

Tracing Eroticism in Erotic Plaques of Chandraketugarh

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Abstract: Chandraketugarh one the historically significant places of West Bengal. This particular excavation site had produced many a significant archeological findings and among this there were several erotic plaques found, which would indicate several things associated with these plaques. These plaques represent the sexual activities and their notions regarding the eroticism. Studies proved that these plaques had multiple significances at that time, such as; sex education, decoration purposes, for mental satisfaction, and advertisement. Several erotic plaques portrayed several sexual images and these images had stories in it. This erotic plaques images conveyed many a significant details about the then existing society and culture. Thus several plaques of Chandraketugarh had helped tremendously in portraying the then society and had been instrumental in bringing about the eroticism or in other words the sexual practices. Thus, this particular plaques holds tremendous amount of historical significance not only in helping us to gather knowledge about the existing sexual practices but also in getting a broader picture of the then existing civilization of Chandraketugarh.

Keywords: eroticism, sexual practices, sex education, advertisement, decorative purposes

1. Introduction

Chandraketugarh one of the present historically significant place of West Bengal. In *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (c. 1st century CE to 2nd century CE) we found the earliest mention of Ganges River and also in the *Geography* of Ptolemy. According to B. N. Mukhopadhyaya, "Ganges is recent Chandraketugarh, which is situated 35 Kilometers away from Kolkata." This particular site had been excavated by University of Calcutta for gathering valuable information and archeological findings. There had been specific interest for numerous amounts of historical reasons in the site of Chandraketugarh. Many a excavation and surveys had been done on this historically significant site for the knowledge and information of age old Bengali civilizations. In those excavation many an archeologically important things were found. Among those archeological several kinds of erotic plaques were found. And these erotic plaques brought forward a curious desire to unravel the mystery and intriguing phenomenon associated with these erotic plaques. Several historians and researchers were bemused by the erotic plaques of Chandraketugarh. There were not only erotic plaques of particular kinds but there were plaques indicating sexual practices, habits and sex positions. Several studies presented the fact that these erotic or in other words sexual images represent diverse range of things. And apparently it needed to be mentioned that, Chandraketugarh had been the place where maximum amount of erotic plaques were found. Such huge number of plaques indicated several things and these plaques must have had crucial significance. A deeper look inside this plaques and behind its creation would point out several heterogeneous details and information regarding the then existing civilization of Chandraketugarh. A brief study of the erotic plaques would prove that these plaques were used for decoration, educational purposes, mental satisfaction, and advertisement. Thus, it was a fact that there were multiple uses of this erotic plaques and this particular notion associated with this plaques also resulted in a huge demand for commercial trading of this erotic plaques.

This present article under consideration would focus on the erotic portraits in the plaques of Chandraketugarh. This article also intends to discuss about the peculiarities and obscurities associated with this plaques in bringing about a picture of the then existing societies cultural and social activities. This article also intends to bring forward the eroticism portrayed in the plaques found at Chandraketugarh. By doing all these, the present article would also talk about the educational purposes, decorative purposes and at a specific time used for advertisement also. All this aspects associated with the erotic plaques also gave it a commercial and economic significance, which was utterly important for the then existing society of Chandraketugarh.

Plaques in the ancient times were made out of clays either burnt or baked in the sun. In the ancient or in medieval times plaques were of tremendous importance because of the difficulty in carving stones and making designs, patterns and portraits. This particular difficulty faced by the artists and also the consequent expenditure and selling cost made the earthen plaques more affordable. These plaques also allowed the artist to showcase his artistic bent and imagination. Likewise, plaques were of tremendous importance at Chandraketugarh in those ancient and medieval times. But the plaques found at Chandraketugarh excavation site were of a peculiar nature. There were numerous amounts of erotic plaques found at Chandraketugarh and these plaques generally portrayed several sex positions and sexual orientations existing at that time. The images, which gets reflected in the plaques tells several stories. The baffling imagery of sexual practices and sex habits amuses the present day scholars and seers.

It needed to be mentioned that, behind such a huge amount of creation and usage of such erotic plaques, indicates several motifs lying behind such creation and usage. It had been a matter of fact that the usage of a particular thing in such a quantity and the consequent demand for that particular thing even in the present day indicates that there must be some usage value and popularity of that particular thing. Such was the condition of Chandraketugarh at that

time. It would not be wrong to say that there were numerous usages of these plaques at that time; otherwise such a huge of production would not have taken place. It needed to be mentioned that, such erotic plaques were not found in a particular place or spot of Chandraketugarh, it was found in a scattered manner and even in almost every other houses such plaques were found. This particular piece of information denotes the fact that there were homely usages of such plaques. Based on this particular information we could assume and perhaps determine the usage of such particular plaques. The placement, of such plaques, which were found in the houses of the then inhabitants of Chandraketugarh reveals several things about the then existing society's cultural, economical and social practices.

Several historians expounded the fact that there were chiefly decorative motives behind the creation of all these earthen plaques portraying erotic images. It had been seen that throughout the ancient civilization the usage of erotic bust, idols, erotic imagery carved on stone walls. The usage of such erotic representation either in paintings or in architecture had been very popular. And for this reason multiple numbers of ancient civilizations had created earthen, wooden and even stone to reflect their sexual practices and their conceptions regarding sexual intercourse including its various impacts on the society itself. Thus it would be quite easy the grapple the story and motives behind the creation of all such erotic representation either in art or architecture. In the ancient Chandraketugarh civilization, such kinds of earthen plaques demonstrating sexual imageries were found in numerous amounts. This particular fact indicated that the existing society of Chandraketugarh, from 1st century to 2nd century, had sufficient knowledge about the sexual activities. Their knowledge about various sex positions and variety in their sexual practices had been remarkable, if judged on the basis of their ancient existence, specifically in the West Bengal region of India.



