Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Punjab has often been called the cradle of civilization. It is accepted at all hands that the term is absolutely true at least in the Indian context if not for the history of civilization of the entire world. But there is no denying that it vies for a place amongst the oldest civilizations of the world. Two of the oldest known civilizations – the so-called Vedic and Harappan, the first known entirely from the literary sources and the other solely on the basis of archaeological finds belong to this land. It is a moot point whether both are parts of the same continuum in the stream of the ageless Indian culture or one was indigenous and the other developed by the foreign settlers, the popularly known Aryans. Since numerous studies containing views that are diagonally opposite to each other have been published on the subject since 1922, it is a must to delve deep in to this problem in order set the facts straight and prepare a strong base for the fruitful scientific study of the society and culture of the Punjab in ancient times. However, in order to properly understand the facts and arguments of the problem of chronology and relationship of the Vedic and the Harappan culture, it is a must to first go through the geographical features of the region under discussion as also the sources of information – both literary and the archaeological.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Punjab, the land of five rivers (literally five-waters), is derived from the combination of two Persian words punj and āb. It denotes the land irrigated by the five rivers from the Jhelum to the Sutlej. This word of medieval origin seems in its turn to be a literal translation of the ancient Sanskrit term Pañchanada that was used for the Punjab from the epic period onwards. The term is used in the Mahābhārata, several of the Purāṇas and several other literary works. D.C. Sircar expresses the possibility of this expression being used for the five main tribes of the Rgvedic period viz. Anu, Druhyu, Yadu, Yurvaśa and Puru as Pañchajana. The term is used by Kautilya for this region known for a special type of elephants. However, the name continued to be used in the wider sense for the entire land from the Indus to the Yamuna till the unfortunate partition of India in 1947 and is still applied to this land.
many a time. For the purpose of all the discussions in the present study the name Punjab is used for the Punjab of the pre-partition days comprising the entire region from the river Indus down to the Yamuna or what can be termed as the area from Peshawar to Delhi roughly lying between latitude 27° 39’ to 35° 2’ and longitude 69° 35’ to 78° 35’.

Prior to this name, if we go backwards from the epic age, the region of Punjab had a more appropriate name that was much wider in its definition, more suitable in geographical application and perfect in the cultural context. It was called Saptasindhu in the Vedic times. This land of ‘seven rivers’ encompassed in it the entire region watered by the rivers, starting from the north-west the Indus (Sindhu), Jhelum (Vitastā), Chenab (Asiknī or Chandrabhāgā), Ravi (Purushnī or Irāvati), Sutlej (Śatadru), Beas (Vipāśa) and the Sarasvati. The Nādistuṭī hymn in the Rgveda mentions a number of rivers of Punjab besides the seven mentioned above. Some of them include Susomā, Drshadvatī, Āpayā or Āpagā, Ārjikīyā, etc. There is some difference of opinion about the rivers that comprised the Saptasindhu. The above mentioned rivers were first named by Max Muller. However, Ludwig replaced Kubha (R. Kabul) for Sarasvati and was followed by Whitney. Edward Thomas took the Oxus to be the seventh river in place of the Sarasvati. Zimmer on the other hand took the number seven to be symbolic as it was an auspicious number used by the Vedic writers and even in the later times for various purposes. More recently, G. C. Pande seems to be in favour of such a view but he does not discount the Sarasvati from the list of seven rivers of the land. The majority of scholars, however, agree with the view that the rivers included in the land were from the Indus to the Sarasvati. The latter cannot be ignored as it is the most eulogized river in the Vedic literature and has been described as ‘the best of the rivers, best of the goddesses and the best of the mothers’. The term Saptasindhu for this land occurs as early as in the Rgveda and was known to the Avestan Iranians as Hapta Hindu. It continued to be used even in the later times as we find it mentioned in the works like the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali and the Bhavishya Purāṇa. However, when we talk of the Punjab from the Vedic to the Mauryan period, including the age of the Harappan civilization, a still larger geographical area has to be assigned to this region for a proper understanding of its cultural mosaic that may include the vast expanse of the entire north-western India from the Sulaiman Mountains to the Yamuna.
Within this region, the Punjab had several segments known by different names from time to time. The extreme north-west region that roughly corresponds to the present day North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan was known as Gandhāra from the Vedic times19. Pāṇini20, who himself belonged to this region, refers to its capital Taxila in his Ashtadhyāyi. The Rāmāyaṇa21 as well as the Mahābhārata have several references to Gandhāra. Gandhārī, the chief queen of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the mother of the Kaurava brothers, was a princess of this region and her brother Śakuni, the king of Gandhāra, was primarily responsible for bringing about the Mahābhārata war22. Gandhāra finds a prominent place in the lists of the Mahājanapadas contained in various Buddhist texts. At least from the time of the Sixteen Mahājanapadas onwards it had its capital at Taxila, near modern Rawalpindi, which was the most famous seat of learning, centre of art, flourishing centre of Buddhism besides being the centre of political activity. Kauṭilya, who played an important role in the overthrow of the Nanda rule in the Gangetic plains and the establishment of the Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta, was a professor at the Taxila University. It is possible that he played an important role in the turbulent period of the Greek invasion of Punjab by Alexander and his retreat from the Beas. Āmbhi is said to be the ruler of Gandhāra at the time of Alexander’s invasion and perhaps the only Indian ruler who submitted without a war. Some of the Purāṇas also refer to it23.

