Introduction
INTRODUCTION

The period c 600 B C to 320 B C has been specially chosen for the micro study mainly because it is comparatively rich in materials available, both, in archaeology and literature. The period also marks the process of political fusion culminating in the first ever great empire of ancient India. It has been the prosperity of this period that seems to have allured Alexander of Macedon in Greece to cast a greedy eye on the land and its people towards the close of this period. From the geographical point of view, as well, the region of northern India had been the hub of political, economic and cultural activities.

Archaeological materials from the excavations in the northern India had been taken into account by earlier scholars, but, such earlier attempts had their own drawbacks*, particularly in two respects. First, earlier works generally present an overview in relation to time and space. Secondly, since the time of earlier works more materials have come to light. Though literature relevant to the period have been exploited to bring out the life and conditions of the people with occasional support from archaeological finds but complete synthesis is still a need.

* For details see page no 3
The present research has been undertaken with the aim and objective to make a microscopic study which may reveal a better understanding of the material life of the people in respect of their social outlook to be gleaned from the use of pottery, housing and other articles of use in daily life. Detailed analysis of pottery of this period to be made in order to arrive at the nature of food habits, the likes and dislikes and the social status of the people. The method of agriculture will be another important area of investigation to be made from the available data, direct or indirect. House plans, permanent or temporary, and fortifications and moats needs to be analyzed to understand the preferences in the style of living and the level of urbanization of the period and the region. The analytical study of arts, crafts and industry will also be an interesting area which has to be done mainly on the basis of terracotta, bone ivory and stone objects. Technological knowledge and its application as manifest in the use metals, i.e., copper and iron as well as other materials has to be gauged to understand the extent, the social implications and the skill of craftsmen of the time. Closer study of punch marked coins in situ from the region in this period must be attempted to make out the level of economy in respect of trade and commerce.
Earlier Works

The material life of northern India in c 600-320 B.C. has not been studied to the extent the Indus civilization has been done. Cunningham,\(^1\) perhaps, provided the first and the most satisfactory background to work on early Indian settlements. He identified the mounds and the sites with settlements mentioned in various texts. Though many of Cunningham's identifications have now been abandoned, but he was successful in providing a historical framework for research to identify the urban settlements of historical India. The book written by Mehta\(^2\) covers almost all the social, political and economic aspects of the pre-Buddhist times. But his work is based on literature, mainly Buddhist, which were written, in point of time, much later than the life time of Buddha. Banerjee\(^3\)'s book mainly deals with origin, use, objects and technique of iron besides the other objects recovered in the Ujjain excavations. He was possibly the first scholar who used some literary texts to correlate the different aspects in the making and use of iron objects found. The biggest asset of Ghosh's\(^4\) book in which he has made a scholarly attempt with complete awareness of both textual and

\(^1\) Cunningham, A., 1924, Ancient Geography of India, Calcutta
\(^2\) Mehta, Ratilal N., 1939, Pre-Buddhist India, Bombay
\(^3\) Banerjee, N. R., 1965, The Iron Age in India, New Delhi
\(^4\) Ghosh, A., 1973, The City of Historical India, Shimla
archaeological sources. The analytical and unorthodox approach to the interpretation taken by him gives an altogether different result which is probably more convincing and satisfactory than that which has been achieved before. But the work apart from being extremely compact does not provide much information about material life. Like Mehta, Jain's\(^5\) book also deals with every aspect. But he seems to pay little attention to the objects recovered in archaeological findings and concentrated more on written sources, mainly the Jain Thakur's\(^6\) book unlike Jain's paid more attention to the archaeological finds rather than literature. Sharma's\(^7\) book has two interesting chapters on the material development of northern India, but the approach is lopsided. Singh's\(^8\) book covers different aspects of material life of ancient Varanasi on the basis of archaeological findings and their proper interpretation in the light of existing written sources. The book written by Roy\(^9\) covered nearly the whole of northern India during the period c.600-200 B.C. and is more of a catalogue of archaeological findings. Thus far, no attempt has been made by any scholar to encompass the material life of the whole of northern India during the period under review and at the same synthesize the archaeological findings with literary sources. All

\(^5\) Jain, K C., 1974, *Lord Mahavira and His times*, Delhi
\(^6\) Thakur, V K., 1981, *Urbanization in Ancient India*, New Delhi
\(^7\) Sharma, R S., 1983, *Material Culture and Social formations in Ancient India*, New Delhi
\(^8\) Singh, B P., 1985, *Life in Ancient Varanasi*, Delhi
studies have been done based either on archaeological findings or on literary evidences. Moreover, after Singh no attempt has been made to deal simultaneously with textual and archaeological data. This has particular significance for our period of study for putting the available data in their proper perspective.

