11m approx). Three smaller but similar equidistant stupas lie to its north, south and west. It is popularly known as 'Pile made by monster' (Daitya Ka chhitta). An exploration team comprising students of G. D. College, Begusarai headed by one of the writers (Dr.S.K.Sinha) in the year 2003 reached the conclusion that it was a set of four stupas. (covered by thrashed pebbles). The central stupa seems to be three-tier and its outer surface seems to be 'Vajralepit'. The covering layer has deteriorated almost at the stage of disappearance due to negligence or lack of maintenance. The Singhal tradition, 'Mahavansha', supposed to be a creation of the first or second century B.C., has reference of covering the clay stupa with a layer of brick-dust and lime. The Vishnu Dharmottar Purana also has references of such " Vajralepit" surface. This particular architectural tradition was using lime (kharsudha), brick dust(ittaka chunna), clay(mritika) sesam oil and many other things instead of bricks or stones to make the surface intact .

At present, only the southern stupa is intact as it is covered by bushes. All the three other stupas including the central one have been cut almost to halves. Unauthorized expansion for agricultural purpose is posing a serious threat for their existence.

The clay stupa at Hersai came into light during the exploration conducted by G.D.College, Begusarai in 1950's. But the historians were aware of only one stupa. After the exploration by the same institution in 2003, a set of four stupas came into light. The largest stupa has been planned in the centre and the three equidistant smaller in the three direction-north, west and south. The east is open. The central stupa, as well as the western and the northern have been cut to more than half. These stupas are Vajralepit. The diameter of the central stupa is 110m and its height is arond 20m.

This stupa adds to the glory of this region, which had been a stronghold of Buddhism, especially the Buddhist Tantrayan. The group of stupa must be seen in the context of Lord Buddhas visit to Anguttarapa, as referred in the "Majjhim Nikaya".