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## Archaeology and History: A Study of the Semthan Site at Bijbehara Town in Kashmir

**Reyaz Ahmad Ganaie**

Doctoral Candidate, Department of History, Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India

### **Abstract:**

Archaeology offers a unique perspective on human history and culture that has contributed greatly to our understanding of both the ancient and the recent past. Archaeology helps us understand not only where and when people lived on the earth, but also why and how they have lived, examining the changes and causes of changes that have occurred in human cultures over the period of time. One of the archaeology's most important qualities is that it provides historical information on past societies from which we have no written documents. Some societies in the world have only written history for a few millennia, while historical records from other societies, only go back for perhaps five hundred years. Without archaeological investigation, the history of other societies would certainly remain a mystery to us in the present day. Archaeology has the ability to bring communities together in a variety of meaningful ways. Through archaeology, one's national, cultural, and ethnic identity can be preserved and solidified. Therefore the present study is related to a very important site of Semthan in Kashmir district of Anantnag which has bridged the missing gap of history which was unknown to the historians till period of its excavation. The Neolithic period as evidenced at Burzuhom and Gufkral sites in Kashmir came to an end sometime in the last quarter of the second millennium B.C. What happened thereafter and before the advent of the Kushanas in about the first century A.D. in Kashmir is not clear, even though some Indo-Greek coins had been reported from the valley. The time span of more than a millennium was to be bridged and the Semthan excavation was a step in this direction. Therefore this smallest archaeological site contains a wealth of important information through the excavation of artifacts and objects will be highlighted in the present study.

**Keywords:** Archaeological Survey, Pre – NBP, Neolithic Settlements, pottery, Grey wares, Indo-Greek, Kushanas, Huna, Kashmir, Terra-cotta, Semthan, Paleolithic.

### **1. Introduction**

There are many towns, cities and villages which even after the passage of centuries have passed successfully in retaining the remnants of their past. The remains and standing structures in the shape of monuments, buildings, mosques, temples, ancient grave yards and other traditions reveal the evidences of their past. In modern days we don't get such marvellous blend of heritage. But despite public and government apathy these places still speak volumes about their past zenith which undoubtedly would never be surpassed by any other modern day construction. Similarly, in south Kashmir, the Bijbehara town has its own peculiarity in terms of heritage. The ancient town has also been a cynosure for foreign visitors who came here to catch a glimpse of its ancient splendour and archaeological remains.<sup>1</sup> The history of the town has been mentioned in detail in ancient religious, secular, historical and literary works like monumental works like *Rajatarangini*, *Ain-i-Akbari* and travelogues of Vigne and BarenHugel and others. In modern period in *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, *Bagh-i-Suleman* etc. one may find the reference in these works about the Bijbehara town. Through the stages of history, we find that the settlements in the town have been started from the ancient times.<sup>2</sup>

#### *1.1. Geography of the Town*

The Bijbehara town latitude 33<sup>0</sup> 9' longitude 75<sup>0</sup> 9'<sup>3</sup> situated on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway is one of the oldest town of Kashmir in district Anantnag and is located at a distance of 48 Kilometres in the south of capital, Srinagar city.<sup>4</sup> The town is surrounded by plateaus and hence adds to the beauty of the town. The plateaus include the notable one "TakTak Shaw" from which the whole town can be seen. According to the historians during the Buddhist period it was called *Vijayhar*<sup>5</sup> as there are scholars who

<sup>1</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archeology, Gulshan Publications, Srinagar, 2006, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Mohan LalAash, Kashmir Ki KadeemRajdhani Bijbehara, Photolithic Works, Delhi, 1988, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>CharleesElison Bates, Gazetteer of Kashmir and the adjoining Districts of Kishtwar, Badarwah, Jammu, Naoshera, Punch, andthe valley of kishinganga, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 2005, p.150.

<sup>4</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Heritage Tourism, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 2007, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup>Mohan LalAash, op.cit., p. 9.

attribute Bijbehara to some Buddhist *Vihara* existed somewhere in its vicinity.<sup>6</sup> However the town which we must supposed to have sprung up gradually around the temple is ascribed by Kalhana in Rajatarangini to king Vijaya which is abbreviated from Vijayavaraksetra. The modern *Vijbror* is Kalhana's Sanskrit equivalent of Vijesvara, Kalhana's – *bror* from Sanskrit *bhataraka*, God, having replaced the more specific – *Isvara*, the usual designation of Siva but nothing else is recorded of the ruler mentioned above and this may cause a doubt as to his historical existence. It is mentioned as such in the Kalhana's Rajatarangini the tradition regarding the king Asoka's connection with it supplies historical proof for its antiquity. According to Kalhana's account which may well have been based on genuine local tradition or even inscriptional evidence, king Ashoka had replaced the old stuccoed enclosure of the temple by one of stone. The great king was also credited with having erected within these enclosures two temples called Ashokesvara.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Importance of the Site

