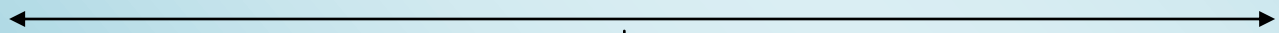


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SAMUDRAKOOP AND RUINED FORT OF JHUSI, ALLAHABAD, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The sacred Samudrakoop is situated on the eastern bank of the river Ganga in the mound of ruined fort (Ulta Quila) at Jhusi, Allahabad. It is so called as it belongs to the period of Samudragupta. The ruined evidence related to this historical fact is visible in the shape of high mounds which have fortified the historical significance of the city. The archaeological remains from this site belong to the 6th century BC and artifact belonging to five cultural phases ranging from chalcolithic to early medieval periods. Recently an archeological site near the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers yielded a C₁₄ dating of 7100 BC for its Neolithic levels. Historically, Jhusi was known as Pratisthanpuram. It was burnt down by foreign invaders around the 13-14th century and then came to be known as Jhulsi (burnt); which later on corrupted to current name Jhusi. This paper highlights the historical and archaeological values of the Samudrkoop and ruined fort of Jhusi which are getting hazy and losing their importance in the glittering of modernity.

Keywords: Allahabad, Archaeology, Jhusi, Pratisthanpuram, Prayag, Samudrkoop, Ulta Quila.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present Jhusi is ancient Pratisthan Pur or Pratisthanpuram was capital of the Lunar Dynasty (Chandra Vanshi). It lies on the eastern bank of the Ganga River at Allahabad and linked to the city by the Shastri Bridge. Once belonging to the rulers of Mauryan, Shunga, Kushana and Gupta period, the ancient Pratisthana Pur has lost its identity to the modernity of Jhusi. The only evidence related to this historical fact is still visible in the shape of high mounds in Jhusi (Fig. 1). These high mounds are impregnated with significant artifacts of archaeological importance. In excavations of the site the articles belonging to the 6th century BC and antiquities embodying five cultural phases ranging from chalcolithic to early medieval period have been recovered. North Black Polished (NBP) ware deposits on the site underline the earliest cultural evidence. The deposits of early layer constitute iron objects. The potteries and antiquities are similar to those found at different chalcolithic sites in UP, Bihar and Northern Vindhyas. From the pre-NBP Ware period to the Gupta period there had been continuous settlement at

the site. However, there appears to be a cultural gap between the end of Gupta period and the beginning of early medieval period¹.

The ruins of ancient Pratisthanpuram buried in the high mounds of Jhusi on the eastern bank of Ganges are spread over an area of about four square miles. It was the most important locality of Prayag and it was founded by king Ila and was the capital of Pururavas and other kings of Lunar dynasty Kalidasa too mentions about Pratishthana in his drama *Vikramor-vasiyam*. He has given an imaginary account of this palace of Pururavas which was magnificent. Various myths are also associated with this site. An inscription of Trilochanapala, the Pratihara king, was discovered from the site in 1830. In his book, VN Pandey mentions that the naming of Jhusi too has a legend associated with it. It was once ruled by Har-bonga, an imbecile and foolish king in whose reign chaos prevailed everywhere. When the cup of his inequity was full there was an upheaval on the earth and the capital Pratishthana was turned upside down, hence now known as 'Ulta Quila'. According to one legend; the capital Pratishthana turned upside down due to the effect of the curse of the saints Gorakhnath and his teacher (Guru) Matsyendranatha.



Fig. 1: A view of ruined of fort at Jhusi in the form of high mound

There was a conflagration which completed the destruction of the city and the ruins went by the name of Jhulsi, a burnt town, from the Hindi root *jhulasna*. It is also said that the town was destroyed in an earthquake in 1359 CE as a result of the invocations of Saint Maqdoom Shah Taqiuddin, whose tomb lies on one side of the fortress. The traditions relating to the scattering of Brahmana and Kshatriya clans abandoning their homes in Jhusi and immigrating to distant places during the medieval period lend colour to this theory¹.

It is also said that once the saint Ali Mur-taza (maqdoom sahab) was invited on the lunch by the king haribong who lived on this kila. King Haribong gave him the wrong things to eat. This made Saint Ali-Murtaza angry and he ordered a star named Mirrikh to fall on that fort, and as per the order, star fell on the fort and the whole was burnt out and this gave it the name the name jhuns (burnt out).

