

## GEOGRAPHICAL SET- UP OF PANCHALA JANAPADA FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO C.319 A.D..

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### ABSTRACT

*History is related to space, place or locality. It must have a physical basis and be rooted in the soil. In the early stages man's history was primarily the creation of geography. It is a recognized fact that geography exercises considerable influence on the evolution of history, culture, trade and commerce of a region. The development of civilization in a large measure is based on geographical setting and the climatic conditions of a particular region. Men and nature have for long been so interacted that the results are no longer separable. It is, therefore, natural that both historical and ecological explanations are required of living beings. These two types of explanations are not opposed to each other. In view of this, it would not be inappropriate to study the geography, topography and geology of the ancient kingdom of Panchala which occupies an important position in the history and culture of the country.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ancient History, Panchala, Janapada, Doab

The following factors have contributed to the shaping of the history and culture of this region.

### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Boundaries of the ancient Panchala kingdom varied from time to time. The incidental references in Indian literature throw some light on this problem and help us to determine its boundaries approximately. According to Alexander Cunningham, the great kingdom of Panchala extended from the Himalayas to the river Chambal (Cunningham, 1871, p413) North Panchala embraced the whole of Rohilkhand to the north of the Ganga, while south Panchala included the upper half of the Doab between the Ganga and Yamuna (Cunningham 1891, p79) B.C. Law states that the Panchalas comprised Bareilly, Badaun, Farrukhabad and the adjoining districts of Rohilkhand and the central Doab (Law 1976, p115) According to Prof. Ali the Janapada extended from the Ganga in the west to the Sarju in the east and occupied only the northern half portion of their Doab and the middle portion of the Ganga Yamuna doab (Ali, 1973,p135). H.C. Ray Chaudhary suggests that the Panchalas were bounded on the east by the Gaumati and on the south by the Chambal (Raychaudhary, 1997,p64) Dr. Awasthi opines that the Panchala Janapada comprised Etawah, Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Unnao, Badaun, Hardoi, Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit and Bareilly districts of Uttar Pradesh (Awasthi, p35)

According to the location of the sixteen Mahajanapadas during the sixth century B.C., it is clear that in the east, Kosala was the immediate neighbour of Panchala. The Aitareya Brahmana (Aitareya Brahamana, VIII 14.3) mentions Kosala and Videha to the east of Panchala. To the

west lay the Kuru kingdom, with which Panchala had links at various stages of its history. The Himalayan foothills may be said to have been to northern most boundary of Panchala. The river Carmavati (Chambal) found the southern boundary of parts of the kingdom while the river Gaumati may be regarded as roughly constituting the eastern boundary. It is difficult to be very precise about the western frontier of the region of Panchala. Broadly the Yamuna can be taken as a line of demarcation. It should be emphasized that the relationship between several janapadas were intimate to each other particularly in the later Vedic period. Hence one has no alternative but to tread on the domain of later day Kuru kingdom in order to get a broader perspective of the region.

At a later stage Panchala was divided into two divisions northern and southern, the Ganga forming the dividing line. Some Vedic texts refer to the eastern and western divisions of the country (Vedic Index, I 469) Patanjali (C. second century B.C.) refers to Panchala Janapada (Kielhorn, 1883 p324) He has also referred to the uttra and purva (northern & eastern Panchalas (Op.cit, p 233) According to Divyavadana the capital of uttura Panchala was Hastinapura but the Kumbhakara Jataka mentions Kampilya (Kampilyanagar) as its capital (Cowell, 1897, 230) According to the Mahabharata northern Panchala had its capital at Ahichchhatra, identical with modern Ramnagar in the Bareilly district while southern Panchala had its capital at Kampilya, identical with modern Kampil in the Farrukhabad district. It is clearly hinted at in the epic that by the kingdom of Ahichchhatra was meant nothing but uttura Panchala. The epic clearly stipulates that the two portions of the kingdom were situated respectively on the northern and southern banks of the Ganga In

Samhitopanishad Brahmana (Macdonell et al, p469) there is a reference to the Pracyas or eastern Panchalas. As a corollary the inference of the existence of the Praticya (western Panchala) becomes logical. Finally, the supposition of central region may account for the naming of the region as Panchala.