According to a European traveller BarenHugel, who was the first researcher of the town and visited here in the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD. He suggested that the town was actually known as Vijaypora (The city of Victory)<sup>8</sup> and argues that Bijbehara was the ancient capital of Kashmir.<sup>9</sup> However, archaeology has a different story to tell about the Bijbehara. As per the archaeological excavations, the town reveals very interesting sequence of various cultural periods which had been mostly of external in nature.<sup>10</sup> The first Archaeological survey of the town was carried in 1889 AD by M.A. Stein.<sup>11</sup> However he could not achieve any breakthrough in his investigations. He is said to have collected few ancient artefacts from the surface of the town.<sup>12</sup> The Neolithic period as evidenced at Burzuhom and Gufkral excavation sites came to an end sometime in the last quarter of the second millennium BC. What happened thereafter and before the advent of the Kushanas in about the first century AD is not clear, even though some Indo-Greek coins had been reported from the valley. The time span of more than a millennium was to be bridged and the Semthan excavation was a step in this direction.<sup>13</sup> A small scale excavation at Semthan was started in 1977 by the erstwhile north-western circle of Archaeological survey of India (ASI). Latter, systematic work was carried out for three seasons from 1981 to 1983 under the direction of R.S Bisht, the then superintending Archaeologist.<sup>14</sup> It did not only reveal the cultural past of the town but even opened a new chapter for the entire history of Kashmir.<sup>15</sup> Prior to the excavations of the Semthan mounds, there was a shadow over the events of Kashmir between Neolithic and early historical periods.<sup>16</sup> Semthan excavation added a new dimension to our archaeological history. It opened the doors of unknown facts and events.<sup>17</sup> Till the Burzuhom and the Gufkral sites revealed the Paleolithic and Neolithic settlements of Kashmir. However, to quote the co-excavator of Semthan site, "Semthan excavation was a step forward in bridging the gap between the Neolithic and the Kushana period in Kashmir".<sup>18</sup>

The Semthan excavations have given a sequence of cultures starting from the middle of the first millennium BC up to the late medieval times. Semthan has provided important evidence about three hitherto unknown cultures in the valley of Kashmir, the pre – NBP, NBPW and the Indo-Greek. The latter was, of course, known through their coins reported from the valley. The salient features of various periods are summarized as below.<sup>19</sup>

## 3. Period – I: Pre NBP (c.700 – 500 BC.)

In continuation of the previous year's work by archaeological Survey of India, R.S. Bisht of the north western circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, assisted by S.N. Jaiswal, G.S. Gaur, Balbir Singh and R.K. Kaul resumed excavation with a view to ascertain the cultural sequence of the site. Period-I is characterized by successive floor levels.<sup>20</sup> The occupational strata of this period consist of yellowish brown compact and sticky clay of about 30- 45 cm's thickness resting directly on the natural soil. Carefully laid successive floor levels indicate regular building activity, albeit no house plan could be observed. Post holes and evidence of thatched roof with prominent grass impressions on it were met with. It probably shows that the earliest inhabitants of Semthan were living in hutments. Important antiquities including terra-cotta, bone beads, pieces of copper, iron arrowed and iron slag were also recovered. The pottery of this period comprises a sturdy red ware of fine paste, made carefully on the wheel and treated occasionally with bright

<sup>6</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archeology, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>8</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archeology, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Charles BarenHugel, Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab, Lal Publishers, Delhi, 1986, p. 131.

<sup>10</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archeology, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>11</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Heritage Tourism, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>12</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archaeology, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> G.S. Gaur, Semthan excavation: (eds.), "A step towards bridging the gap between the Neolithic and the Kushana period in Kashmir," Archaeology and History, New Delhi, 1987, p. 327.

