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Scattered Historical Remains of Motitunga (Beera)

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Abstract

Motitunga, located near Beera village in Ajaygarh tehsil of Panna district, Madhya Pradesh. The region lies within the Vindhyan plateau, characterized by rocky terrain, seasonal water bodies, and forested tracts. The region preserves scattered historical remains belonging to different periods, including the Chandel era, Jain religious traditions, Vaishnav worship, medieval fortifications, and early settlement patterns. Sculptures of Jain Tirthankaras such as Mahavira, Adinath and Neminath, Mediaeval remains, ancient water structures, temples, Ponds , Rock Shelters and an old settlement (Purani Basti) collectively indicate continuous human occupation and religious plurality. This paper attempts to document and analyze these remains to highlight their historical, religious, and cultural significance.

Keywords: Motitunga, Beera, Chandel dynasty, Jainism, ancient settlement

➢ Introduction

Bundelkhand is a region of Madhya Pradesh known for its rich history and ancient cultural traditions. Many villages in this region preserve old remains that help us understand the past. Motitunga, located near Beera village in Ajaygarh tehsil of Panna district, is one such place that has not been studied much but holds important historical value. The area lies on the Vindhyan plateau and is surrounded by rocky land, forests, and seasonal water sources, which made it suitable for settlement from early times. At Motitunga, scattered remains such as stone sculptures, Jain idols, ancient temples, caves, water structures, and ruined buildings can still be seen. These remains show that the site was inhabited for a long period and was influenced by different religious traditions, including Jainism and Hinduism, as well as later medieval architecture. This research paper briefly studies these remains to understand the historical and cultural importance of Motitunga in the context of Bundelkhand's history.

➢ Research Methodology

A systematic field survey was conducted at Motitunga and its surrounding areas to identify visible historical remains such as sculptures , brick structures, rock shelters, temples, ponds, and settlement traces. Each remains was documented through direct observation.

➢ Garhi (Old structure)

- The structure is built of burnt bricks and foundation built of hard stone, arranged in arched bays.
- A series of pointed and semi-pointed arches can be seen, indicating medieval construction techniques.
- The arches are evenly spaced, suggesting the building was planned and symmetrical, not a random wall.
- Vertical brick pilasters separate each arched opening, providing structural support.

➢ Style and Cultural Influence

The arched openings reflect Indo-Islamic architectural influence, common in central India. Such arches are frequently found in:

- Fort walls
- Sarais (rest houses)
- Gateways
- Storage or administrative buildings within forts

➢ Present Condition:

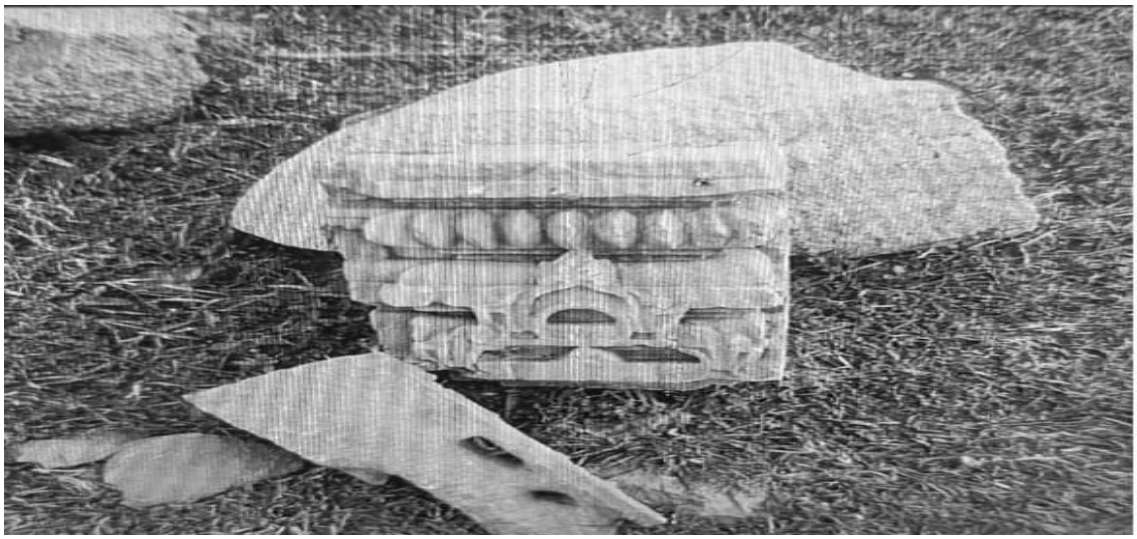
The structure is partially ruined and heavily overgrown with vegetation, indicating long abandonment.
The roof has collapsed, but the arched façade remains intact, showing the durability of brick construction.
No plaster or decoration is clearly visible now, possibly due to weathering.

