1. Introduction

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines archaeology as the study of cultures of the past, and of periods of history by examining the remains of buildings and objects found in the ground. This branch of knowledge studies human activities in the past through discovery and analysis of remains left behind. Archaeology in India has proved to be an important tool for reconstructing history of ancient India. Archaeology has helped in connecting different periods of...
Archaeological Heritage Of The Hissar And Bhiwani Districts: From Earliest Times To Gupta’s

The state of Haryana is historically very rich from earliest times. Although, the word ‘Haryana’ is hardly a millennium old, this land has highly been eulogized as the cradle of civilization, where on the banks of Saraswati, Drishadwati and Apaya was kindled the sacrificial fire. As it is stated in the Rigveda:

वि त्या दये वर आ पृथिव्या इक्ष्यास्यपदे सुदिवाल्ये अह्नाम्।
द्रुष्टक्ष्यां गानुश आप्यायां सरस्वत्यां रेवदन्ने दिदीहि।।

“I place you in an excellent spot of earth on an auspicious day of days: do you, Agni, shine on the frequented (banks) of the Drishadwati, Apaya and Saraswati rivers.”

The state of Haryana is very rich in archaeological heritage. The first tool making man ventured the areas of foothills of the Shiwaliks and Aravalis which are parts of the state of Haryana. The vast and highly fertile alluvial plains of Indus-Saraswati basin frequently attracted a large number of early nomadic tribes to settle in and around the present day Haryana. These tribes were farming communities and with the progress of time many centres of Harappan Culture developed in the state. Some of these centres developed as planned urban settlements. Though, the historical records of earliest times to Gupta period of Hissar region are very scanty, we have to rely on archaeological sources at our disposal for the reconstruction of the early history of this region. The Hissar division of Haryana is very rich from archaeological point of view. Archaeology in India has proved to be an important tool for reconstructing history of ancient India. Archaeology has helped in connecting different periods of history of ancient India through analysis of coins, inscriptions, sculptures and other archaeological material recovered from various sites in excavations.

2. Objectives

On the basis of above mentioned brief introduction, it is pertinent to note that many scholars have studied the various aspects of archaeological explorations and excavations in Hissar and Bhiwani districts. But some aspects of this cultural heritage site have been left out. Therefore to bridge this gap, the following objectives have been taken into account. These are:

(i) To explain in detail the excavations carried out in Hissar and Bhiwani districts.
(ii) To explain the increasing archaeological importance of this region.
(iii) To focus on new findings came into light in recent times.
(iv) To elaborate the cultural heritage of this region’s most important archaeological sites.

3. Important Archaeological Centers of Hissar District

3.1 Rakhigarh

Ancient site of Rakhigarhi is situated in Narnaund tahsil of Hissar district. Rakhigarhi is the biggest Harappan site in South-East Asia. It is larger in size than Mohanjodro. There are seven mounds at this site which are situated in the villages of Rakhihaas and Rakhisahpur. The settlements at Rakhigarhi witnessed all the phases of Harappan Civilization. This site covers a period of approximately 1500 years of Harappan Civilization starting from early Harappan era to mature Harappan period. The Government of Haryana has recently announced a museum and panorama at Rakhigarhi to preserve the ancient cultural heritage of Haryana. The museum will be established on 6 acres land. This site belongs to 2600 B.C. to 1800 B.C. The site of Rakhigarhi was first time come into light in 1963 when it was reported in ‘Indian Archaeology 1963-64 - A Review’. The site...
lies in the alluvial plains of now dried up Drishadvati (Chitang), a tributary of ancient Sarasvati (Ghaggar).

This site was excavated by Sh. Amarendra Nath of A.S.I. in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The archaeological findings revealed a mature Harappan phase characterized by planned township having mud-brick as well as burnt brick houses with proper drainage system. "Fertile and well watered local soils were doubtlessly crucial factors in the settlement of Saraswati-Drishadwati valley and the eventual urbanization of the region during the Harrapan period. The economy of the pre-formative phase at the site was primarily agro-pastoral in character with modicum of craft activity."

3.2 Agroha

Agroha is situated on National Highway No. 10 between Hissar and Fatehabad. Its ancient name was ‘Agrodak’. The site of Agroha is under the protection of A.S.I. This site was first excavated in 1888-89 by C.J.Rodgers. A.S.I. conducted excavations in 1938-39 under the supervision of Shri H.L. Srivastava up to a depth of 3.65 meters. The site was further excavated by Shri P.K.Saran and Shri J.S. Khatri of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Harana in 1978-84. The period of site ranges from 4th century B.C. to 14th century A.D. The excavations carried out so far reveal a fortified township and continuous habitation from 4th century B.C. to 14th century A.D. Apart from residential and community houses, made of baked bricks, the remains of a Buddhist Stupa and a Hindu temple existing side by side indicated co-existence and respect for communal harmony. This site is associated with Vedic Gana ‘Agreya’. The discovery of coins of ‘Agreya’ Republic during excavations and its mention in ancient literature are sufficient proof of its being headquarter town of Agreya republic. The Agrodak was capital city of Maharaja Aggarsen, the famous Agreya King. This city was situated on ancient trade route from Mathura to Taxila. It was an important centre of trade and commerce.