Many of the regions of the Punjab were named after their tribes or vice-versa. The region between the Chenab and the Beas, what is generally termed as the Central Punjab of pre-partition days, was known as Kekaya. Nundo Lal Dey placed it between the Beas and Sutlej, apparently on the basis of the Ramayana24. This view is not supported by any other evidence. The Chhandogya Upanishad25 refers to its king Āśvapati who was the father of Sāvitrī, the paragon of ideal Indian women of ancient times. Kaikeyī, the third queen of Daśaratha and the mother of Bharata, in the Rāmāyaṇa was also a princess of Kekaya26. According to the Epic its capital was Rājaṅgṛha or Girivraja. Its identification is controversial27. The region finds copious mention in the Mahābhārata also28. Both Pāṇini29 and Putaṅjali30 refer to Kekaya. Later on it finds mention in the Purāṇas and other works like the Kāvyamimāṃsā of Rājaśkharaka which beyond the scope of the present study.
The *Mahābhārata* refers to the central Punjab region to the west of the Ravi as Vāhika or Bāhika. The *Rāmāyana* places it between Ayodhya and Kekaya. Both Pāṇini and Patañjali refer to it in their works. Its capital was Sākala, modern Sialkot in Pakistan that find prominent mention in several literary works, especially Buddhist. During the period of the Indo-Greeks it became a great centre of activity. It was here that Menander got converted to Buddhism. Since the Buddhist populace of the place sided with the invader, Pushyamitra Śunґa had to take stringent measures against the Buddhist monks of Sākala. Sometimes the term Vāhika has been confused with Vāhlika leading to a keen controversy regarding its identification. B.C. Law and D. C. Sircar have identified it with Balkh or Bactria. This seems to be the correct view in the light of the Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription and the description given by Kālidāsa in the *Raghuvamsam*. We think that the difference between Vāhlika and Bāhika should not be confused to take both of them as one. The latter term seems to be much later in origin.

Another name for the same region in the *Mahābhārata* was Araṭṭa. This term along with Bāhika was used in contemptuous manner in the great Epic probably because of a great social change that it underwent after the settlement of the Indo-Greeks in the region. We shall dwell upon it in detail later on.

Madra was another name given to the region between the Ravi and the Chenab. It is difficult to say whether the region got its name from the tribe of homonym or vice-versa. The Madras or the Madrakas were a very ancient Kshatriya people of the Vedic times who find mention in the Upanishads. Pāṇini as well as Patañjali talk of the Madrādeśa. Both the epics refer to them. Mādrī, the younger wife of Pāṇḍu, was a princess of Madra. She was the sister of Śalya who played an important role in the Mahābhārata war on the side of the Kauravas. The Buddhist literature, especially the Jātakas are also replete with references to Madra. The Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta places the Madrakas amongst the tribes which submitted to him on their own accord.

Amongst the tribes of Punjab several are mentioned from time to time. The Vedic tribes, some of which we have mentioned above, included Bharatas, Kurus, Trṣus, Krivis, Yakshus, Pakthas, Alinas, Bhalānas, etc. later on the Classical writers have also referred to a number of tribes at the time of Alexander. They included
Malloi (Mālavas), Siboi (Śibis), Porus (Puru), Cathians (Kāṭhas), Agalassoi (?), Oxydracae (Kshudrakas), abastanai (Ambashthas), Sodrai (Śūdras) and several others. They occupied small tracts of land in various parts of Punjab. Even later on we hear of tribes like the Yaudheyas between the Sutlej and Yamuna, Mālavas who originally occupied the region of Sauvīra in southern Punjab but migrated after the invasion of Alexander, Kunindas in the lower Himalayas, Audumbaras in the Pathankot region, Agras at Agroha-Hisar in present day Haryana and so on. These tribes played a significant role in the political as well as the cultural history of the region. Thus we see that geographically Punjab presents a colourful mosaic of the peoples, regions, rivers, mountains and expanding and retracting boundaries from time to time that have a significant bearing on its history.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Literary Sources:

There may be some controversies or dearth of materials for the political history of ancient Punjab but as far the social, cultural, economic and religious aspects of its history are concerned we fortunately have a plethora of literary as well as archaeological sources to fall upon for scientific study and reconstruction of the history of the land. For long it has been a standard belief of the Western as well as Indian scholars trained in European concept of history as an empirical science to negate the entire Indian literature with the dictum that the Indians did not have any sense of writing history. This may be true in the sense that we do not have any works like that of Herodotus but it would be erroneous to conclude that Indians did not have any sense of recording their past. Such a view emanated from the simple fact that Indians had an entirely different view of looking at life as compared to the Westerners. Instead of taking a mundane view of life as an impermanent feature where everything started and ended with it, Indians had a deeper philosophical view where life was a cycle that went on and on, where the physical shapes and existence may cease but the like the eternity of soul the cosmic existence continues. In such situation the events are taken as ephemeral and chronology becomes irrelevant. The need to write biographical histories thus obviously falls to the background. Yet Indians were neither oblivious of recording the facts of life nor were they indifferent to the time scale or the chronological orders. Only their method was different from
that of the modern concept of history borrowed from the West. The concept of the Akhyānas of the Vedic literature and Itihasa-Purāṇa is age old. Recently Romila Thapar has drawn attention to the historical content of the Purāṇas. This is a revival of the views of scholars like F.E. Pargiter, R.C. Hazra, V. S. Agrawala and others who have already dwelt upon the topic in detail. G. C. Pande has aptly remarked that ‘history refers to these inevitable vicissitudes which may be organized into epochs but which being cyclical preserve the perennial character of time. For this reason history tends to lose its uniqueness and tends to become illustrative’. It should be seen as a storehouse of wisdom of the Veda rather than ‘a collection of stock-tales’.

