

From the Pages of Ancient History - M.K.Parimoo

Burzahom in the Historical Perspective

The word 'burzahom' is a combination of two words, burza and hom. Burza in sanskrit means Bhoj i.e. bhojpatra and hom is the equivalent word of Ashram. Hence Burzahom is a place of birch indicating that in ancient days, it must have been a storage godown for birch leaves.

Burzahom is the name of an ancient civilization of Kashmir, which belonged to the Stone Age and that is why Burzahom has been a place of intensive research for historians, researchers and archaeologists. Burzahom is situated towards North East of Srinagar Kashmir on the road connecting Naseem Bagh and Shalimar, about 24 kms away from Srinagar situated at a karewa, an upland. From there one can have a panoramic view of the Dal Lake. There are some monoliths of stone found at Burzahom and this ancient site of civilization in Kashmir was discovered long back in 1928 by an archaeologist Peterson because of very huge stones called Megaliths. According to him, the stone findings are said to

belong to the Neolithic age. Moreover some black coloured pottery has also been found at Burzahom as well as at Nunar Kashmir. In 1961, Central Government took the initiative of excavation through its archeological department under the guidance of a Kashmiri Archaeologist T.N.Khazanchi. Excavation continued up to 1982.



The Stone Age w.r.t. Burzahom has been dealt within four periods. In the first period of the Stone Age, the dwellers of Burzahom used to live in the cup shaped pits as discovered by various archaeologists and historians. The pits have been chiseled with indigenous sharp stone tools depicting the skill of age old craftsmanship in the Valley of Kashmir. The pits were dug according to the requirements of the dwellers and that is why all the pits were not of the same shape and size. The biggest pit excavated up to 1982 had a circumference of 274 meters at the top & 458 meters at the bottom. The measured depth is 395 meters. Pillars of stone were erected near the upper parts of the pits. Over the pillars, the dwellers used birch leaves and mud placed on the horizontal stone monolith slabs, so as to give a covering

Burzahom Aechaeological Site

Image : alchetron.com



roof to the pits. Such roofs used to give the pits a cover against the rains & snow during the wet seasons. Some burnt birch leaves were also found within the pits. Coal, ash and some baked clay pots were also found during the pit excavations, testifying the human habitation inside the pits.

Some cooking stoves made of loose stones were also found outside the pits above the ground level, clearly indicating that the pit dwellers must have been living over and above the pits in accordance to the suitability of the climatic conditions. According to various archeologists, the pit dwellers of the ancient stone age must have been using the pits during the winter seasons. In addition to the pits, some square & rectangular shaped rooms have also been excavated. Some of the rooms measured 7x4.40 meters. In some of the pits, some round shaped grinding stones bear the proof of pit dwellers at Burzahom. During the first period of the last stone age, the pit dwellers were using the utensils made of clay. The colour of the utensils varied from black to dark red though not perfect in shape. They must have been using mats woven out of dried grass. Such mats are called PATTEJ in Kashmiri. Such mats were used by the pit dwellers for drying the clay pots made by them as was evident from the mat marks on the outer surface of the clay pots.

According to various researchers, no remains of the dead bodies e.g. bones etc. were found, not even in traces at any place in

Burzahom, thus clearly indicating that the habitants must not have been burying the dead bodies, but must have been cremating them. Moreover the pit dwellers were nomads and used to catch the fish also. The archeological findings and researches, some tools and instruments made of the bones clearly indicate that the pit dwellers had mastered the art at the advanced level. They also used stag horns for making various types of tools and weapons as well. In addition to the bones, stones were also used to make tools and utensils etc. Some instruments made out of bones and copper indicate that either such instruments must have been coming from China or must have been duplicated. During the second period of the last Stone Age, the habitants must have been using the residential places made of mud bricks and borders on the ground were also made out of brown coloured mud. Pits of any shape were either used or re-used. They also used to fill the old pits either with mud or with stones. The pit dwellers had also been using the potter's clay to make both their utensils as well as some instruments. Weapons as well as some instruments,

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Image : yatra.com

they made with copper also. Such weapons and instruments of copper belonged to the second phase of last Stone Age, indicating clearly transaction of business with other civilizations in those ancient historical days of Kashmir. Archeological findings also included some unpolished handmade potteries as well as polished and coloured potteries. These things found at Buzahom indicate clearly that they must have come somewhere from out side Kashmir. One of the curio in the shape of a hand made pottery has also been found, belonging to the second period of paleolithic age which is in the shape of a huge vessel filled with nine hundred & fifty semi precious stones. The stones indicate the skill of the artisans of that age. Some special types of graves were also found from the dwellings during the second period of the Stone Age. The graves were either found in the ground floors or in the courtyards of the dwellings. White wash was used inside the walls of some graves also. Human skeletons in the bowed pose were also found in some of the graves, but no instruments or weapons of any kind were found in any of the graves. However skeletons of some dead animals such as those of dogs, wolves and goats were also found in some of the

graves. Some researchers believe that dogs must have been domesticated by some of the dwellers. Also among the skeletons found during the first period of the stone age, a skeleton of a tall dead woman was also excavated.

During the third period of the last Stone Age, mega monolithic and paleolithic stones have also been found at Burzahom, though very few instruments were made out of stones or bones during this period. In addition to the huge stones, some goods made of metals have also been found at the site. In the excavations at Burzahom, a huge stone was also found which was used as a lid to a huge pond. Some decorations have also been



Image : Economic Times

engraved on the stone which clearly show the skill of the craftsmen of that era in Kashmir. The image of the Kashmiri deer popularly known worldwide as Haangul is also engraved on the stone. Along the picture of Haangul, there is also the picture of the Sun, which according to the archeological view indicates that the Haangul must have been killed during the day time.

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