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RESEARCH ARTICLE

VERIES CITIES OF ANCIENT INDIA : AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY

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Abstract

Despite finding the scholars being divided in their opinions, the glorious antiquities of ancient India still continue to grow in stature since time immemorial. The rudimentary remnants of hoary tradition and a journey from the ancient, original and enriched nature of Indian culture to Gupta Dynasty with a passage through the epic age amply vouchsafes the very purpose of the article. With the subdivisions of historical ages, the cities in the Indus Valley Civilization with particular emphasis on the twin cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro along with some cardinal Archaeological credentials as well as discoveries have also been amply highlighted. In addition to that, archeologists, anthologists and ancient historians to the calibre of Sir John Marshall, Hieun Tsang, Daya Ram Sahni, Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyaya, Nani Gopal Mazumdar, E.J.H. Macky together with excavation samples, carbon analysis, pictograph, inscriptions, numismatic testimonies, different chronological references documented the erstwhile town planning, metropolitan civilization, societal pattern, rituals till the approach of the Aryans. The age of Rgveda and Mahabharata with the historical evidences of Epic cities like (1) Hastinapur, (2) Indraparastha, (3) Girivraja, (4) Mathura, (5) Dwarka, (6) Mahismati (7) Pragjyotishpur, (8) Prabhas, (9) Ayodhya, (10) Mithila have been cited alongside. Henceforth the article aims to allude the noteworthy references from Cities in the Period of Sungas & Guptas in reference of the populaces like Puruspur, Sakala, and historically famous provinces like Uttarapatha (including kandharpart) - Taxila, (2) Avantariratha (western part) - Ujjayini, (3) Dakshinapatha - Suvarnagiri, (4) Kalinga - Tosali (Orissa) (5) Prachya, Prachina, Pras - Pataliputra. Thus with a renewed mission of rediscovering ancient India in light of the scientific skill and neatly organised enterprise of the erstwhile civilization, the article tends to delineate contemporary town plans, granaries, ports, tradings and prosperous populaces.

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Introduction:-

When India was under colonial rule, it was commonly held by, a section of scholars, mainly British and their native disciples, that civilization in India had emerged at a later date. In deep it was assumed by some scholars that civilization had been brought from outside by Aryan tribes. Frequent mention was made of the isolated nature of ancient Indian culture, and its backwardness in relation to the cultures of other Ancient countries of East. Indeed, the

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discovery of Indus civilization has proved those scholars wrong and their conclusion motivated. The discovery and study of the Indus civilization provided ample and striking proof of the ancient, original and enriched nature of Indian culture.

Before going is to further deliberation, the following points are to be clarified here-

- (1) The subdivisions of historical ages in the context of the Indian history would be as follows:
 - i) from paleolithic age to the age of early Rgveda proto-historic age;
 - ii) from early Rigveda to Goutama Buddha's birth, i.e. approximately c. 568 B.C. to pre-historic Age;
 - iii) from c. 568 B.C. to c. 467-68 A.D., i.e. the probable year of Skandagupta's death, the time period of some thousand years, the 'Ancient Age';
 - iv) from 468 A.D. to 1526 A.D. 'Medieval Age';
 - v) from 1526 A.D. to present time 'Modern Age'.
- (2) The second point to be borne in mind is that 'Ancient India' means the traditionally known, from the time immemorial, country name 'Bharatvarsa', which includes the present day Kandahar Province of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.
- (3) Though, initially Indus civilization was assumed to be confined in the Indus valley only, the present day archeological research, has revealed that Indus civilization embraced an enormous territory, stretching over more than 1,200 kilometers from north to south and 1600 kilometer from to west to east. That is to say that Indus civilization is found to be spread over the entire northern India and to the south up to the Godavari valley and it is spread over almost entire Pakistan including the North-West Frontier Province. The modern day archaeologists have proved successfully that the Indus valley civilization is not confined into the Indus valley only, on the contrary, it spread over about 2 million sq. kilometers (i.e. 20,00,000 sq. kms.).
- (4) The present day archaeological excavation and research have shown that the Indus civilization is not only indigenous, but it also continued over a vast span of time (more or less 1500 years, from c. 3400 B.C. to c. 1900 B.C.), and it had not met a sudden death from some mythical invasion of so called Aryan tribes. The hypothesis of invasion by Aryan tribes has proved to be sheer nonsense.
- (5) Though our scope of discussion is restricted to the Ancient cities, for better understanding we may also refer to the prehistoric era to include the discussion on cities of valley.

