

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS:PATALIPUTRA (PART-2)

**M.A.(HISTORY) SEM-2 PAPER CC:7**

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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS (पुरातात्विक उत्खनन)

After an interval of 38 years Kumrahar was again selected for excavations, this time by the ***K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna*** (Altekar and Mishra 1959). The five seasons work at the site revealed that the habitation at Kumrahar was continuous from the Mauryan age down to AD 600. After that the site was abandoned until 17<sup>th</sup> century. It further exposed eight more pillars belonging to the Mauryan hall proper and four probably belonging to the entrance.

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It was proposed by the excavators that the hall was destroyed sometime around the early Sunga period and not during late Gupta period as proposed by Spooner. A good number of structural remains belonging to Buddhist monasteries dating from 2nd century BC to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD were exposed. A seal confirmed the name of a monastery-cum-sanatorium by its inscription reading *sri-arogyavihare bhikshusamghasya*.

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Other important findings included punch-marked coins, Kushan and Gupta coins, seals and sealings in Gupta character, beads of semi-precious stones and several terracotta objects. Excavations were again undertaken at different sites in Patna city, namely Mahabirghat, Shah-Kamal Road, Begum-ki-Haveli and Government Press Play Ground during 1955-56 .

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Out of the three important culture periods (I, II and III), the Period I was represented by Northern Black Polished Ware, black-and-red ware, grey ware, black ware and red ware. Terracotta belonging to the early phase of this period showed some archaic features like the ear, nose, hair shown by pinching out of clay, the mouth by a deep horizontal cut just above the chin, the legs and hands by stumps of clay and the fingers by notches.

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In some cases, the nostrils were shown by two holes. The impressed circles over the body indicated the navel and the breast portions. The female figurines from mid-to-top portion of Period I showed some advanced features where the face was prepared by mould while the other features like the ornaments, ears and hair were shown by the applique method.

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Some terracotta plaques entirely made of mould also made their appearance in the period. Among the animal figurines which were generally hand-modelled, horse figurines predominated. Punch-marked coins both in silver and copper and uninscribed cast coins were in circulation and they made their appearance from the mid level of period I. According to the excavators,

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the most noteworthy discoveries were of mutilated couchant bull and a number of carved stone pieces bearing the lustrous Mauryan polish. The Period II (150 BC to AD 300) was marked by the presence of red ware. In excavations, the deposit of this period was found to having numerous flimsy walls of brick (43 x 29 x 5 cm), terracotta ring-wells and numerous Sunga and Kushan terracotta, a gold amulet and Naigamesha figures.

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Period III at the site belonged to the Gupta and late Gupta periods after which, according to the excavators the site was abandoned till 17th century. Of the isolated Mauryan finds from Patna the most noteworthy are the two nude polished sandstone torsos of Jaina tirthankaras found at Lohanipur and the famous Didarganj Yakshi now housed at Patna Museum.

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Besides the findings from regular excavations, a large number of terracotta, pottery and other antiquities were obtained from various schemes of sewerage in Patna, especially in 1920s . The terracotta belonged to Maurya, Sunga, Kushan and Gupta periods and are now housed at Patna Museum. According to majority of scholars, the pillared hall of Kumharar lying isolated at the southern outskirts of Patna can hardly be identified as a durbar hall of Chandra Gupta Maurya

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and a guess may be hazarded that it was the assembly hall of the third Buddhist Council convened by Asoka.

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Thus Pataliputra witnessed excavations by a number of archaeologists and they successfully sequenced the archaeological finds by which we are able to know rich cultural heritage of this ancient city.