

**NEWLY DISCOVERED ROCK ART SITE, NAVAGARH
IN DISTRICT LALITPUR, UTTAR PRADESH**

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Introduction

Navagarh is a small village in Mehrauni Tehsil of Lalitpur district in Uttar Pradesh in western part of Bundelkhand, bordering Madhya Pradesh. Bundelkhand is the land of war heroes and cultural and religious activities. The world-famous temples of Khajuraho built by the rulers of Chandela dynasty in 9-10 century AD form the proud UNESCO World Heritage of the region. The second author, a Jain priest at Navagarh, observed a rock art site in the Phytan granite hill. He invited the first and the third authors to visit and study the site. On his invitation both the scholars visited the site on 28 January 2017. The first author also explored the region two times in March and July in 2018. The observations are being put here for the benefit of the readers.

A brief cultural history of the village

Navagarh, also known as Nandpur, is an ancient cultural site. The government revenue name of the village is Navai. It is located in Tehasil Mahrouni, district Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh an the border of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, 30 km southeast of Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh, 130 km from Jhansi (UP) and 65 km from Lalitpur (UP). It is a part of Blundelkhand which is having the world-famous temples of Khajuraho and Orchha.

The village has a Jain temple of 10 century AD discovered by Pandit Gulaabchand Pushp. It belongs to 18th Tirthankar Swami Aranath. It has been renovated by the Jain truet with the help of local people in the leadership of Brahmchari Jay Kumar Nishant, son of Pandit Gulabchand Pushp. Now the beautifully built temple is a lively entity being worshipped and properly taken care of by the trust headed by Nishant, the chief priest, the second author of the present paper. The history of Jain Tirthankaras and their contributions has been beautifully

carved out on the inner and outer walls of the temple. So, the temple appears as learning Institule in a true sense.

Navagarh is a granite region and there are remains of ancient habitation on the top of the hill on the southwest of the village. It yielded posters and some antiquities of historical period. Some antiquities are like rudraksh on chert and terracotta figurines. It is occupied mainly by poor families belonging to Pal (Gadariya), Luhar (Vishvakarma), Kachhi (Kush waha). Kumhar (Prajapati), Badhai (Carpenter). Gurjar, Yadav belonging to Other Backward Caste (OBC) group and Ahirwar (ST group).

Geomorphology

Navagarh village is located by the side of granite hill and is surrounded by granite hills from all the sides. The hills are 20 to 50 m in height. The quartz, grains are of medium size and granite is also of medium to fine quality. At the foot of the hills, chert.junks are found which have been used to prepare artefacts by the Stone Age man.

In our first visit on 28 January, 2017 we studied the rock paintings in the tortoise rock and a cupole in the Siddhon-ki-Toriya (newly discovered by the first author in the explorations), explored both the region near the hills, found a hammerstone lying buried in the reddish-brown soil. It was almost circular and flat, the surface on its both sides are smooth because of its use. It appeared to be of greater antiquity, might be of Stone Age.

At that time, Kumar also discovered a hand-axe on chert of the Middle Phase of Acheulian. It is broken from the head. It indicates that the stone age man explored the region at least in the middle Acheulian times. However, it is single evidence. The region needs to be explored extensively to find more such evidences and to prove the Acheulian antiquity of the region and inter connect the links to understand the continuity of the cultural history of the region.

There is a granite hillock 1.5 km west of the temple, called as Siddhon-ki-Toriya. Here is a big granite rock, vertically fractured in tow halves. It bears a single cupule which is roughly circular. The rock is roughly 8.5m in length, 6.0m in width and 3.5m in height. The grain size of the rock varies from 1.2 mm-0.4 mm. The cupule is 60 x 69 x 26.5 mm in dimension. The cupule is weathering however its surface is having the traces of Kinetic Energy Metamorphosis. It means it was produced by direct percussion technique. This is the solitary cupule we discovered in the region. But we expect much more such evidence; hence the region needs to be explored extensively for more such evidence.

Rock paintings

There is another hillock called as Phyton hill because of the five rocks spreading like the fingers of a hand. The word Phyton may be aberration of five stone. It is about 3 km in the west of the village Navagarh. Here rock paintings have been found in a rock shelter in a big granite boulder. The shelter is 3.5 m in length, 2.3 m in depth and 1.55 m in height, and appears like a tortoise from the distance, that is why Nishant calls it as Tortoise Rock. It bears some clearly visible compositions of animals and geometric designs of pre cattle domestication Stone Age (microlithic / Mesolithic age). A person has written his name 'Veer Gurjar' in thick and bold letters in white colour (CaCO₃). The detail of some significant rock art compositions is given below.