In the light of the above discussion it can easily be made out that despite of the difference of nature between the Western and Indian thought, India has had a rich literary heritage that serves as a significant source for reconstructing its past. Several scholars have fruitfully used the literary data to reconstruct various aspects of our past. However, it is a matter of concern that whatever has been written on the subject in the modern times is a confused mixture of the regional and national history as well as the chronological ambiguities. Though a detailed bibliography at the end of this study is sufficient to throw light on the sources of information, yet a brief discussion on the same shall be fruitful for proper understanding of the material handled by us for culling and analyzing the data in the regional context. It is more in the shape of a brief discussion rather than plain listing of the sources.

Amongst the literary sources, the Vedic literature forms the bedrock of information for the early period. Comprising of the four Vedas or Sanhitās, as they are called, the Rgveda, the Sāmaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, with their various recensions or Śākhās, they are perhaps the earliest literary works ever composed, though all of them do not belong to the same period of time. Only the Rgveda has the distinction of being the earliest literary work known to the mankind and is a product of Saptasindhu. By the time of the other three the civilization had considerably spread to include parts of the Gangetic plains and the regions down to Gujarat. But it appears that the major portion of all the Vedas as well as lengthy commentaries on them was composed in the land of the seven rivers. There are references that each of the Vedas had several recensions. For instance, the Mahābhāṣya refers to twenty one recensions of the Rgveda, 101 of the Yajurveda,
1000 of the Sāmaveda and nine of the Atharvaveda. The same is said in the Purāṇas also. However, most of them have disappeared with the passage of time. The Rgveda now has only one recension called Śākala with a few hymns of some others. Same is the case with the other Vedas. the Yajurveda has six, four of the Krśṇa- Yajurveda and two of the Śukla-Yajurveda. Three recensions of the Sāmaveda and two of the Atharvaveda are extant at present. The Saṁhitās are collection of hymns, prayers, incantations, benedictions, sacrificial formulae and litanies. Amongst these also the Rgveda has the knowledge of the songs of praise, the Atharvaveda has the knowledge of the magic formulae, the Sāmaveda has the knowledge of the melodies and the Yajurveda contains the knowledge of the sacrificial formulae i.e. prayer books for the sacrificing priests. Its white recension has only prayers and sacrificial formulae where as the black recensions contain beside the above, the presentation of the sacrificial rites and discussion on them. It looks more like the Brāhmaṇas or the commentaries on the Vedas composed at a later date. The Rgveda contains 1028 hymns divided into ten books called Maṇḍalas. Of these books II to VII are considered the oldest while the tenth Maṇḍala is considered to be the latest and sometimes a later addition. The Sāmaveda which has 1810 verses contains only 75 which are not from the Rgveda. The Atharvaveda contains 731 hymns having 6000 mantras in twenty books. The gods in this Veda are the same as in the Rgveda but now they become slayers of the demons in place of the simple nature gods.

The Vedas are considered to be divine revelation and hence are not attributed to any authors. They are Śruti in contrast to the rest of the literature which is known as Smṛti. Amongst the Vedas also the Atharva is not given the same sanctity as the other three collectively called Trayī. It is because the Atharva deals with gods ‘to appease, to bless and to curse’. As a source of history the Vedas provide immensely useful glimpses of the life and beliefs of the people who composed them. Since they were not written to be the histories like many of the modern works the information provided by them has no scope of any doubt, though their interpretation many a time by the modern scholars is coloured, misrepresented and misunderstood. For example, the early Vedic people of the Rgveda are often termed as ‘nomads and pastoral’ but there are clear instances in the work itself to indicate that they led a settled life with agriculture and industrial crafts being part of their routine. Another instance, usually associated with the question of the so-called Aryan original home is to term the
Iranian work Avesta as earlier than the Ṛgveda simply because the two have some common features. It has not been cared to examine who has borrowed from whom. Of late the trend is changing and the information provided by the Vedas is now studied afresh and reinterpreted. Again it has been rightly pointed out by V. C. Srivastava⁴⁹ that the earlier Vedic studies are incomplete in many respects and have to be thoroughly investigated and understood afresh.

Next to the Vedas are the Brāhmaṇas, which are voluminous prose texts, which contain theological matters, especially observations on sacrifice and the practical or mystical significance of the separate sacrificial rites and ceremonies. Each of the Vedas has its own Brāhmaṇas. Some of the important ones may be named here. They are Aitareya, Kaushitaki or Sāṅkhāyana of the Ṛgveda, Pañchaviṁśa and Jaiminīya of the Sāmaveda and Taittirīya and Śatapatha of the Yajurveda. The last part of the Vedic literature comprises the Āraṇyakas (literally the Forest Books) and the Upanishads (the secret doctrines). They were partly included or attached to the Brāhmaṇas but partly they are independent works. They contain the meditation of the hermits living in forests on the subject of God, the world and mankind and may be called the oldest works of Indian philosophy⁵⁰.