- Chronology (Probable Date)
- Period: Late medieval period
- Approximate date: 13th–18th century CE
- Cultural phase: Delhi Sultanate to early Mughal influence in Bundelkhand

➢ Archaeological Significance:

This structure supports the presence of a medieval fortified settlement at Motitunga (Beera).
When studied alongside nearby Jain sculptures, ancient temples, ponds, caves, and habitation remains, it confirms that Beera (Motitunga) was a continuously occupied site from early medieval to late medieval times.

- **Stone Peace (Piller)**



This image shows a broken carved stone piece (piller) It may be part of an old temple or religious building. The small arch design shows fine stone work of the medieval period, possibly Its scattered condition indicates remains of a ruined religious structure, likely Jain or Hindu.

- **Jain Religious Remains:**

Jain tirthankar Images

This sculpture appears to be a Jain Tirthankara image, most likely from the medieval period (c. 9th–12th century CE), and it fits well with the Bundelkhand sculptural tradition of central India.
Key features visible in the sculpture

- **Seated posture (Padmasana):** The figure is seated in a yogic meditative pose, a common feature of Jain Tirthankaras.
  - Material and style
  - Carved from local sandstone, widely used in Bundelkhand.
  - The style closely resembles sculptures from Khajuraho, Panna, Ajaygarh, and Deogarh regions.

➢ Historical significance

This sculpture reflects the strong presence of Jainism in Bundelkhand during the Chandela rule.
Such images indicate that Motitunga (Beera) and surrounding areas were once important Jain religious centers.

This image shows an early medieval Jain sculptural panel (stone stele) at Motitunga (Beera), Ajaygarh tehsil, Panna district, Madhya Pradesh, India. Based on iconography, composition, and regional style, the following explanation can be given:

- **Kayotsarga**: The calm facial expression, half-closed eyes, and absence of ornamentation reflect Jain ideals of renunciation.

➢ Material and style

- Carved from local sandstone, widely used in Bundelkhand.
- The style closely resembles sculptures from Khajuraho, Panna, Ajaygarh, and Deogarh regions.

Historical brick-built structure, most likely part of a medieval fortification, gateway, or ancillary building, located in the Beera (Motitunga) area of Panna district, Madhya Pradesh. The architectural features visible in the photograph allow the following interpretation:

➢ Rocky Kutir (Prachin Guha)

One of the most significant features of Motitunga is the presence of a Rock Shelter (rocky kutir) or ancient cave (prachin guha). Such caves were commonly used by Jain monks, ascetics, or Hindu sages for meditation and residence. The natural rocky terrain of the region provided ideal conditions for ascetic life.

➢ Prachin Hanuman Temple

The Prachin Hanuman temple reflects the continuity of religious activity at Motitunga (Beera). This illustrates the cultural transition and coexistence of religious traditions. The temple also suggests that the site retained sacred significance over centuries.

➢ Evidence of Prachin Basti (Ancient Settlement)

The remains of an ancient settlement, including house foundations, buried wells, ponds , scattered stone rubble, and building fragments, indicate that Motitunga was once a thriving community. The presence of religious, defensive, residential, and water management structures suggests a well-organized socio-economic settlement.

➢ Conclusion

The scattered historical remains of Motitunga (Beera) present compelling evidence of the site's long-term cultural, religious, and strategic significance within the Bundelkhand region. Although today the village appears modest and largely unexplored, the surviving archaeological remains clearly demonstrate continuous human occupation from the early medieval period through the late medieval era. The coexistence of Jain, Vaishnava, and later Indo-Islamic architectural elements reflects a dynamic historical landscape marked by religious plurality and cultural interaction.

The Chandel-period sculptures, particularly the Jain Tirthankara images of Adinath and Neminath, highlight Motitunga's importance as a Jain religious center during the height of Chandela rule. The stylistic affinity of these sculptures with those of Khajuraho, Ajaygarh, and Deogarh confirms that Motitunga was integrated into the wider artistic and religious network of Bundelkhand. The presence of Kayotsarga and Padmasana images further underscores the strong ascetic and monastic traditions that once flourished in this region.

The discovery of medieval brick-built structures with arched openings indicates the later transformation of the site under Indo-Islamic influence, possibly during the Sultanate or early Mughal period. These remains suggest the existence of a fortified or administratively significant settlement, reinforcing the strategic value of Motitunga due to its terrain and proximity to important political centers such as Ajaygarh. Complementing

these structures, the rocky kutir (prachin guha) and ancient water bodies reflect adaptation to the natural landscape and the integration of spiritual life with environmental resources.

The Prachin Hanuman temple and evidence of an ancient settlement (Purani Basti) illustrate the continuity of sacred and residential traditions, even as political and religious affiliations evolved over time. Together, these remains reveal Motitunga as a multi-layered historical site that functioned as a religious hub, residential community, and possibly a defensive outpost across centuries.

In conclusion, Motitunga (Beera) holds considerable archaeological and historical value that remains largely undocumented. Systematic archaeological survey, documentation, and conservation are urgently needed to preserve this heritage.

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