Figure 1: Indian Archeology 1957-5 A Review, Plate, LXXIII C



Figure 2: Indian Archeology 1959-60 A Review, Plate, LIV II



Figure 3: Indian Archeology 1959-60 A Review, Plate, LIV 9



Figure 4: Indian Archeology 1962-63 A Review, Plate XCIV D

All these above pictures of earthen plaques found at Chandraketugarh portrays several erotic images. It would be worthwhile to mention that in ancient day's practices of teaching through demonstration method was so popular. And sex education had been an integral part of any kind of society throughout ages and for this reason such erotic images and images of various kinds of sex positions were instrumental for the educational purposes also. However it needed to be mentioned that, among the four **Varna** in the

Indian caste system or Varna system, all categories received education except the **Shudra's**.

It needed to be mentioned that, several historians had expounded the fact that this erotic images on the earthen plaques had decorative purposes, since a number of plaques were found on the destroyed houses and in the living spaces of Chandraketugarh society. The decorative purpose of these plaques could be easily apprehended also by observing several other civilizations around that time. Many a ancient civilization used erotic images in paintings and architecture for decorative purposes. Existence of erotic paintings and architecture could be still seen in practice in various temples and medieval houses. But a close look and keen observation of those erotic plaques found in that area conveys another story. However, it was a fact that many erotic images were seen at the temple front of the **Garbhagriha**. Those erotic images had education, spiritual and decorative purpose. Those images were used in the temples for beatification as seen in the **Khajuraho** and also in the **Konark Sun** temple. After the excavation at Chandraketugarh, a well developed temple was discovered. But, as oppose to the apprehended notion, there was no such erotic plaques found inside or around the temple premises. Thus we could affirm the fact that the Chandraketugarh society did not used erotic plaques in the temple premises. And further studies also helped gathering the fact that these plaques might not have been in proper use as decorative purposes as there was no hole to tie it up with a rope to either hang from roof or door or to for the purpose of stabbing that plaque against a particular wall. There had been existence of **Nagaraka** but no evidences proved the fact that there were uses of erotic plaques for the purpose of decoration of their houses.

It would be also point worthy to discuss the fact regarding the physical and mental satisfaction associated with such erotic plaques. According to **Kamasutra**, man had been divided in three types; hare, bull and stallion by the size of their sexual organ. Not only the sexual organ, man had been also categorized by their temperament and endurance. Similarly, woman was also divided in the same fashion. If the union or coupling was not on the equal basis, any one of them could be unsatisfied and that unsatisfied person would want to fulfill his or her erotic arousal. And this particular fact of unsatisfaction, mentally and physically, could be seen well portrayed in a erotic plaque found at Chandraketugarh, a man could be seen masturbating sitting beside his partner and was probably portrayed as holding his sexual partners breast.



Source: Google

This plaque is an example of unsatisfaction of a man who was fulfilling his erotic arousal by masturbation. These particular plaques indicated the group or kinds of men who were unsatisfied and they would satisfy their erotic ecstasy by masturbation or through other means. We could apprehend by observing the sense of unsatisfactory condition of this men, that they might have bought this sort of earthen plaques to satisfy them by using different positions as portrayed in those erotic plaques. This particular fact could be very easily judged on the basis of modern usage of sex magazines and pornography for various kinds of sex positions and practices or in other words, for the means to get acknowledged about the ways to achieve the maximum ecstasy from sexual intercourse.

It needed to be mentioned that, Chandraketugarh was a port city of ancient Bengal and it was well connected with South-East Asia and 'limyrike' (Malabar Coast). A lot of traders came here and accommodated themselves with commercial transactions. In ancient period, the traders left their home for long durations and in those times men were not enable or could afford to bring their wives or sexual partners with them. And for this particular reason, this kind of people, to be specific the traders would be extremely eager to fulfill their physical desire. They wanted to fulfill their sexual desire and they were in most times were very much eager to have sexual intimacies. Whenever these traders would see a land or port they would collect their essential needs and resources from their in order to sustain their lives and acquire their all needful amenities like food and water and possibly their sexual desires also. To fulfill their sexual eagerness they searched for brothels and would reach out to that spot for sexual gratification. And in this particular situation, existence of such kinds of erotic images on plaques indicated them about those brothels it areas where they could satisfy their sexual desire. Thus, these kinds of plaques were used as a method for advertisement of those brothel areas. And oftentimes the plaque sellers would also inform them about the location of such brothels or areas of prostitution activities.

2. Conclusion

To conclude on the present discussion regarding the eroticism of the Chandraketugarh society, between the 1st century CE to 2nd century CE, it could be said that there was a particular notion and sexual activity which were portrayed on such earthen erotic plaques. And these earthen erotic plaques indicated their knowledge about various kinds of sexual activities and practices. It had been already mentioned above that, this earthen erotic plaques had educational and commercial usages. And this sort of earthen plaques were also associated with the mental and physical satisfaction of the buyers. These earthen plaques were also used as a means to gather knowledge about the sexual activities, practices and various kinds of sex positions to satisfy the sexual desire. The importance of this earthen plaques could never be overlooked in order to understand the then existing society and its governing pattern. These erotic plaques not only indicated the existing sexual knowledge of the then Chandraketugarh society but also play a crucial part in revealing or unraveling several key facts associated with society, such as religion, sculpture, trade and commerce. These erotic plaques also hinted at the culture of the society. Thus it had been a fact that this earthen erotic plaque of Chandraketugarh not only instrumental in tracing the eroticism of Chandraketugarh society but also plays a handy role in getting us a moderate picture of that society.

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