Cities in the Indus Valley Civilization:

The existence of large cities and a carefully defined system of town planning and architecture point to high level of development attained by the Indus civilization. Archaeologists have discovered a number of major cities this civilization, of which perhaps the largest are the twin cities Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Mohenjo-Daro occupied an area of approximately two and a half square kilometers, and its population has been estimated at not less than 35000 to 40000, although some scholars have come forward with larger figures, as high as a hundred thousand, i.e. one lakh of people.

Chronology:

Sir John Marshall, who is called the father of Indian archaeological studies, assigned the seven building periods of Mohenjo-Daro to c. 3250-2750 B.C., with a rider that a thousand years must have taken for the Indus civilization to attain maturity by 3250 B.C. On the other hand, Mackay held the view that the life span of the Indus civilization was from 2800 B.C. to 2500 B.C. but thought that the life span of the Indus civilization city at Harappa was 1000 years, from c. 3500- 2500 B.C. it is Mortimer Wheeler, who quite Motivaedly, gave the time bracket, c. 2500-1500 B.C. for the Indus civilization with a view to see that the end of the Indus cities coincided with their garrulously much propagated hypothesis, the supposed Aryan invasion. Subsequently, however, on the basis of carbon-14 tests and dendrochronological tests of the Indus civilization towns and other sites have established the dates of different sites, and thus we have found that the Indus civilization has not perished suddenly in a certain short span of time bracket, viz., 1500 B.C., on the contrary, the Indus civilization has from c. 3400 B.C. (Mehrgarh-chacolithic and kot-Diji I) to 1200 B.C. (Late Prabhas period -III).

Discovery of the Twin Cities:

The first reference to Harappa, though not recognized as a site of the Indus valley civilization, was by Charles Marson in 1826 A.D. He mentions in his travelogue, "a ruinous brick castle having remarkable high walls and tower spoiled by the ravages of time and decay". Next came Alexander Burnes in 1831 A.D. the first archaeologist to visit Harappa was Cunningham 1831 A.D. 1853 A.D. and 1856 A.D. He excavated the site but identified it was as 'P-fa-to-Lo' visited by Hieun Tsang and published the plan and seals in 1875 A.D. But, the actual scientific and

methodical excavation was made at Harappa by Daya Ram Sahni in 1921 and by Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyaya at Mohenjodaro in 1922. At both the sites large brick buildings, several antiquities including seals inscribed with a 'pictorial writing' were found and both of them held that it is a civilization as old and as great as the Mesopotamia had come to light in the Indus valley. After Rakhal Das Bandyopadhyaya, Nani Gopal Mazumdar undertook the charge of excavation at Mohenjo-Daro. But Sir Jhon Marshal and E.J.H. Macky unflinchingly filched the findings of Sahni, Bandyopadhyaya & Mazumdar and added to that the findings of their part of the excavation since 1924 and at last published sumptuous reports, Marashal in 1931 and Mackay in 1938 A.D.

However, whatever, may be the history of the Historiography of the discovery of the twin cities, one striking feature of Indus civilization has struck every one, that the Indus people were advanced in their town planning and they were able as well as very fond of building well fortified and planned cities which are quite larger cities of the world that time. Almost all the excavations of different sites of Indus civilization revealed that the culture of Indus people was largely Metropolitan culture and they loved to build large and well planned Metropolises. Though they may be chalcolithic civilization, yet they were not dependent on agriculture only. They were very fine artist and very good shipbuilders and they were accustomed to Maritime trading with foreign countries too. The excavations at Lothal and under marine archaeological expedition under the able leadership of Dr S.R. Rao at the sea-coast of Dwarka shows that they have well planned ship - building factories and Maritime Coastal Ports, both at Lothal and Dwarka sea coast.

