

Pilak Civilization of Tripura

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Tripura is a small state of North Eastern Region of India. It has its own resources of green forests, numerous hills, flowing rivers and extensive corn-fields. It is also gradually developing in coping up with the basic principles as adopted by other states.

In fact, here lies many factors which will sufficiently justify its glorious historical past. Recently we have been able to discover a historical spot of urban-civilization at Pilak situated at the Southern part of Jolaibari under Belonia Sub-Division in South Tripura District.

Agartala-Sabroom road runs through pilak and as such pilak is divided in two parts, east and west pilak.

The distance of Pilak is 98 Kms. from Agartala. Besides, the middle part of the area of Pilak is named as "Sagardhepa". 'Dhepa' means marsy land. Pilak is located at the "Jolaibari Mouza", Jolaibari most probably comes from the word "Jola" which is a term of Bengali. The word "Jola" means khal or Canal. "Badi" ordinarily means "house". The word "Jola" means accumulated money or treasury, according to the people of Noakhali district of Bangladesh, which is adjacent to pilak. Again there are differences of opinion as regards the correct meaning of Pilak. Some maintain that the word "Parashu" or "Pileku" after changing its original spelling has come to be termed as pilak.

Pilak chari (a small river) flows besides the eastern part of Pilak and falls into the Muhuri river. A densely populated village grows in the basin region of this river, and river Muhuri falls by the northern side of west Pilak.

Here in this spot labourers, farmers, cowboys, interested persons etc. found out many a variety of antiquities including stone sculptures, bronze images, terracotta sealing, coins etc. while working, ploughing, earth cutting and for soil erosion. These images attract every one for their marvellous artistic

skill and style and also have enormous value in the perspective of Archaeology. Many images are still found to lie in the field, mounds, roadside, underground. Some are broken, or half broken and some are yet in original shape. Some are believed to be the image of "Sakti" with eight arms with halo of light in back, the image of "Narasimha" with broad chest and with broken four arms, is now housed in the Govt, Museum of Tripura, the image of "Surya" standing with full blown-lotus of eight petalled in both hands, and also with "Kiriti Mukta" on head. There are also some other images which may be recognised as Abalokiteshwar, Bhuddha (more than one), Narayana, Ganesha, Kinnari, Shiva, Bishnu, Mahishasuramardini, another image of a Surya in a chariot drawn by seven horses of seventh century A.D. and a highly interesting image of "Chunda Devi" with great celebrity.

Apart from above some specimen of terracotta plaque in the style of Mainamati and relief work, palatable "Carnish" of fairly good workmanship, drinking pot, ornamented bricks, pedestal, temple complex, Bhuddhist esstt and many other things alike were also found. Some of them have already been placed at the Agartala Govt. Museum, Delhi Museum and some are at the personal custody. Some images are being worshiped as God or Goddess in the local homes. According to some people, some valuable images, gold and silver coins type of the gupta coinage are removed in the foreign countries by the international smugglers at a high price. A gold coin and some silver coin have been acquired by Govt. and housed in the Agartala Museum. Many antiquities, stone sculptures, ornamented bricks etc. are lying at the site.

The get up, style and physical beauty of the images is attractive. Some images are speculated to be made during the period of the Guptas, Mauryas, Kushanas, Pallavas and Chalukyas. Some maintain that the superexcellent antiquities are to be dated during the period 3000 to 1000 B.C.

Now from the appearance and structure of these images we get an idea of artistic skill with basic originality in pattern. There is possibility of relation between pilak and Mainamati Region of Bangladesh. Pilak may be the centre point of "Harikela Mandal" and was administered by the Mauryas, Guptas, Senas and Palas. This resulted pilak to become a partner of East, South and West Indian civilization. A relic of a big temple is also found in Pilak. Some people main-

tain that it was the temple of "Surya" or to be a "Buddha-bihara" or Brahmanical esstt.

Some coins are found to be ornamented with the word "Harikela", which justifies administration of Harikela Mandal. I-tsing (Chinese visitor) arrived in India in 573 A. D., From his writing we know that the Harikela attained a great celebrity as centre of Buddhists in 7th century A.D. Chittagong, Sylhet (Surma Valley), the Southern part of Tripura, a part of Arakan formed parts of Harikela. Some historians maintain that the Pilak was under the ancient kingdom of "Samatata" (Noakhali-Comilla Dist. of Bangladesh).

Whether the Pilak was a region of Hindu majority or Buddha majority or and outcome of a mixed civilization of Pre-Vaidic is not yet clear. But it is clear that Pilak was a developed city since there were "pucca roads", tanks with "pucca" wharf, big temples and images etc. People imagine that flood, or Muslim invasion or epidemic etc. were the causes of the ruin of ancient Pilak civilization.

The work of digging at Ashram tilla of Pilak was started on an experimental basis by the initiative of Archaeological Survey of India w.e.f. 20th February to 20th March, 1985. Some pots, images, work of terracotta were found at that time. Many other interesting things might be discovered if an extensive digging would be done.

It is hoped the in the near future, the historically important Pilak will offer many valuable facts to the people of India and outside world.