Sometimes utara Panchala was included in the Kururastra (Jataka No 505) and had its capital at Hastinapura. At other times it formed a part of the Kampilya rastra (Ibid, Nos 323, 513,520) Sometimes the kings of Kampilya rastra had court at utara Panchala nagara, at other times the kings of utara Panchala had their court at Kampilya (Ibid, Nos 408)

According to the Jaina work Vividhirthakalpa, Kampilya was situated on the bank of the Ganga Cunningham has correctly identified the city of Kampilya with the modern Kampil on the old Ganga between Badaun and Farrukhabad districts (AGI p413) Nundo Lal Dey and other scholars follow the identification of Cunningham (Dey, 1971 p88) Captain Hodgson, the surveyor who first visited Ahichchhatra has described the site in the following words - " It is as the ruins of ancient fortress several miles in circumferences which appears to have had 34 bastions and is known in the neighbourhood by the name of Pandus Fort (McCrinkle,1877 p134)

According to Alexander Cunningham (Cunningham,1871,p416) There are only 32 towers, but it is quite possible that one or two may have escaped my notice as I found many parts so over grown with thorny jangal as to be inaccessible. The usual height of the towers ranges from 28 to 30 feet. Above the road outside, near the south-west corner, a single tower is approximately 47 feet in height. The average height of the interior mass is from 15 to 20 feet. Many of the present towers however are not ancient as an attempt was made by Ali Muhammad Khan about 200 years ago to restore the fort with a view of making it his strong hold in case he should be pushed to extremities by the king of Delhi. The new wall is said to have been 1/4 gaz thick which agrees with my measurements of the parapets on the south-eastern side which vary from 2 feet 9 inches in thickness at top. There is an arched gateway on the south east side which must have been built by the musulmanas but as no few bricks were made by them, the cost of their work would have been limited to the labour alone. The ramparts are 18 feet thick at the base in some places and between 14 and 15 feet in others."

The Kuru-Panchala region lies between 26-30 northern latitudes and 77-80 eastern longitudes (Shrimali,1985,p16). Panchala was originally the country north-west of Delhi from the fort of the Himalayan to the Chambal. It roughly corresponds to modern thirteen districts of Uttar Pradesh-Kanpur, Farrukhabad, Mainpuri Etah, Etawah, Rampur, Bijnor, Hardoi, Sitapur, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly and Badaun.

## PHYSIOGNOMY

Panchala region is an essential constituent of the upper Ganga plain; therefore, the flatness and the uniformity of the surface soil are two noteworthy features of the physiognomy of the region. Like the middle Ganga plain, it also forms part of the alluvial asymmetric at definite divide formed by the Delhi Ridge. The region in general is part of the well integrated drainage system of the Ganga although the two important tributaries, the Ghagra (Gogra) and the Gomati join the master stream in the middle Ganga plain. The extremely gentle gradient almost all over the region, restricts the degradational activities of the streams resulting in the near parallel courses and the acute angle junctions of the tributaries with their master streams at most levels, the confluence of the Ganga with the Ramayana and that of the latter with the Ganga are typical examples. This feature imparts to the region a primate drainage. The Ganga and its major tributaries, the Yamuna, the Ramganga and Gogra are the only Himalayan rivers which carry sufficient water all the year round though with high seasonal fluctuations.

Another group of rivers consisting of the Kali east, the sot, the sai the Kalyan etc. belong entirely to the plain as they originate from the depressions or tals in the bhangar tracts from the south the Chambal is the only tributary worth mentioning.

## CLIMATE

Climatically the upper Ganga plain is a sub region between the dry Punjab plain and the humid middle Ganga plain and naturally partakes of the characteristics of the two adjoining regions. Thus, we see that the climate of the region is dry and healthy. Hot and strong westerly winds blow during the summer season occasionally interrupted by violent dust storms. With the approach of the monsoon the wind veers to the east till the rains actually break. The weather is most oppressive. the close of the rains in September and October is the unhealthiest period of the year. The cold weather commences at the end of October and the mercury falls gradually till it reaches its minimum in January. May and June are the hottest months and the temperature goes well over 90°. the temperature is occasionally cooled by the showers. In the trans-gangetic low lands, the heat of summer is less parching dry than in uplands. During the rains the whole area is flooded, the villages rising out of the water like islands in a muddy sea. The average annual rainfall varies between 50 & 100 cms.