<sup>14</sup> G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>15</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archaeology, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>16</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Discoveries of Kashmir, Gulshan Publications, 2005, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>18</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Heritage Tourism, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>19</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>20</sup>Debala, Mitra, (eds.), Indian Archaeology 1980-81, A Review, Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India, New Delhi, 1983, p. 21.

red slip, dull red ware with incisions making multiple wavy lines, crisscross patterns, etc., burnished grey ware, and a handmade crude ware of poor clay tempered with stone grits. The main shapes include a dish-cum bowl on stand, deep bowl like lid with a central knob, a dabber-based pot probably resembling goblet, cooking vessel, etc.<sup>21</sup>

Interesting evidence of grains was also found from the excavations. The remains of this period have shown presence of cereals like, rice (*Oryza sativa*), wheat (*Triticum sphaerococcum*) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) and pulses such as mung (*Phaseolus aureus*) and lentil (*Lens culinaris*) and hackberry (*Cedrus deodara*) and walnut (*Juglans regia*). The largest quantity of cereals is that of wheat followed by barley and rice, the former was perhaps the main crop. Blue pine might have been used as building material and firewood. The knowledge of the cultivation of wheat, barley and rice was perhaps acquired through the plains of the Punjab before the introduction of Northern Black Polished Ware in the valley.

#### 4. Period II: Northern Black Polished Ware (c. 500-200)

The true historical remains which are characterized by the presence of Northern Black Polished ware and other associated ware were encountered in period II. Here for the first time two sherds of Northern Black Polished Ware (N.B.P.W), a characteristic pottery of Gangetic region, were found in a deposit of 1.35m thickness. Besides N.B.P ware, associated wares such as Black slipped ware, plain red ware Grey wares were also found. The types in the pottery of the period included variants of Ahichchhatra 10 at type, dishes, basins, vases, carinated rimless handi's were important. The structural activity was mainly represented by rubble walls and mud floors. In making the floors, mud clods were especially used. The important antiquities which were encountered in this period were silver and punch marked coins, terra-cotta balls, beads of semi-precious stones and terra-cotta, bone points and copper and iron objects. The cereal remains found in the excavations included urad, pea, and wooden remains included *Pica smithiana*, *Aesculus indica*, *Populus* and *Ulmus wallichiana* and weed seeds of *Vicia*, *Lathyrus*, *Galium* and *Lithospermum* were important.

Thus the result obtained in the excavations at Semthan, which for the first time yielded NBP, a predominant ware of Gangetic region, had also an extension in the Himalayan region too, Though the excavations had yielded three sherds of NBP.<sup>22</sup> Not only the ware has been found but its other associated types particularly in plain grey ware and red ware have also been encountered. The availability of this early pottery indicates an obvious contact with the plains of the subcontinent.<sup>23</sup> The Rajatarangini in the first book states that the Mauryas extended their sway up to the valley and King Asoka, who embraced Buddhism, set up viharas and erected stupas in Srinagar, the modern Srinagar. Thus it is clear that the remains founded at Semthan are the earliest physical evidence of the historical period in the valley.<sup>24</sup>

#### 5. Period III: Indo-Greek (c. 200 BC. – Beginning of the Christian Era)

This period is represented by a thick deposit consisting of several floors yielding pottery of a thin fabric with a bright red or orange slip.<sup>25</sup> After these historical remains synchronizing with the Mauryan period of Indian history, the remains which have been found in the valley belong to Indo-Greek period.<sup>26</sup> Bijbehara is perhaps the first place in Kashmir where tremendous archaeological evidences of ancient Greeks<sup>27</sup> have been found.<sup>28</sup> The excavations at Semthan and the large number of stray finds of coins of Euthydiamis, Eukradites I, Appolodotus, Menander, Antimachus II, and Hippostratos indicate that Indo-Greek settlements took place in the valley some around 200 B.C. and continued to flourish till the arrival of the Kushanas on the political scene. In the excavations, a deposit of 40 cm thickness has yielded for the first time successive floor level made of mud mixed with chunam having reddish pink slip was an important ware of the period. The important types found included bowls, dishes, vases and earthen thali (pans). The important antiquities recovered included a clay seal bearing a standing Greek deity, Indo-Greek coins and other minor objects.<sup>29</sup> A significant finding was the discovery of a pot with the inscription consisting of five letters engraved below the rim portion externally. It reads as Dharmarai or Dharmo (Rajai).<sup>30</sup>

#### 6. Period IV: Kushan-Huna (c. First Century AD to Fifth Century AD.)

Period IV witnessed the continuation of certain wares and types of the proceeding period. A large number of terracotta figurines, coins and clay sealing of this period are found from both excavation and surface.<sup>31</sup> The systematic excavation conducted at Semthan has yielded information that the Kushana succeeded the Indo-Greek settlements at Semthan. Here a deposit of 4m thickness which overlies the Indo-Greek deposit revealed a distinct pottery characterized by the presence of red ware and coarse grey ware. The important types founded include bowls with incurved rim, vases with long vertical necks, inkpot type lids, jars and stamped ware.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>21</sup> G.S.Gaur, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> R.C. Agarwal, Kashmir and its monumental glory, Aryan Books International, Delhi 1998, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Indian Archaeology 1980-81- A Review, op. cit, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p 76.