The age of the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads was followed by the age of the Sūtras. It has been most aptly described by Ram Gopal in the following words, “The stock of Aryan knowledge concerning rituals, customs, manners, etc., had accumulated by the close of the Brahmana period to such an extent that the preservation of the precious cultural heritage posed a serious problem. A need was, therefore, felt for such treatises as could compress the mass of cultural traditions in a manageable form. In order to accomplish this task the savants of ancient India invented a peculiar style of composition characterized by utmost brevity and rigid systematization.”⁵¹ A sentence composed in this peculiar style is called sūtra which literally means a thread. The works composed under this category are called Kalpasūtras because kalpa means ritual and they deal with rituals. They are divided into three categories viz. Śrauta, Grhya and Dharma respectively dealing with Vedic sacrifices, household ceremonies and customary law. Like the age of the composition of entire early Sanskrit literature, the period of the composition of the Sūtras is also debatable. But even the most skeptic minds have kept them earlier than the 5th century.
BCE, though the possibility of their being much earlier cannot be ruled out. Irrespective of this controversy it is admitted at all hands that they form a mine of authentic information about the socio-cultural ethos of the time when they were composed. All these works after the Vedic Saṅhitās need a cautious use by the scholars working on the history of the north-west India as by the time of the Sūtras the centre of Vedic activities had shifted from Punjab to the Gangetic plains. None the less Punjab continued to be the pious land of the Vedic lore in this period.

Next in the category of the sacred literature may be enumerated the two great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Mahābhārata attributed to Veda Vyāsa. Despite being encircled by a ring of controversies from their being pure myth or historic, the age of their composition, interpolations in both the works to even the plain descriptions in them, they remain fundamental to Indian culture of the masses to this day. Though the Rāmāyaṇa is generally assigned to the 5th century BCE, it being a pre-Buddha work is far more likely. Any date later than that would play havoc with the entire chronology of Indian literature. The accuracy of Vālmīki’s geographical knowledge alone makes this work as a mine of information about ancient India. However, the cultural data contained in the work provides excellent glimpses of the Indian culture. The Mahābhārata on the other hand is not a work of one time and expanded over a millennium roughly from the fifth century BCE to fifth century CE. But the centre of its story remains in Punjab and it contains a mine of information about all aspects of the Indian society in lucid details. The actual stories of the two epics may belong to remote past, long before they were composed but there is little scope to doubt their historicity and usefulness.

The sacred brahmanical literature required for discussion in the present study comes to an end here. The Purāṇas and the Dharmaśāstras being works of the post Mauryan period are outside the scope of present work and not discussed here, though we may use them at places where required. The Buddhist and Jain literature, especially the former, is equally useful source of information for the present study. The Tripiṭakas, Jātakas and even the later works like the Lalitivstara and Milindapañha have some bearing or the other on various aspects. For instance the last mentioned work that deals with the Indo-Greek invader Menander’s conversion to Buddhism in Punjab sheds important light on the socio-cultural scenario during that
period. However, as compared to the Vedic literature that was composed in the land under discussion the value of the Buddhist literature may not be so much. But some of the later works like those of Aśvaghosha, Kumārajīva and Kumāralātā may profitably be used when talking of Gandhāra in the north-west and its contiguous region of Kashmir. The Jātaka stories which deal with the previous lives of the Buddha as Bodhisattva are generally assigned to the Mauryan period. Many of them deal with the region of Punjab and provide a good peep into the society and culture of this region.

Next to the sacred literature are the technical works on etymology, grammar and polity. The first in this category is the Nirukta of Yāska that deals with the origin and meanings of difficult Vedic vocabulary. It is admitted on all hand that without this work it would have been almost impossible to understand the Vedas. Yāska has provided us an excellent picture of the Vedic culture in an unconscious manner and serves as a valuable source of information. The Ashtādhhyāyī of Pāṇini, a work on grammar that has made Sanskrit the most scientific language in the world has been assigned to the 5th century BCE by V. S. Agrawala though others place it as early as 7th century BCE. The latter view was propounded by scholars like Goldstucker, R. G. Bhandarkar, D.R. Bhandarkar, etc. from the contents of the work, it definitely appears to be of pre-Buddha period and may safely be assigned at least to the early 6th century BCE but the time of the 7th century BCE shall also not be too early for it. In any case, the Ashtādhhyāyī forms a mine of information about the society and culture of ancient times. Its additional value is that Pāṇini himself belonged to Śalātūra in the North-Western province of Punjab and had intimate knowledge of the society and culture of this region. He extensively used this knowledge for illustrating his work. Pāṇini was followed in the field of grammar by Patañjali who composed his famous Mahābhāṣya, a commentary on the work of Pāṇini in the early second century BCE. He was in the court of Pushyamitra Śūṅga and wrote at the time when the Indo-Greeks were making regular incursions in northern India. His work, like that of his predecessor, is a mine of information for the Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan periods alike. To the early Mauryan period also belongs the Arthasastra of Kauṭilya, composed sometime in the 4th century BCE. Its author, who was a professor of political science at the University of Taxila, was also responsible for the foundation of the Mauryan Empire under his pupil Chandragupta Maurya. He was not only the mentor of the latter
but in probability his prime minister. His work has remained to this day perhaps the best work ever produced on the statecraft. It provides a deep insight into various issues including the state administration, crime and punishment, position and rights of women, social divisions of the society and so on.