City Plans:

So far, the archaeologists have under too mobold hundreds of excavations in different sites in the Indian Sub-continent to unearth the Indus civilization in and to understand its salient features and culture thereof. To judge by these excavations the urban centers of the Harappa civilization were all based on a similar plan. The large cities consisted of two principal parts: citadels where the city's authorities would reside and the so called lower city where dwelling house were concentrated. This latter part of city was usually built in the form of a cangle. The citadel would be built on a high brick platform raised up above the rest part of the city. This platform also provided projection against flooding, one of the most dreaded natural disasters that used to be fall the cities of the Indus valley. Contacts between two parts of the city were evidently of limited scope in Kalibangal, for example excavations revealed that there were only two entrances linking the citadel with two 'lower city'. In surkotada the citadel was separated from the lower city by a fortified rampart.

The separation of Harappan towns and cities into citadel or acropolis and lower town was deliberately introduced in order to enhance the prestige of the ruler. The citadel at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were seats of Governments. Among other significant structure at Harappa a doublerange of barrack-like dwellings and five rows of granaries standing on a raised brick platform are important. Seventeen dehusking platforms found near the granary at Harappa suggest employment of labour living in the nearby barracks. At Mohenjo-Daro the granary lies within the citadel. The enormous water tank (width 7 meters; length 12 meters; depth 2.5 meters) was found in the citadel at Mahenjo-Daro. There were public and private bathrooms in both the cities. There were well planned roads with elaborate drainage and sewerage drainage and sewerage system are the unique feature of the Harappan Towns.

A town of an original plan was unearthed at Lothal (Saurashtra-Gujrat) which was not only a trading center but evidently a port as well. It was surrounded by a stone wall and the dwelling house were arranged on a special plat from in order to protect them in case of flooding. In the settlement there was a ship-yard (218 meters x 37 meters) which was linked via canals to the thence the coast of the sea. Excavations revealed traces of one canal over two and a half kilometers in length. The remainder of the town consisted of dwelling house. The main streets were between four and six meters wide and the narrow side-streets were no more than two metres across. There were craftsmen's workshops lining the main streets. Even in chalcolithic Malwa, Eranwas a fortified town and Navdatoli had built up jetty for bertting boats. The port-city of Dwarka was not only fortified but also larger than Mohenjo-Daro. Unfortunately much of the port city Dwarka lies buried in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Kutch, yet it is found at Dwarka and Inamgaon jetties for berthing sea going boats were built. Eran and Dwarka continued the Harappan tradition of fortifying the town. The trading community of the Indus civilization established large unban settlements in the midst of rural ones. In the late Harappan period the settlements were small and scattered but gradually large town ship such as at Dwarka, Prabhas, Atkot and Rangpur up in Gujarat. Such is the case in Rajasthan, Punjab and western U.P. too. There are the baths and drain, ware house or granary and occasionally a fortification too. As already, laid down in above the ancient most cities India are several in numbers, but most famous were Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Kalibangal, Rangpur, Banawali, Lothal, Dwarka, Prabhas.

The approx dates of the cities referred above are under:

Harappa	-	from C. 3500 B.C. to C. 2500 B.C.
Mohenjo-Daro	-	from C. 3100 B.C. to C. 1900 B.C.
Kalibangal	-	from C. 3100 B.C. to C. 1900 B.C.
Rangpur	-	from C. 2000 B.C. to C. 1700 B.C.
Banawali	-	from C. 2250 B.C. to C. 1400 B.C.
Lothal	-	from C. 3000 B.C. to C. 1600 B.C.
Dwarka	-	from (?) to C. 1400 B.C.
Prabhas	-	from (?) to C. 1200 B.C.

