ABSTRACT

Domestication has played an enormous role in the development and progress of mankind and its material culture. In fact, a domesticated animal was the first pride possession of man. The fundamental distinction between domesticated animals and their wild ancestors is that the former, as a result of human perseverance and labour on them, underwent sea changes in their habits, habitats, disposition and to some extent even in physical structure so to meet the specific requirements and even whims of humans in different strata of their existence.

The study of animal remains throws ample light on the antiquity of humankind by establishing different species of animals domesticated by man at different stages of his existence and as such the studies of faunal remains constitute a major discipline to the field of archeology with the slightly modified nomenclature of archaeozoology or zoo-archaeology. The discipline of archaeology, apart from identification and interpretation of food refuse and other types of animal remains from archaeological contexts, addresses issues relating to prehistoric subsistence, palaeo-environmental conditions, process of domestication of different species of animals, season(s) of occupation and the roles played by different species of animals, domesticated or wild, in the social, economic and cultural life of humans in different regions. As such, the study of animal remains has become an increasingly important part of archaeological research.

Harappan civilization located in the north-western region of Indian subcontinent was the oldest and largest civilization of world. Ironically, it came to light, that too accidentally while laying of a railway line between Karachi and Lahore, just about a century ago. Social, economic, cultural and other facets of Harappan life were reconstructed by scholars, initially, on the basis of seals, sealings, figurines painted motifs on pottery and other evidences recovered archaeologically from different Harappan sites, but since then faunal remains have started attracting greatly the attention of scholars engaged in the field of archaeology and as such present study too aims to concentrate on the animal remains of Harappan culture.

The present research was tailored to assess the role of animals in the economic and social life of Harappan people and thereby to reconstruct the social, economic and cultural fabrics of the Harappan society. In addition to aforesaid aspects, the study throws light and enables understanding of geographical and climatic conditions together with environmental complexes of the Harappan civilization on the basis of archaeological evidences in general
and archaeozoological remains in particular. Further, archaeologically recovered bones provide us valuable dating material of Harappan times that affords more reliable stratigraphic reconstruction of cultural sequence.

The study further investigated the diet, dietary habits, modes of transport, trade, commence, and other occupations of the people and the role played by different animals in these spheres of life of the people of Harappan civilization.

A range of other topics, such as living conditions, migration of men and animals from one site to other, differential access to protein resources etc. which cropped up during the course of the study were also taken up. Above all, as the understanding of the processes that resulted in archaeological faunal assemblages increased, so increased the ability of the researcher to interpret ancient human cultures through the animal refuse. As such the present study widens the horizons of understanding and enlarges the frontiers of knowledge about Harappan civilization and its faunal life.

Analysis of faunal remains is a documentation of interaction between man and animals in the given cultural setting of Harappan civilization. The objective of the study was to find out the relationship between Harappan people and their animals. The aim of the research was to conduct, on the one hand, a region wise comparative study, and on the other hand, a study of the composite Harappan civilization on the basis of archaeological material and archaeozoological remains. The primary objective of the study was to reconstruct the animal based economy and social life of the Harappans.

It is from the study of reports on faunal material obtained from representative sites covering the entire domain of Harappan civilization that the importance of herd animals has been reconstructed and the available information on faunal remains has been interpreted. The trends of bio-archaeological information from urban sites, permanent sites and small rural sites were studied and this differentiation has helped in understanding the role of subsistence economy at different levels of Harappan society.

The archaeological and archaeozoological remains of animals, existent in Harappan civilization, were studied from research papers, excavation reports, and unpublished research works. The archaeological studies initiated by R.B.S. Sewell and B.S. Guha (1931), and B, Prashad (1936) at sites namely Mohenjodaro and Harappa respectively were perused in depth with regard to Harappan animals. In addition, the researcher has tried to explore the plethora of literature available in different libraries of the region and accordingly the research has attempted to rebuild the realm of social, economic life of the Harappans.