3.3 Hansi Fort

Hansi Fort is situated in Hansi town. The town of Hansi is at a distance of 20 kms. on National Highway No.10 in the east of district headquarter town Hissar. The ruined fort of Hansi is situated in Quila Mohalla of the town. This extensive mound possibly represents the ruins of a fort and settlement which is ascribed to Prithviraj Chauhan. The fort was destroyed by Muhammad Ghor. The fort is under the protection of Archaeological Survey of India. This fort is popularly known as the Quila of Prithviraj Chauhan. The site was excavated by D.B.Sharma of A.S.I. and unearthed the remains of early historical era. In 1982, fifty-seven Jain sculptures of bronze have been recovered from the ruins of the fort.

4. Important Archaeological Centers of Bhiwani District:

4.1 Mitathal

The ancient site of Mitathal is situated in Bhiwani district. Mitathal village is at a distance of 11 kms in the north-east direction of district headquarter town Bhiwani. The ancient site is at a distance of 1.5 kms from the village. Mitathal is an important site of Harappan era identified in Haryana so far. There are 3 ancient mounds in Mitathal village. This site first came into light in 1915 when a hoard of 86 gold coins was recovered from there. There are many Chalcolithic mounds nearby Mitathal such as Chang, Dhanana, Mundhana and Tigrana etc. During 1965 to
1967, beads and curious copper implements were discovered at the site, giving it the honor of yielding proto-historic material. This was followed by excavations in 1968. There are two low mounds of modest size. The smaller mound, measuring 150 m x 300m x 5m, lies on the west, and the bigger one, on the east, is about 300m x 75m x 3m. The excavator believes that the site once lay on the bank of river Yamuna which has since gradually moved away. The site has yielded a variety of antiquities such as beads, bangles and terracotta, stone, shell, copper, ivory and bone objects.

4.2 Naurangabad

The ancient site of Naurangabad is situated in Bhiwani district in the eastern direction from Bhiwani. This site is about 8 kilometer away from Bhiwani on the Bhiwani-Rohtak road. The ancient site of Naurangabad is under the protection of Archaeological Survey of India. Its period has been identified from 1st century B.C.to 5th century A.D. This site is spread over an area of about 59 acres. The site was excavated by Shri P. B .S. Sengar of A.S.I. The excavations conducted here so far have yielded a large number of coins, coin-moulds, seals and sealing of different Kings of historical period including those of Yaudheyas, Indo-Greeks, Kushans and Guptas. Its collection may be seen in Haryana Prantiya Puratativa Sangrahalya, Gurukul Jhajjar, Jhajjar. A Terracotta seal found here confirms that the old name of this site was Nakanagar and it was very important urban center of Yaudheya Republic.

4.3 Tosham

Tosham is a Sub-division town in Bhiwani district. It lies at 28° 52’ north latitude and 75° 37’ east longitudes. Tosham is situated at a distance of 25 km in the north-west direction of Bhiwani. The town is dominated by the 244 meters high hump of Tosham hill. The hill rises characteristically out of the desert sand, almost like the hump of a camel. Curiously enough, as one approaches Tosham by road from Bhiwani side, the hill gives an impression of a sleeping camel.

On the top of the hill, there is an irregular plateau covered with jungle growth. There are platforms and ponds, some of which contain a little water. These water ponds mostly lie along the eastern brow of the rock, and carry names like Pandutirtha, Surya Kund, Vyasa Kund and Kakara Sarovar. A fair of ‘Baba Mungipa’ is held on Somvati Amavasya at these tanks. The very name Tosham is suggestive of its derivation from, a chaste Sanskrit word ‘Toshayan’. It is said to be one of the ancient towns of Haryana. People also seem to associate it with the legendary Pandavas and claim that there was a Tapobhumi where the sages, in olden times, observed penance. It also remained part of the Delhi kingdom of Prithviraja Chauhan. The rock inscriptions found engraved on the precipice of the hill are the oldest and surest relics of the ancient past of Tosham. These were first brought to notice by General Cunningham in 1875. They may be seen about half way up the hill, on two separate large blocks, of which, the later one, nearly two and a half meter high and two meter broad, contain three records, including the longest and most important one, and the other contain two small epigraphs. Though the language of these inscriptions is Sanskrit and the script is Pali. These inscriptions date back to the 4th-5th century A.D. These epigraphs, though short, throw a good deal of light on the contemporary religious history of this part of India.

5. Conclusion

As discussed above in detail, the region under present study is very important in the construction of ancient history of Haryana. Recent findings have established that Rakigarhi is larger than
Mohenjo-Daro in size. The increasing importance of Rakhigarhi in world archaeology has been recognized by the government of Haryana by announcing a state of the art museum and panorama at Rakhigarhi to preserve the rich cultural heritage of Haryana.

References