There are several more numbers of cities, whose accounts cannot be laid here for want of and time. But, it is interesting enough to note that several of those cities had kept their existence and importance intact through the 'Epic Age' and 'Ancient Age' of the India and still through resurgence revived their existence in our present-day India. The startling example of this observation are Dwarka, Prabhas and Ropar (Punjab) etc.

Epic Age Cities :

Now, we can step forward to the 'Epic Age' of Mahabharata or we may say the Age of Rgveda and Mahabharat. We are aware of the facts that there is controversy over the so called 'The Aryan Question'. For many decades scholars have disputed 'Aryan questions', trying to decide when, where and how the Indo-Aryan tribes came to India. The questions as to the original home-land of the Aryans is also a subject of controversy, we are not going to add any more fuel to fire, for that would not help us to understand our current subject. We can only say that so far archaeological excavations are not as vigorously undertaken in the sites of important cities as those are referred in the Rgveda or in the epics. That is, perhaps, happened for the sites of those cities are somewhat still remained as important human habitation, as is the case of Hastinapur and Indraprastha where still remains the cities in their resurgent forms, the modern time's Delhi and New-Delhi. Yet, of course some efforts, have been made to unearth the Ancient cities of Epic Age by archaeological excavations. But, those efforts have not yielded results in a such glaring form as in the case of Indus civilization. A little is known about their actual time period or Town planning. However, of course, some facts about the Epic Age cities have come to light. In any discussion for Epic Age cities, name would come to the mind of any the first Indian, are: (1) Hastinapur, (2) Indraprastha, (3) Girivraja, (4) Mathura, (5) Dwarka, (6) Mahismati (7) Pragjyotishpur, (8) Prabhas, (9) Ayodhya, (10) Mithila. There are many other cities too.

Indeed, it may be stated that a upsurge in city and town building had come to that age when hundred, of small and large towns were built as capital city, trade-centre cities, Holy cities for pilgrims and so on and so forth. However, as already told that the cities mentioned in the Rgveda and the Epics, are still the places of importance. But archaeological excavations were made at too few sites. Archaeological excavation had been under taken at 'Hastinapur' site led by Dr. B.B. Lal some years ago.

To judge by the result of that excavations and findings thereof, the city of Hastinapur was abandoned by its inhabitants between the eleventh and ninth century B.C., as a results of flooding (perhaps by the change of course by Yamuna River). These facts show us that the date of its founding and developing or actual planing of the city cannot be ascertained for sure now. Though some scholars try to these facts with the date provided in the Mahabharata. It is revealing to note that it was commonly accepted in ancient Indian writings that the battle of Kurushetra the beginning of the New Age or New Era. The Panchala and Kuru tribes which according the epic were the strongest and most influential, list their political and the some then states of Eastern India appeared on the political arena, in particular Koshala (with its capitals in Ayodhya and Shravasti); Kashi (capital Varanasi), and Videha (capital Mitila). To the south of modern Bihar there arise the mighty state of Magadha (capital Girivraja and later Rajagriha and now Rajgir) and to the west Avanti (capital Ujjayini) and to the further East Pundravardhan the capital city of Pudradesh and Pragiyotishpur or Shonitpur the capital city of Kamrup. In later Vedic literature there are references to the division of the country into three parts: (i) Aryavarta - the northern kingdoms; (ii) Madhydesha - the middle kingdoms; and (iii) Dakshinapath or Dakshinatya - the southern kingdoms. There are also references in some literatures to a division of five parts - the northern lands, the middle-eastern-southern lands and the western lands. The archaeological and other information about the Epic Age cities and Towns are so scanty that their actual geo-position, or planning are hard to find in present days yet, the cities and towns referred above are somewhat precisely located so far and it is interesting to find that all most the towns are still throbbing vigorously as human habitats and

hubs. The cities of proper Ancient Age of Indian history are competitively well located and are still the important towns of Indian in a resurgent form.

Cities of Ancient Age: (From 600 B.C & 600 A.D. Approx.)