**Archaeology of Northern Black Polished Ware**

Archaeologically, the period of c 600-320 B.C. of Northern India is generally known as Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) culture, which is nearly lustrous black in colour on both sides. It was first discovered by Marshall in 1911-1912 A.D from Bhita excavation. This discovery of pre-Mauryan levels at Bhita drew the attention of several archaeologists but unfortunately at that time it did not find universal acceptance and no one was ready to push its date preceding 300 B.C. Later, again Marshall reported more pieces of NBPW from the lower strata of Bhir mound at Taxila. But, he regarded these sherds as a kind of “Greek Black Ware” and was not sure whether these were imports to Taxila or a local product. In the excavations at Ahichchnatrd in 1940-1944, it also did not provide enough ground for extending the date of the site beyond B.C. 300 (as stated above), although...

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10 Annual Report *Archaeological Survey of India* 1911-12 pp 37, 80, & 81
11 Marshall J 1951 *Taxila* Cambridge vol II p 432
sherds of NBPW were found in the earliest levels. This was the status of NBPW till 1945. In 1946 an up to date list of the distribution of the ware was published by Krishan Deva and Wheeler\textsuperscript{12}. This list contained the names of eighteen sites most of them from the middle Ganga Valley. For them the occurrence of NBPW below two hoards of punch marked coins, dated to c.300 B.C. at Taxila was important in defining the duration of ware from c 500-200 B.C.

In post-independence era our knowledge of the material culture of the period under research has been immensely enriched by the excavations of NBPW sites. This pottery is wheel made and of thin fabric and is painted. It is believed that it was a prized commodity. Because of its specialty it was characterized as “Deluxe pottery”. The stratigraphy and chronology of this ware at Hastinapura,\textsuperscript{13} excavated in 1954-55, provided the final confirmation. Until now nearly six hundred\textsuperscript{14} NBPW sites have been reported, but most of them are explored. A good number of NBPW sites have also been excavated. Some among them were excavated continuously for several years while others were

\textsuperscript{12} Deva Krishan and Wheeler, M.R E., 1946, “Northern Black Polished Ware" Appendix A in Ancient India, No. 1, Delhi, pp. 55-56.

\textsuperscript{13} Lal, B B., 1954-1955, Excavations at Hastinapura and other explorations in the Ganga and Sutlaj basins, Ancient India, Nos. 10-11

\textsuperscript{14} Sharma, R S., op cit p. 105 (Sharma wrote, exact number is 584)
excavated and re-excavated. In Rajasthan, the noteworthy sites are Ahar, Bairat, Nagari and Noh, whereas, Ropar, Sugh, Autha Sanghol and Rajakaran ka Qila are in Haryana and Punjab. in Madhya Pradesh, Ujjain, Nagda, Awra, Eran, Besnagar, Kayatha and Tripuri. In the Upper Ganga Valley the important sites are Kanauj, Sravasti, Atranjikhera, Alamgirpur, Ahichchhatra, Jakhera, Khalua, Kaseri, and Hastinapura. Mention may also be made of some sites of the middle Ganga Valley, the important sites taken up for excavation were Ayodhya, Champa, Buxar, Prahaladpur, Rajghat, Takiaper, Narhan, Pataliputra, Sonpur, Vaisali, Rajghat, Chirand and Jhusi.

Out of these as many as over four hundred fifty sites\textsuperscript{15} are located only in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. However, the spread of the NBPW sites outside northern India are even further northwest beyond the Indus at places such as Charsada near Peshawar and Udegram in Swat, southern part of Madhya Pradesh, Amravati in Maharashtra, Sisupalgarh in Orissa and even Tilaurakot in Nepal. But they have generally yielded very few sherds of this deluxe pottery. The nuclear zone of this ware is generally considered to be the middle Gangetic plain, roughly corresponding to eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{ibid} , Thapar, B K , 1957, \textit{Ancient India}, Vol 13
Stratigraphically the date of this ware is given to range between c. 600 B.C - 200 B.C.\footnote{Ghosh, A and Panigrahi, K C, 1946, "The pottery of Ahichchhatra District Bareilly, U P.,", Ancient India, No 1, pp 55-56} But later, Roy\footnote{Roy, T.N., 1986, \emph{op.cit.}, p.93} in 1986 divided Iron Age in three phases i.e. early, middle and late. He placed early and middle phases from c. 800 B.C to c. 300 B.C and the late phase of iron age or late phase of NBPW to start around 300 B.C. Sharma\footnote{Sharma, R S, \emph{op cit}, p. 91.} in 1983 on the basis of archeological discoveries divided NBPW into two broad phases, i.e., 600 B.C. – 300 B.C and 300 B.C. – 100 B.C. Archaeologically, the first phase is marked by occasional use of tiles and burnt bricks, evidence of mud structure and floor, use of punch-marked coins, NBPW sherds and bronze to a smaller extent. Evidence of the use of iron, copper, animal and human figurines along with discs of terracottas, and plenty of bone, ivory and stone objects also forms the usual repertoire. But in the second phase we have the evidence of prolific use of NBP pottery, more punch-marked coins, plenty of terracotta, more iron tools, burnt bricks structures, and evidence of more tiles and ring-wells etc.