The last but not least amongst the literary works are accounts of the foreigners who either visited India from time to time or compiled their works on the information received from others. Amongst these the earliest are the Greek accounts of those who came here in the train of Alexander in the 4th century BCE. Amongst these were the authors like Aristobulius and Onesicritus. Of course the most popular and important was Megasthnes, the Seleucid ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya who recorded his observations during his stay in this country in his famous work the *Indica*. Though the work is lost in original but is extensively used by the subsequent Greek writers. Then there were the later writers like Strabo, Pliny, Curtius, Arrian, Justin, etc. whose works have been edited, translated and used by scholars like J. W. McCrindle, W. H. Schoff, G. Rowlinson, R. C. Majumdar and several others. The Geography of Ptolemy and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea by an anonymous navigator are also extensively used as sources of information for Indian history. These along with the later works of the Chinese Buddhist travellers like Fa-Hsien, Hsuan Tsang and I-Tseng who visited India from the Gupta period onwards have generally been assigned the value of gospel word by early historian, without ever caring to check the authenticity of their contents. It has been conveniently forgotten that the accounts of these writers were often based on second-hand information, gathered by foreigners unfamiliar with the history, culture, language and literature of this land. They often recorded whatever was conveyed to them often by ill-informed people by way of story-telling. There are numerous instances in each of these works that would not stand a close scrutiny of the statements made in these works. Moreover, the geographical location is also not applied to them while using their information. For instance, the Greek accounts about the prevalence of the custom of Sati in India are at the time of Alexander’s invasion are quoted ad nauseum without checking the facts or verifying them from the Indian sources. What has been said of the Catheans was probably a practice in some Central Asian or extreme north-western region but it has been applied to whole of the country. Even the writers like Herodotus drew their information from Central Asian sources that were far from being authentic. In recent
years a word of caution has been given by scholars like Klaus Karttunen and U.P. Arora in this regard. The literary accounts of the foreigners must be used with great caution and only when verified by the indigenous evidence. They at best can form corroborative evidence and not the primary source of information by themselves.

Archaeological Sources:

The above survey of the literary sources for the reconstruction of the history of Punjab makes their significance self evident. It also brings to fore the fact that there is an abundance of these sources for an investigator of the socio-cultural history of the land to which they belong. However, one does not fail to notice that all these sources are known for a long time and there is no new addition in the recent times that may add to our knowledge. There use is confined only to analysis and reinterpretation of the data. On the other hand the same cannot be said of the archaeological sources. There have been fresh discoveries almost continuously in the last two centuries that have not only shed valuable fresh light on the history of Punjab both in the proto-historic and historic periods but some of them have been epoch making. These discoveries continue to be made and there is still abundant scope for fresh archaeological finds to be made. It has been pointed out by the eminent historian Romila Thapar that “significant new evidence on the early periods of [Indian] history is more likely to come from archaeological data than from literary sources”. The remark cannot be more true to any other place than Punjab as the following survey shall indicate.

The archaeological evidence has played a vital role in the reconstruction of history of the region. Alexander Cunningham had done some pioneering work in the field in the nineteenth century itself. He has given scientific accounts of his laborious surveys of several places of archaeological interest in Punjab in his Reports. Rodgers, as also some other archaeologists and explorers, also did some useful work in archaeology of Punjab in the 19th and early 20th century. Historic sites like Taxila were excavated in early 20th century by archaeologists like John Marshall that revealed rich Buddhist heritage of the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the beginning of the Common Era. In the post-1947 period A. H. Dani has done some commendable archaeological work in various parts of Pakistan in collaboration with the French, Italians and the Japanese. But the path breaking
discoveries were made in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century when the sites of Mohen jo-daro on the right bank of the Indus in the Larkana district of Sind and Harappa on the left bank of the Ravi in the Montgomery district of Punjab were discovered and excavated by R. D. Banerji and Daya Ram Sahni respectively in 1921-22 under the overall supervision of Sir John Marshall. The two sites yielded the evidence that started an absolutely new chapter in the hitherto known history of India pushing it back by about two millennia according to the beliefs of modern historians of the time. The excavations here brought to light the remains of two sprawling cities with fortifications and all amenities of urban life highly advanced for their age. Further excavations at these sites were subsequently done by archaeologists like M. S. Vatsa, E. J. H. Mackay, R. E. M. Wheeler and others. It was just a beginning of a new chapter in the archaeological history of the Punjab. Several new sites belonging to the same culture that has been named as Harappan Culture after the name of the first discovered site or called the Indus Valley Civilization as the concentration of early finds was on the banks of the Indus and its tributaries were soon discovered and excavated. Chanhu-daro some 130 km south of Mohen jo-daro was the next to be discovered in 1934 and fully excavated by Mackay in 1943. It was followed by the discovery and excavations of sites like Amri, Balakot, Kulli, Nal, Nausharo, Kot Diji, Damb Sadaat, Kile Gul Muhammad, Mehrgarh, Rehman Dheri, Jalilpur, etc. all in the present day Pakistan. This list is neither in the chronological nor geographical order of discoveries. It is because of the fact that the number of sites discovered beside these is so large that it is not practical within the scope of this discussion to dwell upon all of them. However, the commendable efforts of archaeologists from across the world in last nine decades have immensely added to our knowledge. Though important works of some of these have been listed in the bibliography, yet the names of scholars like J. M. Casal, G. F. Dales, B. De Cardi, S. Durante, F. A. Durrani, W. A. Fairservis, M. A. Halim, J. F. Jarrige, J. M. Kenoyer, F. A. Khan, J. R. Knox, R. H. Meadow, M. R. Mughal and several others must be mentioned for their contribution to the field on the Pakistan side of the Indian Subcontinent. Amongst these the work of Jarrige at Mehrgarh and Nausharo has pushed the cultural antiquity of the region to the eighth millennium BCE. M. Rafique Mughal has meticulously surveyed region along the Pakistan side of ancient Sarasvati what is now called Ghaggar-Hakra thus bringing to light a couple of hundred sites of the Harappan period. Amri was excavated by Casal,
Balakot by Dales, Rehman Dheri by Durrani, Quetta and Zhob area by Fairservis and Sarai Khola by Halim all of them adding fresh knowledge in the field.