<sup>27</sup> Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archaeology, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p 80.

<sup>30</sup> Iqbal Ahmad, Greek Kashmir, ShriPratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Indian Archaeology 1980-81- A Review, op. cit, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 83.

The principal structural activity of the period was represented by mud brick, rubble and diaper pebble walls and floors made with rubble stones. The introduction of the diaper pebble wall during this phase is of significance as such mode of construction has been encountered for the first time in the valley. It shows that the tradition of making diaper pebble wall was brought to the valley by Kushanas from the North West region and was made popular. Such structures have been found in the excavations of the Kushana level at Taxila. The important antiquities found in the excavations are the beads of semi-precious stones, terracotta, bone, shell and quartz; wheel and balls of terra-cotta; clay seals and sealing's bearing legend in Brahmi and Kharoshti and copper and silver coins.<sup>33</sup>

Two brick tiles having cross within a circle were also recovered. The use of such brick tiles which were depicted variously is common in almost all the Kushana sites in Kashmir.<sup>34</sup> Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* has referred to the Kushana kings viz, Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka and also Mihirkula, a Hun ruler. The material culture of period IV of Semthan attests to what literature has to say. The interesting aspect of the excavations is the discovery of a large number of terra-cotta figurines, of which a few outstanding are described here.<sup>35</sup>

### 6.1 *Terra-cotta Fragment of a Horse*

It is a front portion of terracotta animal figurine which depicts the face of a horse having traces of manes. It is well fired and executed. The manes are made by appliqué<sup>36</sup> technique and the eyes and nose by punching. On the junction of the neck, a circular ornamental appliqué decoration is made in the shape of a circle and in each circle dots are made which appears to be a contemporary ornamentation on the horses.<sup>37</sup>

### 6.2 *Headless Terra-cotta Figurine*

The goddess from Bijbehara is damaged by its head, arms and other attributes. Since the prongs of the trident are partly visible at the right side of its foot, is identified as a form of a Durga,<sup>38</sup> wearing a high-waisted chiton and a long scarf. A cord passes over the left shoulder and forms a loop in front of her body. The scarf falls in a series of folds at her feet. This treatment may be watched on many early standing female deities known in terra-cotta.<sup>39</sup> The right hand is uplifted and placed against the chest. The left hand is wrapped in drapery. The garment shows folds. There appear to be lower and upper garments. From the folds of the drapery it appears that the terra-cotta figurine was made in the latter Gandhara style of early centuries of the Christian era.

### 6.3 *A Damaged and Broken Terra-cotta Head of a Deity*

It is broken from the left side and hollow from back. It is made with the help of a double mould. The face of the figure is oval with protruding eye ball. The eye brow is prominently moulded and the eye lid is separated by deep incised line. In the right eye a piece of quartz has survived. The forehead is decorated with an appliqué urna. The urna has five punches in which crystal pieces are embedded. The head dress is shown in two tiers. In the lower tier on an appliqué horizontal band, deep vertical lines are marked. The upper tier is further divided into several vertical sections by making deep vertical lines. The space between two lines or sections is filled with diagonal incised lines. The major portion of this part of terra-cotta is broken and damaged.

On the oval cheeks semicircular appliqué design is noticed. The nose of the figure is damaged but traces indicate a sharp and elongated nose. Below the nostril appliqué traces indicate upper lip. On account of this features the figure appears to be that of a deity, probably a Buddha or Buddhist divinity.

### 6.4 *Terra-cotta Head of a Soldier*

The head is broken / detached from the neck portion. It is hollow inside and made in two pieces. The face has round contours and oval in shape. Around the chin the beard has been made by appliqué technique. To make the beard look natural vertical irregular mild lines are made. Above the beard, the lower lip is visible. The moustache of the figure is also made by appliqué technique and plain in execution. The nose portion is broken and seems to be painted. Both the eye balls are protruding and punched. The headgear is simple. Above the forehead, the hair is shown by making short lines. Above the hair a ribbon is shown made in appliqué technique. The total facial treatment of the terra-cotta is very interesting as it provides ample information for the study of socio-ethnic aspect during the early centuries of the Christian era. The terra-cotta figurine,<sup>40</sup> probably a warrior, with chubby cheeks and protruding elongated eyes.<sup>41</sup> The terra-cotta also depicts culmination of Hellenistic tradition in the valley.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>34</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>36</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., P. 83.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>38</sup>Iqbal Ahmad, Master pieces of Kashmir museum, Offest Publishers, Delhi, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>40</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>41</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 333.