Kamayani is written by Jai Shankar Prasad based on battle between Pururava and Ila and later they had fierce love, in the background of Pratishtanpur. Andher Nagari chaupat Raja, Take ser bhaji, Take ser khaja, a play by Bhartendu Harishchandra.

There is also the historical and sacred Samudrakoop here, which has its own story. "It is known as Samudrakoop since it belongs to the period of Samudragupta. In fact five such wells are found in Ujjain, Mathura, Prayag (Allahabad), Varanasi and Patalpur (Patna). It was dumped with garbage once but the efforts of a sage Dayaram brought its historical importance to limelight." Research on lost heritage of Allahabad under Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) suggests that the site is slowly losing its identity on account of continuous urbanization²⁻³.

2. OBSERVATIONS

This historical site has been declared as archaeological site by Archaeological Survey of India, sub circle Allahabad (Fig. 2) for its preservation and study.



Fig. 2: Archaeological Survey of India

On the site, there is a display panel in Hindi and English which reveal the history and importance of this ancient site of archaeological importance (Fig. 3).

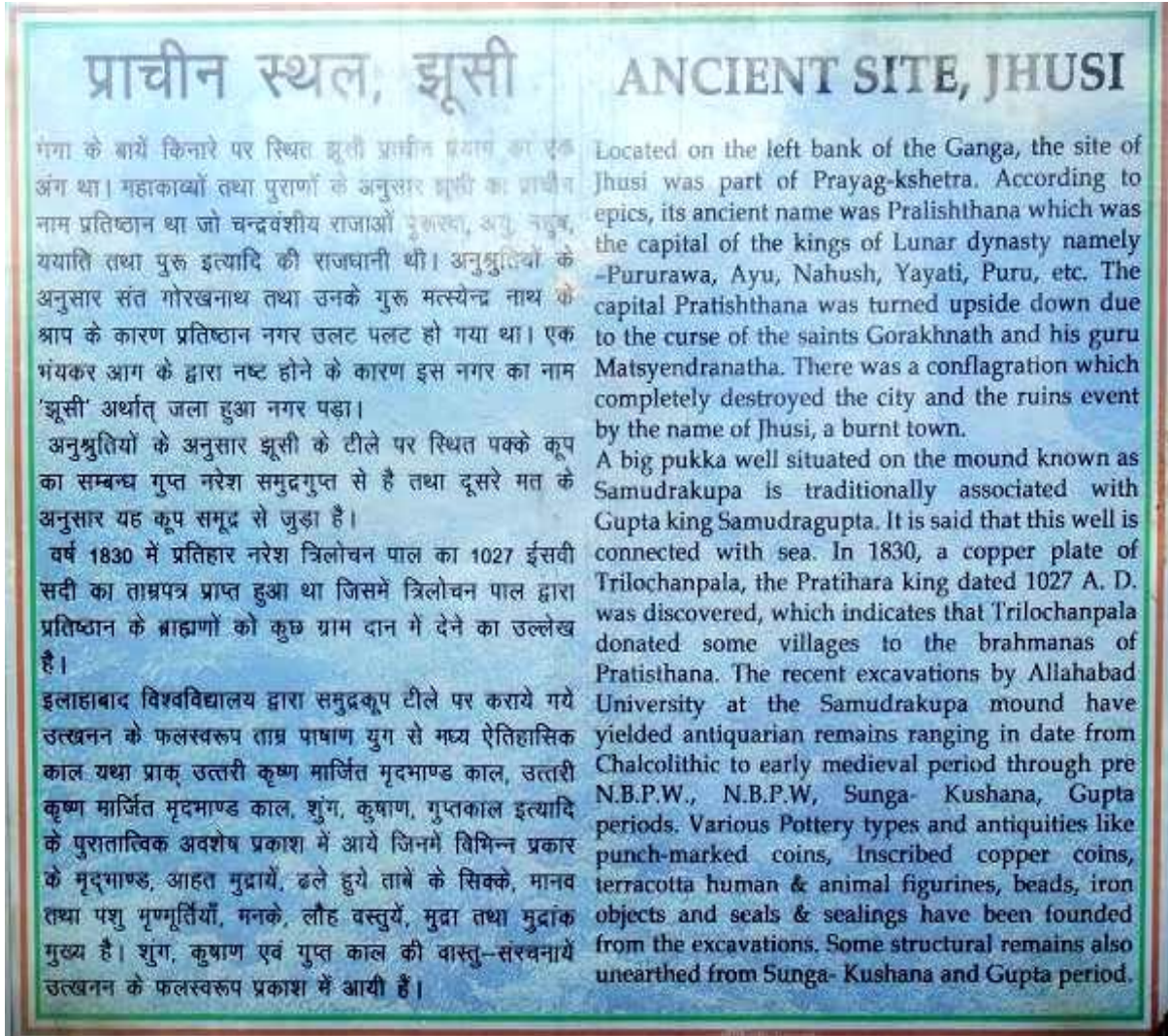


Fig. 3: A description of the ancient site in Hindi and English

3. SAMUDRAKOOP

The well is about 15 feet in diameter with hexagonal outer rim. It is built of big stones and entire premises are surrounded by a red stone wall. It is said that it was built by the king Samudragupta hence the name Samudrakoop came into being. However, the idea that the water level in the well is equal to the sea level, therefore the name Samudrakoop is assigned. Ancient Hindu scriptures *Padma Purana* and *Matasy Purana* indicate the celestial virtue of the Samudrakoop which are inscribed in the display panel at the site (Figs. 4-5).



Fig. 4: Virtue of Samudrakooop



Fig. 5: Virtue of Samudrakoop in Puranic inscriptions

This Samudrakoop is traditionally associated with Gupta dynasty King Samudrgupta. It is said that the koop (well) is connected with the sea. In 1930, a copper plate of Trilochanpala, the Pratihara king dated 1027 AD was discovered, which indicates that Trilochanpala donated some villages to the Brahmanas of Pratisthana.

According to *Padma Purana* Rishi Narada narrated to Yudhishtira the virtue of the Samudrkoop in following verse⁴;