The tradition of urbanization of important places had fully flourished in the Ancient Age of Indian history; i.e. approx 600 B.C. to 600 A.D. and it is period when somewhat written evidence or inscription on rocks or copper and bronze Plates are available along with the travelogues and diaries of foreign travelers in Indian. It is found that from the time of Buddha a good numbers of new cities emerged in the different parts of India, besides the large cities of the Epic Age. Of course, some cities of Epic Age were either ruined or derelict and some others were either degraded or lost their importance, such as Hastinapur or Mahismati. But, the majority of the Ancient most cities like Rajagriha were very much in vigor and fame. But, more and more new towns were coming in existence: In 'AbhidhanappadipikaAlvavi' finds a place in a list of twenty famous cities; of course Alavai is a new capital town of kingdom which is referred as 'Chanchu' by Hiuen Tsang and the list of referred twenty cities is as below: (1) Baransl, (2) Savatte (Sravasti), (3) Vesali (Vaisali), (4) Mithila, (5) Alavi, (6) Kosamchi, (7) Ujjeni (8) Takkasila, (9) Shampa, (10) Cagata, (11) Sumsumaragira; (12) Rajigaha, (13) Kapilavatthu, (14) Saketa, (15) Indapatta, (16) Ukkatta, (17) Pataliputta, (18) Jettuttara, (19) Samkassa, (20) Kusinara.

Actually, we learn from the Mahavagga that king Bimbisara's dominions embraced 80,000 (Eighty thousand) townships. Of course all of these townships were not equally famous or large enough to earn fame, and we know that Bimbisara dominions was Buddha's contemporary and his domains did not include much of the Dakshinapatha. While the numbers of townships as well as cities were growing gratuity with the growth of powers of the MagadhanKindom, the new names in the list of cities and towns were added to the subsequent gazetteers. It is impossible to deal with all of them. But a virtual conceptual change had occurred with the Macedonian invasion of north-western India. From the Greek accounts of India we came to know some other larger and important cities such as 'Kapisi', i.e. 'Kapisha' at or near the confluence of Macedonian invasion we got some actual point of Indian historical geography of the Ghoraband and the Panjshir from the chronically of that contemporary period. Alexander crossed the Hindukush for the second time and advanced against the small kingdoms of north western India immediately adjacent to Afghanistan in May, 327 B.C. The king of Takshasila (Taxila, near Modern days Rawalpindi in Pakistan) showed Alexander his eagerness to help Alexander in his expedition. These all are history, soon, after Alexander's death Chandragupta Maurya ascended the throne of Magadha in approx. 322 B.C. During Nandas the capital of Magadha was shifted to Pataliputra from Rajigraiha. Now Pataliputra become the seat of Magadha emperors and we find the views of large cities very clearly. In the period of Mauryas their empire exile over the whole of India including Dakshinatya, but probably excluding present day's Assam i.e. Kamrup. The extension of the empire started from Chandragupta Maurya, but attained its Zenith at the time of Asoka the Great and we find that a good number of larger cities have spotted all over India. In the south there came the city of Kanchipuram, Mahisur, Madurai and other cities. In the north the famous 'Sringar' in Kashmir, in the east-port city Tamralipta, and Pundranagar etc. are the good example township turned into cities in the Maurya period, especially the Asokan period. In the time of Asoka, the vast expanse of the Maurya Empire was divided into five great division, rather, provinces, viz.: Name of Province & Capital City are (1) Uttarapatha (including kandharpart) - Taxila ,(2) Avatriraththa (westrn part)- Ujjani, (3) Dakhahinapatha - Suvarnagiri ,(4) Kalinga - Tosali (orisya) (5) Prachya, Prachina, Pras- Pataliputra (Pataliputra was the capital of the empire too).