\textbf{Nature of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit Texts}

We have few literary texts, which can be placed between c 600 – 320 B.C. The Brahmanical sources which mainly comprise the \textit{Dharma sutras} (law books), the \textit{Grihya sutras} (book dealing with
domestic rites) and the grammar of Panini can be supplemented by the early Buddhist and Jain texts. The chronological position of these sources can be fixed only roughly. The principal Dharma sutras have been assigned to the period 600-300 B.C\(^{19}\) These sutras show a grammatical freedom, which is hardly conceivable after the period of the influence of Panini\(^{20}\), whose grammar has been assigned to the middle of the 5\(^{th}\) century B.C\(^{21}\). The law book of Gautama is believed to be the oldest Dharma sutras\(^{22}\) But its mention of yavanas\(^{23}\), as born of sudra females and kashtriya males show that its contents underwent great revision in later times. To the period 600-300 B.C. may also be assigned the principal Grhya sutras\(^{24}\) which have been characterized as the most authentic reports on the daily life\(^{25}\) of the people. In Buddhist sources viz the four collection of Suttas (dialogues), i.e., the Digha, the Majjhima, the Samyutta the Anguttara\(^{26}\) together with Vinaya pitaka\(^{27}\) may be roughly ascribed to the pre-Mauryan period. But it is more difficult to

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\(^{19}\) Kane, P.V., 1941, *History of Dharma sutra*, Poona, vol II, pt I, p XI


\(^{21}\) Agarwala, V.S., 1953, *India as known to Panini*, Lucknow, p. 475

\(^{22}\) Kane, P.V., *op.cit*, vol I, p. 13.

\(^{23}\) Gautama Dharma sutra, IV. 21

\(^{24}\) Kane, P V., *op.cit*, vol II, pt I, p XI


\(^{27}\) ibid
fix the date of the canonical texts of the *Jatakas* in which the *gathas* (verses), constitute the oldest stratum. At the same time, even the stories of the past, which are in the form of commentary in prose may be put in pre-Mauryan period, nevertheless, the present stories occasionally seem to reflect conditions of pre c.320 B.C and are clearly later additions.

About the Jaina sources we have even more chronological uncertainties. It is held that canonical works were first compiled somewhere towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century B.C. But dealing as they do with life of Mahavira, they may be utilized for condition prevailing in pre c.320 B.C.

There can therefore, be no difficulty in accepting facts attested to by the above-mentioned sources. But the remarkable difference between the canonical literature of the *Brahmanas* and that of the *Buddhist* and the *Jain* is that the former is couched in savant’s language, while the *Buddhist* and the *Jain* texts, in Pali and Prakrit languages respectively exhibit some advance from Brahmanism. They reflect equality and democracy in their monastic organization and theories of the state. The texts of the *Buddhist* and the *Jain*

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29 Law, B.C., 1933, op. cit., p. 30
attributed to the teaching of Buddha and Mahavira, reflect the contemporary social outlook. The numerous imageries and depiction of cattle rearing indicate the material life that developed in pre c.320 B.C. This explains why the Pali and Prakrit works acquaint us with popular life more than the Sanskrit. Because of this, there is a general tendency to discard the Brahmanical works in favour of the Buddhist texts\(^1\), as pointed out by Rhys Davids. The same is true of the Jain literature.