Composition No. One

In one composition there is a wild animal like a bison facing right and having three geometrical designs, two in front of it, one above the other and another above it. The bison is 19.5 x 17 cm in size, body decorated with multiple vertical lines and horns are fully grown and curved in side. In its front is a geometrical form filled with slightly slanting lines. Then there are two rectangular blocks, lower one decorated with four lines crossing each other in the centre. This

composition measuring 52 cm x 44 cm has been executed in the right side on the wall of the rock shelter in red colour with a fine brush. In the upper side of this composition there are traces of lines in comparatively thick brush and executed in ochre colour. Besides there are three symbols in dark red colour probably made later on. There is another design, roughly square in shape, filled with dots and executed in fine brush in red colour. The exfoliation of the rock surface on its right side has damaged this design partially.

The figures are concealed under a white encrustation of salts. Besides, there is an animal in outlines in faded red colour. It has been executed in fine brush and has been superimposed by the bison. Thus, in this composition can clearly see three phases of the execution rock paintings, two early phases of animals and designs of the Stone Age and the third one of symbols of comparatively later phase.

Composition No. two

On the left side of the shelter wall there is another composition with 7 wavy lines executed in medium size thick brush in red colour and placed one above the other. The composition measures 60 cm x 17 cm. Besides, there are two geometrical designs executed in fine brush in red colour. The left one measuring 11 x 10 cm is almost circular and has two concentric circles. The broad space between them has been decorated with straight lines. The left one measuring 16 cm x 12 cm is oblong in shape and has been divided in to two parts by a horizontal line. The lower part is comparatively bigger and has been decorated with 6 crescent shaped lines. The upper part is unequally divided by a vertical line and decorated with 9 lines, slanting from left to right. Both the designs are being concealed under thick encrustation of white colour. Besides, there are many traces of early figures in faint red colour on the roof of the rock shelter.

Petroglyph of a Jain deity

There is a figure of a Jain deity engraved in a narrow and dark cave in which we have to crawl down to reach there. Probably this

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place might have a place for meditation and prayer by the Jain monks (munis) and someone has carved the figure I did not measure it, however it is 59 cm in height and 23 on th width. It holds an object in his right hand: 11 Nardly visible in the darkness of the cave.

Discovery of a handaxe on chert

What is important is that on the slope of the hill nearly 500 m west of the village we found a small hand axe on chert. It is well prepared and bears a sinking platform at 120°, bulb of percussion has been partially removed by flaking, head is broken, edges are zigzag prepared by removing five flakes from the obverse side and five flakes from its reverse side. Then the edge has been retouched from both the sides. It bears light red patination. We also found a circular hammerstone from red soil at a distance of nearly 30 m from the Phyton rock and 50 m from the painted rock shelter and a fossil bone exposed from the red soil in the field on the bank of a nala. Besides, Middle palaeolithic artefacts on chert and microliths on quartz were also discovered from the region by the first author in the subsequent visits in 2018.

Concluding remarks

Navagarh alias Nandpur and Navai village has a hoary past. Previously 9-10th century Jain temple along with many sculptures was found here. There is an old habitation site on the hill about 500 m in the west of the village. The rock shelters and caves in the hills have been used for meditation by the Jain munis and monks. However, discovery of the rock paintings took the cultural antiquity of the region to the Mesolithic age. Our visit also brought out a cupule on the granite rock on Siddhon-ki-Toriya hill. It is a new form of rock art at Navagarh, made by reductive technique and might be older than the rock paintings. However, the discovery of a handaxe on chert by us adds a new dimension to the cultural history of the region. It belongs to the Middle Phase of Acheulian which is dated between two to five lakhs years in India. It indicates that the Stone Age man explored the region at least in the middle Acheulian times. Kumar, in his second and third visit on 25-27 March and 3-6 July 2018 respectively found some Middle

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Paleolithic artefacts on chert from Sapaun-ki-Toriya and some artefacts looking like Acheulian artefacts on some fragile stone! at 2.5 km from Navagarh on the right side of the road. Therefore, the region needs to be explored extensively to find more such evidence and to prove the Acheulian antiquity of the region. It is necessary to interconnect the links for understanding the continuity of the cultural history of the region.

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