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen- Tsang informs us that the climate of the region is genial (Watters, 1971,p331-333) Hiuen-Tsang thus states about the people of the region, "The inhabitants were well of and there were families with great wealth, fruits and flowers were abundant and the sowing and reaping had their seasons (Ibid, p340)

Alberuni has referred to the tract and says that "It lies between the hot and cold countries (Sachan, p198) The climatic variety produces a variety of Flora and Fauna. According to Hooker, "The flora of India is more varied than that of any other country of the same size". According to Blandford, "The variety of India's fauna surpasses that of Europe which is twice its size." The products of India included everything needed by man. Nature has marked out India for economic self-sufficiency and independence to be achieved by man's utilization of her varied and vast resources.

From the point of view of natural vegetation, the region under study is very rich. The references of Bansudha, the forest area in the Ghaghara-Gomati doab, Naimisaranya, the famous forest in Sitapur district The hermitage of sage Valmiki on the bank of the Ganga in the area now part of the Unnao district, the Khandara of the Mahabharata fame clearly show that the whole area was covered with thick forests. The monsoon fed forests and the swamps on the river banks of the doab may have continued to persist for most of the period between 4000-2000 B.C. (Agrawal, 1971 p225) The pollen analysis of the doab soils is also indicative of thick vegetation in the area. During about three millennia of human occupation of the region gradual clearing of the natural vegetation for cultivation has continued. The species found are Siras, Tamarind, various kinds of fig, the Neem, Shisham, wild Sissoo (*Dalbergia Sissoo*) and Kurchi (*Holarrhena anticyathica*). Cane and rice were also reported. On the whole the area represents a well wooded appearance.

#### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The doab with its primeval dense forests and the hard calcareous soil was not a congenial place for settled agriculture in the copper bronze age. Only effective iron technology could pave the way for later large-scale agriculture. The area under south Panchala included in the region known as Brahamavarta, is an affluent crop growing area. The two Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang corroborated the fact that the doab region has been rich and fertile tract. Fa-hien who visited the region in the fifth century A.D. states, "This country is very productive and the people are flourishing and happy beyond compare (Giles, 2012, p27) Hiuen-Tsang who visited the area during the seventh century A.D. remarked that "It was a fertile country with a hot climate. It yielded much upland rice and sugar-cane (Watters, 1971 p366). The soil of the region is divided into three natural classes of Dumat or Loam, Martiyar or clay and Bhur or sand. In the Tarai the soil is alluvial. Nowadays the Tarai is noted for its Sal (Teak) and semal forests and tall grasses like Kans and Munj.

" Ahichchhatra, the capital of north Panchala according to Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsang yielded grain and had many woods, spinings and a genial climate (Ibid, p331) The autumn harvest (Kharif) spring harvest (Rabi) and the immediate

harvest (Zaid) are produced in the region. The important crops of the Kharif are cotton, rice, sugar-cane, Bajra and Arhar.

The principal products of Rabi are wheat and potatoes. Wheat is grown singly or in combination with barley or gram. Farrukhabad district is famous for producing potatoes. Tobacco is an important product of the zaid harvest. It is known as 'Mahun' from the month of Magh when it is cut. This harvest covers a large area in the Farrukhabad district.

#### MINERALS

The mineral resources are very limited because the geology of the region exposes nothing beyond the ordinary Ganga alluvium. In fact, there is no stone, nor are there any metallic ores. Whatever mineral products are found in the whole of Uttar Pradesh are concentrated in the eight northern Himalayan districts, viz. Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Pithoragarh, Tehri-Garhwal, Almora, Nainital, Dehradun and Garhwal and the six southern districts, Agra, Jhansi, Hamirpur, Banda, Allahabad and Mirzapur (Census of India, 1961) It is a well recognized fact that the whole of the upper Ganga plain is devoid of any mineral wealth.

#### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Transport of a region reflects the economic advancement, social condition and the political set-up. The location of the region has always attracted trade to pass through its northern and southern parts. The character of the landscape also plays a vital role in transportation. The deep alluvial stratum has helped in the development of railways and roads in this region. The railways and roads are the principal transport of the area under study.

The trunk route from Udyapura, Puskaravati and Taksasila in the north-west to Sravasti, Saketa, Kapilvastu, Mithila, Vaishali, Patliputra beyond to Tamralipti and followed the Himalayan piedmont through Haridwar, Govisana and Ahichchhatra adhering as closely as possible to the foothills and avoiding the Tarai and flooded terrain and crossing the Himalayan rivers before they become for middle and extensive channels. The other route ran from Jalandhar (Punjab) to Tamralipti through the important regional cities like Indraprastha, Mathura, Kampilya keeping to the south of the Ganga and the further east Kashi (Varanasi) Rohitagir (Roktasgarh) etc. This route was the forerunner of modern Grand Trunk Road. Panini has mentioned this route. The Indraprastha, Agra, Ujjayini and Kausambi-Vidisa routes penetrated to western and central India respectively and connected these regions with the upper Ganga plain.

We learn from the Ramayana that Satrughana while going to crush Lavana at Mathura from Ayodhya first came to Bithur (Taru, 1951 p488-89) It appears that he followed the Uttarapatha Sankissa and reached Mathura. Lakshmana along with Sita came by the same route from Ayodhya during her exile (Uttarkanda, 66.2, 71.3)

During the period of the Buddha, we get a detailed account of the routes of this area. Sankissa was the important town during this time. It was situated on the junction of three trade routes. Firstly it stood on the Uttarapatha route between Soron and Kannauj After spending the twelfth rainy season in Veranja, Buddha travelled from this route via Soron, Sankissa, Kannauj, Prayaga and went to Varanasi (Vinayapatrika, 3.2) This route from Veranja to Varanasi was the shortest according to Buddhaghosha. Fa-hien came to Sankissa from Mathura by the same route and then travelled to Kanayakubja. From Kannauj he crossed the river Ganga and he went to Ayodhya (Giles,2012 p23) The second route passed to Sravasti via Saketa. The distance from Sankissa to Sravasti was 30 yojanas .

The third route was from Soron to Sahjati (Bhita in the Allahabad district). This route was followed by Sthavira Revata. He started from Soron, came to Sankissa and then proceeded to Kanayakubja. Thereafter he went to Udambar, Aggalapura and Sahajati (Sankrityayan, 2011p559- 561) Sankissa has yielded an inscription in the Asokan Brahmin characters which has been read as ' Kudinasa Chandana Vaninasa' (Annual Report,1903 p3) This find indicates the fact that Sandal wood trade was flourishing in this town. There was a water trade route existing between Varanasi and Indraprastha.

The Prithivi Shukta of the Atharavaveda indicates that roads were numerous and they were the chief source of transport and communication. Many metalled and unmetalled roads served both urban and rural areas. State roadways and privately owned vehicles provided transport in the region. The regional cities with their rich resources were thus active in the international coastal and foreign trade channels.

#### IMPACT OF NATURAL SETTING ON HISTORY AND CULTURE OF PANCHALA

So far as the amount history of the region undue study is concerned, the impact of the geographical factors appears to have been quite significant. The alluvial soil and the congenial climate of the Doab valley provided ample impetus for the economic, social and religious growth. The big rivers like the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Kalinadi and the Ramganga provided facilities for pastoral activities and defensible sites. The important ancient sites like Kampil, Kannauj, Bhojpur, Bithur, Jajmau, Sankissa and Musanagar were situated on the banks of the rivers. Agriculture has been a predominant feature of the Doab (antravedi) area from very early times. The soil of the area being good for agriculture, was also favourable for making pottery, terracotta figurines, sun-baked and fire-baked bricks. This gave birth to the various fine arts and architectural activities. The flat nature of the land provided good opportunities for navigation, irrigation and for the reconstruction of roads. The rivers of the area carried a considerable share of water-ways traffic. The Uttarapatha

route, joining Pataliputra with Taksasila, passed through this region. It gave impetus to the trade and commerce and helped in the prosperity of the region.

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