

# ***Migration of Harappan people from Indo-Sarasvatī Plain to Indo-Gangetic Plain***

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Initially, Sarasvatī was the lifeline of Harappan Culture, but with its disappearance the people of Harappan civilization shifted eastward to the Indo-Gangetic plain. The fact is corroborated by the discovery of late Harappan sites in the region. Actually, they shifted to Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doab*. Accordingly, Sarasvatī was replaced by Gaṅgā as the primary river of Late Harappan culture and the civilizations there after. The Harappan civilization expanded from Indus-Sarasvatī plain to Indus-Gaṅgā plain. This is supported by the *Mahābhārata* which mentions the important *tīrthas* in India of which many are situated on the bank of river Sarasvatī<sup>1</sup>. Later in Anuśāsana parva, Bhīṣma mentions several *tīrthas*, most of which lied on the bank of river Gaṅgā<sup>2</sup> and Sarasvatī is scantily recalled. This indicates the growing popularity of Gaṅgā and decline of Sarasvatī which was drying and transforming into the great desert of the modern Thar. The people living there along the course of Sarasvatī were naturally compelled to move away from the banks of the dying river. They searched for another shelter and found it in the plains of Gaṅgā and its tributaries. This region attracted them for its very fertile land and pleasant weather conditions with plenty of rain. By about 1500 BCE the people of Harappan civilization shifted to the Gangetic plain and Sarasvatī was completely lost by then. Heap of sand buried its channel beneath it.

Geographically, this area is quite conducive and fertile because of the sediments brought from the Himalaya, also well-covered with the perennial rivers from the Himalayas. Agriculture was found to be profitable, people once settled here did not migrate to other place. The life was quite easy in comparison to the semi-arid conditions of north-western India.

The civilization of Gangetic plain including its tributaries is a continuation of the old civilization of Harappa is evident from the fact that many of the cultural elements like Archaic Mother Goddess of Harapan civilization continued in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doab*. The traditions of the Harappan culture continued in this second phase and the same can be traced easily. The civilization flourished, as the area was geologically less active and the rivers flowing in this land did not change their course frequently like Sarasvatī barring the river Damodar and Kosi in Bihar. In fact the Gaṅgā has been flowing since very beginning and has never randomly changed the course. Consequently the life in this area was quite peaceful and this helped in the development at a fast pace and many new gods and goddesses also emerged.

The Harappan people moved eastward is also evident from some new locations

of Harappan culture found in Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doab*<sup>3</sup>. This migration already started when Sarasvatī was still there, but was drying up slowly and the area was getting converted into the desert.

There is ample evidence to prove that the Harappan communities were among the pioneer colonizers and farmers of the *doab*. This is supported by a number of finds, like Harappan Red Ware, typical Harappan artefacts like terracotta cakes, cubical clay dice, animal figurines, faience bangles, steatite and semi-precious stone beads, and inscribed objects, including an Indus sealing with three signs of the Indus script from Hulas. Similar things have also been obtained from Almgirpur, Mandi etc. Infact a list published in 1984<sup>3</sup> mentions 31 Mature Harappan and 130 Late Harappan sites in the *doab*, mainly clustered in its northern segment. None of these sites is as old as the Early and Mature Harappan sites of the Sarasvatī valley, Mohenjodaro and Harappa. This find reinforces the concept that Harappan people migrated eastward with the disappearance of Sarasvatī.

There are no cities or towns found so far in the *doab* of the kind that existed in other Harappan regions. The rural Harappan life is best revealed at the sites in the *doab* because of the high fertility of the soil here. In fact there are several patterns specific to the Harappan settlements in this region. There is a high concentration of sites in one regional pocket; 93% of Mature Harappan sites and 76% of the late Harappan sites are clustered in and around modern Saharanpur, the northernmost portion of the *doab*, around Yamunā and its tributaries.

To the west of Saharanpur, beyond the Yamunā, lie the Karnal and Ambala district. Here more than 70 late Harappan sites are located. However, as one move down the *doab*, south of Saharanpur district, towards Muzaffarnagar and Meerut, the sites progressively decrease in number, may be due to the area being not well explored.

This shows that Saharanpur region was an important Harappan settlement and an important trade route traversed through this area. It moved along Yamunā, towards Vikasnagar and Kalsi, to reach the Himalayas. This region was important initially also as Sarasvatī emerged from this region of Himalaya and later on Yamunā robbed off the water of Sarasvatī.

Thus it can safely be concluded that with the disappearance of Sarasvatī, the Harappan people migrated eastward to the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doab* and were among the first settlers in the region. Initially, they followed the course of Sarasvatī and were concentrated around Saharanpur, later on they moved to the whole of the *doab*. Only future researches will tell whether Harappan people later on moved to eastern Uttar Pradesh and beyond or not.

### **References**

1. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 80.118.
2. *Mahābhārata*, Anuśāsanaparva, 26.34.
3. Nayanjot Lahiri and D.P. Sharma, 'Harappan Settlers of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab', In: *Indus Civilization Sites in India: New Discoveries*, D.K. Chakrabarti (ed.), 2004, 52-56.