After the partition of India all the known sites of the Harappan Culture went to Pakistan and no work had been done on this side. The fresh efforts of the post-independence archaeologists in India proved to be very fruitful as today we have an equally large number of sites on this side of the Subcontinent as on the other. Ropar (now Rupnagar) was perhaps the first Harappan site on the left bank of Punjab that was excavated by Y. D. Sharma in mid-fifties of the last century. It was followed by the discovery of Bara near Ropar by the same archaeologist, which got name with a distinct identity as the Bara-culture belonging to the late Harappan period. Bhagwanpura in Punjab was excavated by J.P. Joshi in 1975-76. Mitathal in the present day Haryana was excavated by Suraj Bhan in mid-sixties and in the same state Banawali by R.S. Bisht, Rakhigarhi by Amrendra Nath, Balu by U.V. Singh and Suraj Bhan and Kunal by J.S.Khatri and Madhav Acharya were excavated. The yield has always been very rewarding. In very recent years some more sites like in Haryana like Bhidrana have been undertaken for excavations. Explorations along the Ghaggar and ancient bed of the now lost Sarasvati by Suraj Bhan and others have yielded the same results what Mughal got along the Hakra bed. The late Harappan culture was also discovered from Mahorana and Sanghol in Punjab. Amongst the sites of historical period in the Indian Punjab Sanghol and Sunet stand foremost. The former has yielded Buddhist remains of the Kushâna and Gupta periods and the latter antiquities such as coins and coin-moulds of the Yaudheyas. Likewise Agroha, Khokrakot, Naurangabad, etc. in Haryana have brought to light material remains of the historic period. Though strictly speaking outside Punjab, a reference to important Harappan sites in Rajasthan and Gujarat is a must. Thus Kalibangan (B. B. Lal and B. K. Thapar), Lothal (S. R. Rao), Dholavira (R. S. Bisht), etc. have been epoch making discoveries that now serve important source of archaeological information. Any scientific historical study would remain incomplete without taking due note of these archaeological finds and corroborating them with the information gathered from the literary sources, many a time the former becoming independent or the only source of information.

CHRONOLOGY: PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS
Till the coming of the Europeans in India in the seventeenth century, there never was a problem either about the beginning of the Indian history or its authors. The question of the origin of Indian civilization never arose in early Indian minds or even in those of the ancient Persians and Alexandrian Greeks and later on with the Arabs, Turks and Afghans who came to India from time to time. Indian civilization was simply taken as a continuum since the beginning of the human race. But the new conquerors of the land inquisitive of the past of the people over whom they had established their supremacy started their own investigations and study. Trained in the empirical way of the study of history and led by political exigencies they started looking for the past of this country beyond its borders and came up with the question that involves the concept of Indo-European race and language. Sir William Jones for the first time in 1788 declared a genetic relationship between the Sanskrit language and the classical Greek and Latin, hinted at the same origin for Gothic and Celtic and also suspected the same for Old Persian. The idea perhaps emanated from the existence of a complicated linguistic mosaic in India where several of the spoken dialects were not related to each other and did not seem to originate from Sanskrit. Thus with the view that Sanskrit belonged to the family of Indo-European or Indo-Aryan languages in contrast with the indigenous Dravidian group of languages arose the theory of the Aryan race, a people of foreign origin who migrated to India in remote past and settled down in the land of Saptasindhu from where they spread to other parts of the Subcontinent. The Rigveda was taken to be their earliest composition and assigned to the middle of the second millennium BCE. This theory was further coloured in various hues and gradually infused in the Indian minds throughout the 19th century. Thus it was Max Muller in the middle of the 19th century who attempted to fix the date of Aryan migration to India in c. 1500 BCE and suggested the date of 1200 BCE for the composition of the Rigveda. His theory was questioned even at that time by European scholars like Goldstucker, Wilson and Whitney forcing him to withdraw the same in 1890 when he admitted that “Whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000, 1500 or 2000 or 3000 B. C., no power on earth will ever determine”. Despite of this clear admission, the idea of Aryan as a race and the theory of their invasion and settlement in India got so deeply embedded that most of the educated intellectuals were not prepared to even give a second thought to it. Thus the imperialist version of Indian history continued throughout the 19th and in early
decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century till the discovery of the Harappan civilization. The new discoveries created a problem as the Aryans were portrayed as the people who had come from outside and settled here to develop the first civilization in Punjab. They were rural invading pastoral nomads who lived in villages and gradually took to agriculture. In contrast to these the inhabitants of the newly discovered civilization were termed as urban people involved in developed trade and commerce used to the comforts of the city life. To overcome the problem of the relationship between the two it was now professed that the authors of the Harappan culture were original inhabitants of the land who were defeated by the invading Aryans and pushed to the south of the Vindhyas. So the Aryan Dravidian divide was created. The Aryans were portrayed as fair skinned, tall with sharp features, who went about destroying cities inhabited by aboriginal populace called the dāśas or anāryas. The latter were dark skinned with blunt features who spoke Dravidian languages not related to Sanskrit of the Indo-Aryan group. Though the evidence to prove these theories is not only controversial but contrary to the fact, yet they have been repeated, followed and believed to be the only true picture. However, with the changing historical perspective in the last couple of decades debate has started on this complex problem and a strong section of historians and archaeologists have questioned the racial character of the so-called Aryan, the date of the Vedas, specially the Rgveda, and have suggested new relationship between the Vedic people and the Harappans. Even those like Kenoyer\textsuperscript{63}, Bryant\textsuperscript{64}, Thapar\textsuperscript{65}, Trautman\textsuperscript{66} and others who are opposed to the equation of the Harappans with the Aryan have conceded to the fact that these are debatable points. On the other hand there is strong group of scholars who does not support the theory of Aryan migration/invasion, their racial character and even the Dravidian Aryan divide in the Harappan and Vedic cultures. Soon after the discovery of the Harappan remains Lakshman Sarup challenged the views of Marshall and Mackay and said that it was the Vedic civilization of the Atharvavedic period\textsuperscript{67}. As a deep scholar of the Veda trained in the Western ways of scientific investigations he further said that there was no evidence that Aryans were not indigenous people. His views were shared by others like M. S. Vats and K. N. Shastri, notwithstanding the views of celebrated writers like Sri Aurubindo\textsuperscript{68} and Dayanad Saraswati\textsuperscript{69}. The views of the latter have been dubbed as those of ‘philosophers and politicians’\textsuperscript{70} where as a complete silence has been maintained about the views of seasoned scholars like
Lakshman Sarup and M. S. Vats by the ‘professional historians’[71]. However, dissenting views continued to come forward but were generally ignored or suppressed. It was about three decades back that a strong opposition to the established imperial views arose and the scholars like B. B. Lal[72], S. P. Gupta[73], David Frawley[74], Koenraad Elst[75], E. Leach[76], N. Kazanas[77], S. Kak[78], Bhagwan Singh[79], G. C. Pande[80], G. F. Dales[81], etc. came up with the arguments thus completely demolishing the established theories. Since it is not possible to go into the details of their arguments and discuss the entire problem with the framework of the present study, we shall try to answer the most important issues in a summarized form as follows.