<sup>42</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 85.

### 6.5 A Human Terra-cotta Figurine

It is a tiny terra-cotta figurine of a human being. From its appearance it can be said to represent a royal personage. The figure is holding something in the right hand. The right hand is uplifted and resting against chest. The left hand holding something (a purse) is resting on the waist. The figure appears to be standing on a base and having ornament anklets on its feet. There are two garments distinctly visible in the terracotta, a gown and a tight pajama. At the waist, the waist line is prominently visible. The gown has a well-defined border. The figure is also shown wearing a necklace which has been depicted in relief by vertical strokes on a moulded part below the neck. The ears are having simple roundish ear labs. The lower lip is thicker than the upper lip and the nose is prominent. The eye portion is protruding and the eye brow is sharp and distinct. The forehead is flat but indicates gentle curvature. The treatment of the hair is by recessed vertical lines. The anatomy of the terra-cotta is well proportionate.<sup>43</sup>

### 6.6 A Miniature Terra-cotta Figurine

A well prominent male miniature figure standing on the pedestal is shown almost naked.<sup>44</sup> The terra-cotta figurine is almost similar in the treatment to the figure described above except the facial expression is different.<sup>45</sup> Round face, circular eyes and chubby cheeks and other anatomical details are noteworthy. The face expresses a kind of innocence which points out this to be a child. A hole by the side of the left arm was probably for its suspension. A number of such terra-cotta has been found at Semthan.<sup>46</sup> Another difference is that both its hands are empty but the right hand is resting on the waist.<sup>47</sup>

### 6.7 Terra-cotta Human Figure

The lower half of this terra-cotta is broken and fortunately the upper portion is very well preserved and intact. The figure is shown wearing a gown. The right hand of the figure is uplifted and holding something. The only ornament shown on the figure is a necklace represented by a prominent semi-circular line. The necklace can be termed as a Kanthi. The facial treatment is also very distinct. The face is often oval shape. The nose is prominent and the eyes are made by punching and upper / lower eye lids by prominent lining. The head gear is simple and the hair appears to be covered under a piece of cloth probably part of a gown.

### 6.8 Terra-cotta Fragment of a Human Face

The fragment appears to be a well proportionate human figure. The fragment indicates an oval face, prominent cheeks and well treated nose. The eyes are of almond shape and of a fish profile. A minute examination of the figure indicated an application of the slip before firing. The slip has produced a smooth surface and lustre in the treatment of the face and the kind of the sophistication achieved show the maturity in the terra-cotta art of Kashmir. The fragment is of exceptional value. It has been found on the surface and it is very difficult to place it in a proper chronological frame work in the light of the other antiquities, but it is certainly of the fourth- fifth century AD.<sup>48</sup>

### 6.9 Terra-cotta Figure of a lion

The body of the terra-cotta is elongated. The hind and front legs are broken and the tail is shown by making a vertical incised stroke. The facial treatment is naturalistic. The mouth is wide open and eyes are made by appliqué technique. The eye portion is roundish. The mane is treated with parallel recessed lines. The body of the animal figure is plain. Recessed lines in low relief distinguish the shoulders and the back portion.

### 6.10. Headless Terra-cotta of a Lady

This is important terra-cotta found at Semthan. Its head is missing and the right foot is partially damaged. The entire body of the terra-cotta is covered by thick garments and it is difficult to visualize the treatment of the body. The figure is standing on the base / pedestal and the right hand is holding drapery. The left hand enveloped in drapery is hanging free. In the waist a muslin belt or something like Kati-bandh made of cloth has been modelled. It is not the usual belt of the Kushana type. The necklace is made by modelled dots around the neck. Between the belt and the necklace, the dots have been arranged in a crescent line indicating the outline of the upper garment. The style of the terra-cotta and modelling of drapery indicate an affinity with the Kushana tradition.<sup>49</sup>

### 6.11. A Terra-cotta Plaque Depicting Buddha

Seated on the throne in Padmasana in dhyananmudra, is shown in the low relief and his palms are placed on one another in the lap.<sup>50</sup> His frontal face of the throne carries some animal figurines out of which two are probably of a lion and deer.<sup>51</sup> It is broken terra-cotta, the lower half, a very important part, is missing, and it is handmade. The figure modelled in a frame is in the form of a niche.