From geographical point of view, the texts of the Buddhists and the Jain described the state of affairs in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar\(^2\), while the Brahmanical texts were mostly written in the region which are today called upper Indo-Gangetic doab, and the states of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan\(^3\). These Pali and Prakrit texts can be considered in conjunction with the grammar of Panini, which is the most valuable source of information for pre c.320 B.C. Its picture of social and material life is more reliable because its grammatical rules have been explained with the help of illustrations. Of course, Panini's work is more relevant to the Indus basin but the general trend of developments in northern India, known from the texts cannot be ignored\(^4\). In spite of that,

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\(^1\) Rhys Davids, T.W., 1935, *Dialogues of the Buddha* vol I, p 286
\(^2\) Sharma, R S, *op cit*, p 90
\(^3\) *ibid*
\(^4\) *ibid*
material life of the people is to be sought in people's literature. Fortunately such popular literature is not altogether wanting and they are preserved in diplomatic, dynastic and military records. Nevertheless, they could not completely escape the tempering of compilers idealistic motives.

Comparative Analysis of the Archaeological and Literary Sources

There are different views among scholars about the comparative value of the archaeological and literary evidences. Archaeologist like Wheeler\textsuperscript{35} suggested that the search for literary evidence in support of archaeological data has a great risk. Piggot\textsuperscript{36} says that the literary and philological evidence is a dangerous ground full of quick sands and pitfalls. Gordon\textsuperscript{37} condemns literary sources for history writing while Kosambi\textsuperscript{38} goes to the extent of saying that "archaeology alone can supply any reliable data for the study of ancient culture".

The above views of scholars make it very clear that archaeologists like Wheeler, Piggot, Gordon and historian like Kosambi were too obsessed in favor of archaeological findings. They do not want to mix it with the literature. But here, too, there

\textsuperscript{35} Wheeler, R E M . 1947, "Harappa 1946 the defences and cemetery R 37" Ancient India, vol III pp 81-82
\textsuperscript{36} Piggot, S . 1950, Prehistoric India to 1000 B C London p 241
\textsuperscript{37} Gordon, D H . 1958, The prehistoric Background of Indian culture, Bombay p 2
\textsuperscript{38} Mishra, D P . 1971, Studies in the Proto-History of India, New Delhi, p 102
are shortcomings. Most of the excavations have been vertical in nature and have not laid bare as a whole the culture of the period of NBPW, with which we are particularly concerned here. Further, the absence of detailed reports of excavations in some cases stands in the way of a full utilization of whatever material is available.

Unlike the earlier scholars, Srinivasachari^ identifies the archaeological evidence with the dry bones of history and, he further says, that only a correct sequence of occurrence priority and posteriority in point of time can be judged through the writing materials related to the period of study. Similarly, according to Sankalia，“In a country like India which has got very-very ancient traditions preserved in the Puranas, the two Epics and Vedic literature, one should not overlook such possibilities, even though a large number of scholars would regard the Puranas and the Epics as purely imaginary. I think that this work, much inflated do contain an element of truth and particularly the list of the dynasties and other essentials should be true and approximate to truth. It is in this way that we can give some form to the Puranic dynasties, whereas our potteries may be given some individuality”.

Literary sources alone are inadequate for writing the history of the period under research. Hence, the importance of archaeological

^ cf Jain, K C, 1979, Prehistory and Protohistory of India, New Delhi, p 294

^ Sankalia, H D, 1974, Prehistory and Protohistory in India and Pakistan, Poona, p 281
evidences, which are not only more prolific but also more reliable. As a professional historian we must take cognizance of both these sources and collect data with a proper and critical analysis. The exclusion of literary evidence would mean restriction of culture only to the external manifestation of man's activities ignoring the mental and moral make up.

The present work is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is titled as Introduction. It deals with the contents which rims in these pages. Chapter two titled as physical features and political history of northern India between c. 600 – 320 B.C.

Food and food production discussed in chapter third. It deals with vegetarians and non-vegetarians food habits of the people of the time along with the method of production of different grains. Sources of irrigation, too, have been the point of focus as an essential ingredient of agriculture.

The fourth chapter architecture, the nature and construction of houses, wall, roof, floor, besides the use of bricks, hearths and ovens, sanitary arrangements, privies and soak-pits, ring wells drains, street/road. Discussion on moats and fortifications of some important cities of the period, as well, is given due consideration.

In chapter five I have discussed the use of various objects in daily life and their technology. Made of metals like iron, copper
and silver, bone and ivory and stone the technology involved in the
making of the objects has been worked out. Terracotta objects such
as animal and human figurines and discs are also included as
objects of material life. Different industries of potteries, the
technique of their making and their proper use have been discussed
in detail.

In the final chapter an attempts has been made to sum up and
resolve the issues raised in the preceding chapters.