When was the Rgveda composed? Who were the authors of the Rgveda? What is the meaning of Aryan? Were they indigenous people or migrated from outside? What is the relationship and chronology the Rgveda and the Harappan culture? These are the major questions to be answered. We have already referred to the view of Max Muller, who initially put the date of the Rgveda in 1200 BCE but withdrew his claim in 1891 in the face of severe criticism[82]. He had based his hypothesis on the presumption that the Sūtras were contemporary of the Buddhist literature and giving roughly 200 years each to the Upanishads, Brāhmaṇas and the Vedas from 600 BCE backwards shall get a date between 1200-1000 BCE. Winternitz aptly remarked long time ago that “Max Muller’s hypothetical and really purely arbitrary determination of the Vedic epochs in the course of years received more and more the dignity and the character of a scientifically proved fact, without any new arguments and actual proofs having been added. It became a habit to say that Max Muller had proved 1200-1000 B.C. as the date of the Rgveda”[83]. In contrast to this Tilak proposed a date of 6000 BCE on the basis of astronomical data and Herman Jacobi suggested 4500 BCE[84]. Others have proposed dates between these two extremes[85]. Other arguments advanced for the purpose of a late date (1200 BCE) are based on the linguistic basis of the similarity and the common origin of Indo-Aryan languages; the contents of the Boghaz-koi inscription wherein some Vedic gods like Mitra and Varuṇa are mentioned; and the similarity of contents between the Zend Avesta and the Rgveda[86]. None of these has any definite proof and the evidence varies widely. But a section of scholars is still not prepared to yield. For instance, Romila Thapar admits that the date of the Rgveda cannot be positively determined but insists that the date of the rest of the Vedas is definitely not earlier than 1000 BCE and assigning an early date to the
Rgveda shall create a ‘chronological hiatus between the first and the later three Vedas’87. She does not explain as to how the dates of the other three Vedas remain ‘firm’ in the first millennium BCE. This argument is as absurd as that of Max Muller. The answer to this actually should be sought in the contents of the Rgveda. It becomes crystal clear when its data is compared with that of the Harappan remains. We shall shortly revert to this point.

