Recently Discovered Buddhist and Jain Sites at Anandapur Block of Keonjhar in Odisha

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The name Anandapur derives from which in Sanskrit means the ‘City of bliss / ecstasy’. Anandapur is located at 21.21°N and 86.11°E. It has an average elevation of 43 m (141 ft). The town is situated on the bank of the river Baitarani (which flows on the southern side of the town)1.

Anandapur, A town in the District of Keonjhar, is one of the Important Service-Cum-Primary activities oriented towns of the State. Anandapur was once a prosperous village. It is said that Gobinda Bhanja fell out with his father and left Keonjhar. He joined the services of Puri ruler and for his victory in the battle of Kanchi &Kaveri; he obtained a reward to the gadi of Zamindari of “Athagarh” now better known as “Anandapur”9. It was during the time of Gobinda Bhanja that the territory now comprising the Anandapur Sub- Division was conquered and incorporated with the Kingdom of Keonjhar.

It is situated in the strike line of coastal and hilly regions. It is surrounded by beautiful scenery of green hills. It is situated on the bank of the river Baitarani which is a sacred river of Odisha, also known as Budha Ganga, and is considered one of the oldest rivers in India. During the ruling of Keshari dynasty in Odisha many temples of Shiva were constructed. Along the banks of this river many temples of Lord Shiva can be found. The Jhadeswara temple, Balunkeswara Temple, Utareswara temple, Kundeswara temples and others are situated. Kushaleswara Temple was built by Jajati Keshari.

In this research paper I want to present before you about my field exploration in this region. Mainly I would like to focus on Buddhist and Jain sites which are explored by me and this will encourage other researchers who are working on Buddhism and Jainism in this region. Explored sites discussed below:

![Buddhist God Avalokiteswar from Bancho](image)
Bancho (21° 10’ 34”N – 86° 11’ 30”E):- This site is situated on left bank of the river Baitarani and 8 KM far away from the Anandapur block. From this area I have collected so many potsherds of red ware and black ware. Among the potsherds shapes are like vase, spouts and handi etc (drawing of the potsherds given below). From the excavation of Kankialike this type of potsherds reported\(^4\). And from this so many sculptures of different god and goddess of Buddhism and Jainism reported to me, which were worshiped by the villagers.

Dadhibamanpur (21°11’50” N- 86°10’57”E):- This site also situated on the left bank of river Baitarani and 5 KM far away from the Anandpur block. And this site situated between Anandpur and Bhadrak. From this site I have collected storage jars, vases, miniature pots, bowls of red ware and spouts also extracted from this site. From the excavation of Sisupalgarh and Kankia in Jajpur district like this type of potsherds also reported\(^5\). This is a very big mound of 200 m x 200m area. And the height of this mound might be 1 m. or above. With the potsherds I have also collected some bricks, sculptures of Lord Buddha, Tara and stone pestles/weights from this mound. General view of this mound is given below.
of Keonjhar, Cuttack and Jajpur. Among these Cuttack and Jajpur is a variable store-house of Buddhist vestiges. The range is strewn with Archaeological vestiges of ancient structures, loose sculptures, architectural fragments, brickbats, potsherds, etc. The hills and hillocks of the range for their geographical isolation from the surrounding plains were rightly chosen for the residence of the Buddhist monks during the four months of rainy season (Chaturmasa Varsavasa) as attested by discovery of several Buddhist establishments in and around the range. Buddhism witnessed roaring prosperity in Birupa-Chitrotpola valley during the rule of the Bhauma-Karas as evidenced from the archaeological vestiges at Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Langudi and many other sites in the neighbourhood at Vajragiri, Tarapur, Deuli, Kolanagiri, Kayam, Radhanagar, etc. Many sites from this list are situated in Jajpur district.

Through these above evidences we can guess/conclude that how much importance of these areas from the archaeological point of view. Anandapur is not much more far away from Jajpur, so during that time Buddhism must be spread to this area. That’s why the evidences of Buddhism reported to me during my exploration of this area for my research work. And this research paper may be helpful to other research scholars those who are working on Buddhism in Odisha.

References:
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