Consequently, those above five cities were the larger cities amongst the huge numbers of cities. Besides, being the capital of Uttarapatha, Taxial was a world famous education center of that ancient time, with its Campus University accommodating more than 10,000 students of different disciplines and their professors and mentors were the residential professors. Perhaps, in that period another two cities took into shape: One is Bodhagaya the old city Gaya is extended uptoBodhagaya and give it a new shape; and the other is the Nalanda the most famous residential University in India and East Asia. One more salient feature we must attend during the time of Maurya Empire the important cities had a well thought out plans and fine architectural aesthetic beauties. A distinctive feature of life in the Magadha and Mauryanperiods was thus can be stated as the periods of the growth of cities and towns, which were becoming centers of craftsmanship and trade, although a large section of the population still lived in the villages.

Archaeological findings show that the most rapid expansion of cities & towns took place between the sixth and third century B.C. That was the time when urban fortifications were built and town planning was underway, although towns differed sharply one from another, Pataliputra was built in the shape of a Parallogram, Kausambi in the form

of a trapezium, shravasti was rectangular in shape and Vaishali was rectangular. The town was biggest in size and had the largest was the imperial capital Pataliputra, According to data quoted by Megasthenes, who lived in the capital, have occupied an area of over twenty-five square kilometers. If these data are taken as reliable, Pataliputra must be regarded as one of the largest cities of the world in that ancient time. Alexandria was only a third the size, and well-known Indian city of Kausambi- the capital of the state of Vatsa was eleven times smaller. Megasthenes wrote that in the Imperial capital there were 570 towers and than more sixty gates led into the city. The main building material was still wood. It was only on rare occasions that stones were used. Even Asoka's Royal places were made of wood, as excavations have shown. Wood was subjected to special pressing that preserved it from be clay in the course of many centuries. When the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien arrived in Pataliputra (near modern Patna) six centuries after the reign of Asoka he was quite amazed by the grandees building and wrote that it must have been but by gods, rather than men. The techniques used to preserve the wood and the building methods have made a deep impression on archeologist who first started investigating the remains of the royal place at the beginning of nineteenth century. Craftsmanship also achieved a high level at this time, particularly weaving, metal working and Jewelry. The finest fabrics were held to be cottons woven in the cities of Varanasi, Mathura and Ujjayani.

Cities in the Period of Sungas&Guptas:

In the periods of Sungas and Guptas following the down fall of Mauryas have also added to list of in townships in India. In the Sunga period apart from the existing cities two more prominent cities have come into the hall of fame. Both the cities are at present in Pakistan. One of those two cities is Purushpur, i.e. present day's Peshwar in North-western province of Pakistan and the other one is Sakala, the present Sialkot in west-Punjab of Pakistan. Then came the great age of Indian history, the age of Gupta kings. The Gupta period is often referred as the golden period of Indian history. As in the time of Asoka, almost the whole of India, empire period of Samudra Gupta including Dakshinapatha has come into the ambit of Gupta and Chandra Gupta -II cities and towns were sprouting allover India especially in Deccan. The chief cities of the empire were: Pataliputra, Vidisa, Ujjaini, Tamralipta, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Pundranagar, Kamrup, Kanchipuram, Mashishur etc. as in the cast of Maurya period. But the striking new feature is that at this stones and bricks (burnt-bricks) are widely used along with wood. And for guard against the Hun invader very thick Mudwall of mixed with grinded morum and gravels were used as the outer protective wall of cities and town and citadels too. After Guptas decline in the end of C. 600 A.D. virtually there came a recess in the processes of city and town construction we is apparent from the historical Accounts.

Conclusion:-

Cascading down the unremitting passages of history with a journey from Ancient Indian polity to post independent Indian democracy, we discover the perennial truth that such a generous, philanthropic and bias free Constitution would have remained a far cry had it not been laid upon a fortified past with an inviting acclamation to the rest of the world, "*Shrinwantuvisweamritasyaputraha*", "*Bhumi mata, ahamputra prithivyah*"....i.e. the world is but a family, earth is the progenitor, humanity stands out to be the progeny and regardless to that Absolute Truth, 'we, the people of India' are inextricably woven with one another with a gelled up spirit of Universal Humanism. A journey from the ancient, original and enriched nature of Indian culture to Gupta Dynasty with a passage through the epic age amply vouchsafes the perennial truth.

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