*Purve Pasharve tu Gangayaah Tripulokeshu Bharata,
Koopam chaiv tu Samudram Pratishthanam tu Vishrutam.
Bramhchaari Jitkrodha Striratram Tisthati,
Sarvpaap Vishudhatma so Ashwamedha Falam Labheta.*

(That is to say; the world famous Samudrakoop is situated on the eastern bank of the river Ganga at Pratisthana. If someone avoiding anger and observing celibacy resides there for three nights, then he becomes free from all his sins. By taking water, he becomes gracious and taking round gets the highest place and resides in the heaven).

Further in *Matasy Purana* it has been mentioned that⁵;

*Pratisthane Mahan Koopah Samudradwaravyo Virajatey,
Darshnaad yasy Paanachch Naro Nishkalusho Bhaveta.
Aamavasyaam Purnmasyaam Chandr Surya Grahe Tatha,
Yat Parikramatah Bhumi Pradakshna Falam Labheta.*

(That is to say; at Pratisthan (current Jhusi) there is a great well, whosoever watches and takes water wherefrom becomes free from all his sins. On the occasions of *Aamavasya*, *Purnmasi*, lunar eclipse and solar eclipse who takes round about the well gets the advantage of taking round of the Earth).

The front, rear and interior views (Figs. 6-8) of the well are of established Gupta Architectural style in terms of pattern and materials used.



Fig. 6: The entrance facade of Samudrakoop



Fig. 7: Rear view of the Samudrakoop



Fig. 8: The interior view of Samudrakoop

Recently on 31st January 2013 the statues of King Pururva and Apsara Urvasi was established by Sri Saurabh ji in a small room size temple as a tribute (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9: King Pururva and Apsara Urvasi (Statues established in 2013)

4. CONCLUSION

The historically and archaeologically significant heritage of Allahabad in the form of the Samudrkoop and ruined fort at Jhusi embodies not only historical facts but also associated with the faiths and devotions since ancient times. However, this heritage is deteriorating due to the want of proper care and encroachment of nearby residents. Since Allahabad (Prayag) is a holy religious place on the world map therefore, the proper management and development of the site can attract the tourism. It is therefore apparently needed to revive this heritage site which is getting hazy and losing its importance in the glittering of modernity.

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