ANCIENT ODISHA

A 1,300-year-old Buddhist stupa was discovered in Jajpur, Odisha.

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • February 28, 2023 • 3 min read



The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered a 1,300-year-old stupa in the heart of a mining site in Odisha's Jajpur district, from which Khondalite stones were extracted for the beauty of the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, which dates back to the 12th century.

"We were able to excavate a Buddhist stupa at the Khandolite mining site at Parabhadi in the village of Sukhuapada in the district of Jajpur. Monday, Dibishada Brajasundar Garnayak, Supervising Archaeologist of ASI's Puri circle, reported that a second, smaller stupa had been entirely damaged by mining at the site.

Mr. Garnayak stated that the stupa could be 4.5 metres tall, and preliminary analysis indicated that it could date back to the 7th or 8th century.

The archaeological artefact was discovered at Parabhadi, which is located close to Lalitagiri, a huge Buddhist complex with numerous stupas and monasteries. In response to the discovery of a Buddhist stupa at a mining site, the ASI intervened and requested that the Odisha Mining Company cease operations (OMC). Since then, mining has ceased.

The recently discovered stupa may have been defaced during a previous time period. The ASI would now endeavour to recover the structure's whole archaeological legacy, restore it to its original state, and conserve the site.

Before granting approval for mining, the state government must conduct a heritage evaluation of a site, especially if it is located near a site of archaeological significance. Mr. Garanayak stated that the smaller stupa, which was demolished, cannot be rebuilt.

Being part of the Lalitgiri Buddhist site, locals and Buddhist academics had cautioned the state government against mining in the Sukhuapada village. Even local artists voiced concern that their livelihoods will be negatively affected by the industrial mining of Khondalite stones.

"Those who accepted the idea for quarrying at Sukhuapada ought to have used their brains. Subhendu Bhuyan, a member of the Jajpur Culture Council, remarked that large mining equipment should not have been deployed at the Lalitgiri archaeological site in light of the discovery of numerous enormous Buddha sculptures from Sukhuapada, which are currently housed in a museum at the site.

Ancient temple structures utilised Khondalite stones extensively. To develop Puri into a world heritage city, the State government devised an ambitious plan to invest 3,208 crore under the Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture (ABADHA) scheme in three years.

To preserve the aesthetic value of a number of projects, including the heritage security zone, the Jagannath Ballav pilgrim centre, the Puri lake development project, the Atharnala heritage project, and the Matha Development Initiative, it is proposed to employ Khondalite stones extensively.

The largest of six Khondalite stone blocks reserved for the OMC was Sukhuapada. In Khordha district, Khondalite mining is taking place on 78.3 acres at Sukhuapada, as well as on 27.5 acres at Teligarh, 20.3 acres at Gobindpur, 4 acres at Chandia, 4.67 acres at Kundakundi Kunda, and 1.67 acres at Kurumpada decorative stone quarry.

As a result of the ASI's jurisdiction over the Sukhuapada site, the OMC may have trouble supplying Khondalite stones for the State government's planned temple development programmes. That may spark a new round of conflict between the federal government and state governments. A considerable controversy surrounded the Puri rehabilitation project because to its violation of the ASI criteria.

Edited from OBJECTIVE IAS

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