Coming to the question of Aryan and the authors of the Rgvedic culture, again the colonial psychology still prevails. There is no prima facie evidence to show that it belonged to an alien people who had come and settled down in this land. The word Aryan is used in the Rgveda in contrast to Anārya or dāsa or dasyu. But it is never used in the sense of a ‘race’ or a ‘people’. It simply means ‘cultured’, ‘well-mannered’ ‘elite’ etc. and is contrasted with those who lack these qualities88. Once the racial character of the Aryan is discarded most of the force of the Aryan Invasion Theory is lost. Yet, it may be pointed out that the geographical region known to the authors of the Rgveda is confined to the land of Saptasindhu with some extension towards Afghanistan in the west and Ganga-Yamuna in the east. There is not remote reference to some ancestral land from where the early Vedic people may have migrated, be it the Scandinavian region, Russian Steppes, border land of the Black Sea, North Pole, Tibet or Central Asia. One may pertinently question as to what happened to the memory of these conquerors who just blackened out their glorious past? The situation warrants only one answer that the authors of the Rgveda knew only the region of Saptasindhu of which they were the original inhabitants. Some of them might have migrated towards the west at a later stage and took their cultural traits and language with them89. Now comes the question of the Vedic-Harappan relationship. There is a general consensus that the first depicts a rural set up and the second was mature developed urban culture. Now, if the Vedic people were barbaric nomad invaders90 with rural background, how come they were not attracted towards the superior advanced material culture of the Harappans when they came to Punjab? Why it took them so long to adopt to the city life that they must have found readily available after the so-called conquest of the original inhabitants? What happened to the original inhabitants of the Punjab now that the theory of the Mohenjo-Daro massacre has been completely demolished? If the Harappans were pushed to the south, how is it they did not carry their culture and skills with them. We do not have a
single Harappan settlement in the south. There are no answers to these questions by those who profess the foreign origin of the racial Aryans coming to India in the middle of the second millennium BCE. It may be added here that archaeologists have not found even a single site that may have been called early Vedic. Why? Did Vedic people leave no material remains behind them? The answers are available but are only to be seen and admitted. Now we have numerous sites in the entire region of the Saptasindhu where evolution from rural to urban is traceable. For instance, Kunal in Haryana. It is a rural site of the pre-Harappan period with signs of development towards urbanization. The favourite terms for them are pre-Harappan (even pre-pre-Harappan), early Harappan and so on. No effort has been made so far to see in them the rural culture of the Rgvedic period in them. Now that scores of similarities between the Vedic culture and the Harappan culture have been noted by scholars at Kalibangan, Dholavira, Kunal and other places the affinity of the two should not be doubted. Moreover, the most revered river in the Rgveda is the Sarasvati, the easternmost river of the early Vedic people. It dried up at the end of the second millennium BCE due to some volcanic-tectonic upheavals in its catchment area that led to the abandonment of hundreds of sites discovered along its dried up bed in the present day Ghaggar-Hakra. These are clear evidence of the oneness and continuity of the Vedic-Harappan what has rightly been termed is the Sindhu-Sarasvati civilization. Once we accept this hard situation warranted by the available evidence, the entire problem of chronology evaporates in thin air and provides us the only viable solution. Thus to us first came the Rgvedic civilization that continued in the later Vedic period called by the archaeologists as the Indus civilization or the Harappan culture. That was followed by the historic period of history from the time of the second urbanization onwards. This was the period of the Sixteen Mahājanapadas or the Age of the Buddha which saw flourishing state of Gandhāra in Punjab region. It was at this time that the Persians tried to make inroads in Punjab by invading and conquering some areas in the North-West in the 6th-5th centuries BCE. Their conquest was short lived. It was followed by the Macedonian invasion of Alexander in 326 BCE that prepared the ground for the foundation of the grand Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta, who according to one tradition belonged to Punjab, studied at Taxila under Chāṇakya and became emperor with the later’s help. In any case his conquest over Selucus Nicatore expanded the boundaries of Punjab towards north-west to
include some of the provinces of Afghanistan. But what is more important for our study is the introduction and spread of Indo-Greek culture during this period.
Notes and References:


2. Thapar, Romila, India: Historical Beginnings and the Concept of the Aryan, Preface.

3. Mbh. Sabhaparva, 32.11; Karnaparva, 45.

4. Vishnu, 38.12, Agni, 109, etc.

5. Studies in Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 332 ff.

6. Arth. II.2.

7. X.75.


9. Rgveda, 3,200,

10. JAOS, 3,311.

11. JRAS, 1883, 371.


15. VIII.24.27.

16. Vendidad, I.73.

17. I.1.1.

18. Pratisarga Parva, Part I, Ch. 5.

19. RV. 1.126.18; AV. 5.22.14; SB. 12.4.1.

20. 4.3.93


22. The main story of the Epic revolves around these characters and the references are too numerous and too well-known to be quoted in detail.

23. Vayu, 99.9; Matsya, 48.6.


25. 5.11. English tr. By Ganganath Jha, 1942, 60.

26. II, 68, 19-22; VII, 113-14; I, 69,7; II,71,18, etc.
For details see Bharadwaj, O.P., *Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India*, 108-114.

II. 48.13; VI. 61 12; VII.19.7.

7.3.2.

7.2.3.

Sabhā. Ch. 27, Karna, ch. 44. Etc.

Ayodhya. 78. Also see Bharadwaj, O.P., *op.cit.*, 97-98.

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4.1.176; 4.2.131; 4.2.108.

1.1.2; 1.3.2; 2.1.2, etc.


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For detailed discussion and references to these views see V. S. Agrawala, *op.cit.*

For details see R. P. Kangle’s *Kautilya Arthasastra*, 3 Vols. Or R. Shamashastri’s *Arthasastra of Kautilya*.
For details see Agrawal, Ashvini, ‘Sati – How Old? How Indian?’ in the Haryana Sahitya Akademi Journal of Indological Studies, II.

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Vedic Samskriti, 33-44; The Dawn of Indus Civilization (Up to 600 BC), Vol.I, Pt. 1.

The Mythical Massacre at Mohenjodaro, Expedition, 6 (3).


Ibid., 295-296.

There are some exceptions who go even up to 7000 BCE or suggest a date of 40,000 years ago for the Rgveda. Such views have been justly ignored on scientific grounds.


Ibid.