<sup>43</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>44</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>45</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>46</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>47</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>48</sup>R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., P. 86.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>50</sup>G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

Prominent horizontal lines make the outline of the frame distinct. The drapery of the figure is shown by making horizontal and irregular folds. The face of the terra-cotta is roundish. The chin and the lips are very smoothly modelled and the nose is proportionate. The eyes are shaped by protruding circles having pupils. The pupils are made in the center of the eyes. The eye brows are made prominent. The forehead is flat. The headgear is long and conical. The curly hairs are shown by prominent dots, a feature generally found in the Buddhist sculpture of the Kushana period.

#### 6.12. Terracotta Fragment of a Torso

The fragment appears to be of a human figure. The drapery folds are distinct. Such pieces of terra-cotta or terra-cotta figurines are generally found in the north-west region.<sup>52</sup>

#### 7. Period V: Hindu Rule (C. AD Fifth Century to Thirteen Century AD.)

Period V belonged to the time of prolific temple building and flourishing sculptural art in Kashmir.<sup>53</sup> This period is marked by a distinct fine grained and thin sectioned pottery having lustrous red slip. This paper-thin pottery presents variety of shapes such as bowls, dishes, small vases, jars and goblets. The occupation deposit of this period is more than 4m. Important antiquities of this period include copper coins of various historical dynasties of Kashmir in addition to numerous miscellaneous objects of daily use. A circular road around the township was built during this period. This was a period of affluence and roughly corresponds with the period of the Hindu rule in Kashmir represented by the Karkota, Utpala and Lohara dynasties.

#### 8. Period VI: Late Medieval (Post Thirteen Century AD.)

Characterized by typical late medieval pottery but devoid of glazed ware, the main pottery shapes included knife-edged bowl, handis, jars; flat plates etc. partly exposed rubble walls probably of a large house complex were found. This period commences with the Muslim rule in Kashmir.<sup>54</sup> Therefore Semthan Excavations<sup>55</sup> did not only reveal the cultural past of the town but even opened a new chapter for entire Kashmir history.<sup>56</sup>

#### 9. Conclusion

Semthan excavations in the Bijbehara town have given a sequence of cultures starting from the middle millennium B.C. Up to the late medieval times. Semthan has provided important evidence about three hitherto unknown cultures in the valley of Kashmir, the pre NBP, NBPW and the Indo-Greek. The latter was, of course, known through their coins reported from the valley. Although the limitations of the study cannot be ruled out and thereby posing probable missing links but it is certain that the Semthan evidence could be called a survival in the archaeological history of Kashmir. But unfortunately despite tremendous archaeological importance, all the material culture including coins, terra-cotta, pottery etc. could not be preserved well and the site is still robbed of its treasure as there are still reports arriving from the Semthan plateau regarding the discovery of coins but unfortunately most of such coins go into hands of antique dealers and gold smiths who are hardly concerned with its historic value. Let the government take care of Semthan site as the Semthan is for historians and archaeologists a research site. Care of these finds will shed more light on not only of the history of the Bijbehara but that of Kashmir also. Indications are that Bijbehara may have remained a Grecian or Scythian city. The word Semthan also looks to have been borrowed from Scythian. These Scythians are called as Indo-Scythians. Despite wonderful discoveries of Semthan, Bijbehara still remains unexplored. The ancient town on its various outskirts carries a number of mounds. Therefore, there is a further scope of archaeological excavation and research of the Semthan site. The mounds if explored and excavated would shed some more light on ancient culture of Bijbehara.

Although at present the Semthan site is under the supervision of Archaeological survey of India but there is no fencing or proper demarcation of the site. Besides that, there is no proper staff at the site. The government should appoint proper staff to supervise and safeguard the Semthan site. Besides this, it is suggested that there should be proper walling around the Semthan site to get it properly protected from whom who are always wandering around the site for its illegal exploitation for their personal gains.

<sup>52</sup> R.C. Agarwal, op. cit., P. 87.

<sup>53</sup> Indian Archaeology 1980-81- A Review, op. cit, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> G.S. Gaur, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>55</sup> Iqbal Ahmad, Discoveries of Kashmir, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> Iqbal Ahmad, Kashmir Archaeology, op. cit., p. 56.

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