

The Language and the Script of the so-called Indus Seals

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Colonial historians have concocted a fraudulent theory of Aryan invasion and propagated that the archaeological sites found in the region of Sapta Sindhu (from Sarasvati River to Sindhu River) are belonged to the Indus Valley Civilization. Many scholars have presented numerous irrefutable evidences to prove the fallacy of Aryan Invasion Theory. Recent genome studies have also conclusively debunked this false theory. In reality, the so-called Indus Valley civilization was not an alien civilization but it was indeed Vedic civilization. Therefore, the so-called Indus Valley civilization must be named as Vedic and Post Vedic civilization. The seals found in these archaeological sites must be named as Vedic seals. The enigmatic script of Indus seals has posed a great challenge to Indologists since the discovery of the first Indus seal in 1875. In my opinion, it is pertinent to understand the chronological evolution of Indian languages and scripts before debating on the probable language and script of Indus seals.

Chronologically, the early Vedic civilization was born around 14500 BCE during the time of Brahma and his son Svayambhuva Manu when the summer solstice was in Dhanishtha nakshatra. Seemingly, the proto-Sanskrit was the popular language of the early Vedic society. Early Vedic Rishis of the period 14500-11500 BCE had envisaged the development of a structured language to facilitate the writing of sacred hymns for Vedic rituals. Probably, a basic script had also been evolved by ancient Indians around 14500 BCE. Gradually, Rigvedic Rishis evolved the basic rules of context free grammar including conjunctions (Sandhis) and the rules of Chandas (meters). Thus, Vedic Sanskrit was an artificially structured language like computer programming languages and it was evolved out of the proto-Sanskrit language. Undoubtedly, a basic phonetic script had also been developed concurrently because the concept of conjunctions cannot be evolved without a phonetic script.

Early Vedic Rishis of the period 14000-11500 BCE wrote mantras and suktas in Vedic Sanskrit. During the period 11500-10500 BCE, Vedic Sanskrit also known as Chāndasa Sanskrit has been evolved to an advanced stage. Rishi Gālava, a classmate of King Brahmadatta II (11130 BCE) was the first who introduced Padapatha and Kramapatha of Vedic hymns and formally founded the science of Vedic grammar. A basic science of Chandashastra has also been developed at the same time. Seemingly, all hymns of Vedas have been undergone editing with an objective to correct the language grammatically around 11500-10000 BCE. Thus, Vedic Sanskrit attained a status of sacred language for rituals. It was insisted that all pupils must learn Vedas by listening from their teachers to avoid mispronunciation of Vedic mantras. This was the reason why Vedas had been

referred to as “Shruti”. Colonial historians have speculated the absence of a script during Vedic period because of their gross ignorance of the evolution of Vedic Sanskrit.

The evolution of the structured Vedic Sanskrit clearly indicates that the Vedic society of Sapta Sindhu region had at least two languages i.e. Proto-Sanskrit (natural language) and Vedic Sanskrit (artificially evolved language). Common people of Vedic era spoke in their natural language i.e. Proto-Sanskrit language whereas the Rishis, Acharyas and their pupils used to learn Vedic Sanskrit for the practice of Vedic rituals and the education of Vedic sciences.

The disappearance of Vedic Sarasvati River in Thar Desert around 10900-10500 BCE and the weakening of monsoons in Sapta Sindhu region around 11000-9500 BCE had severely affected the prosperity and stability of Vedic civilization. The people had no other option to immigrate to eastern and southern regions. Seemingly, many Vedic families had also crossed Indus River and migrated to western and northwestern regions. King Videha Madhava had migrated to Mithila kingdom around 10900 BCE. The princes of Soma Vamsha namely Pandya, Chera, Chola and Kola had already established their kingdoms in South India around 11500-11300 BCE. Dandaka, son of Ikshvaku founded his kingdom in Tondaimandalam and Andhras, the sons of Vishvamitra settled in the region of Godavari and Krishna Rivers. Chandrahāsa, a son of the Chera king founded his kingdom of Kuntala (north Karnataka) around 11100-11000 BCE.

Though many Vedic families had to migrate from Sapta Sindhu region but the Vedic villages situated on the banks of the rivers of Sapta Sindhu region had been somehow survived during the period 10900-9500 BCE. Seemingly, monsoons became normal after ~9500 BCE and the Sapta Sindhu region again started flourishing which led to the evolution of post-Vedic sciences and literature. During the period 10000-9000 BCE, Vedic or Chāndasa Sanskrit had been transformed into post-Vedic or Samhitā Sanskrit. There was a long break in the continuity of writing mantras and Suktas in Vedic Sanskrit. This was the reason why none of the post Vedic Rishis had attempted to write Vedic Mantras. In modern times, though we may learn and understand the old Hindi language of Tulasi’s Ramacharit Manas and Jayasi’s Padmāvat but we cannot create new literature in the archaic Hindi language because nobody speaks or understands archaic Hindi today. Similarly, Vedic Sanskrit took back seat when Samhita Sanskrit had been evolved out of it. Thus, Samhitā Sanskrit became popular in post-Vedic times due to the advancement of Sanskrit grammar and Vedic Sanskrit remained limited to Vedic hymns only.

Gradually, Samhita Sanskrit has been evolved into Laukika Sanskrit around 7500-6500 BCE due to further advancement of Sanskrit grammar. During the 28th Treta Yuga (6777-5577 BCE), Bharata’s Natyashastra, Dattilam, Nandikeshvara’s Abhinaya Darpana & Bharatarnava and Mātanga Muni’s Brihaddeshi brought a revolution in the entertainment for all sections of society. Valmiki, the Adi Kavi wrote Ramayana around 5600-5550 BCE. Valmiki Ramayana had inspired many scholars to write Drishya (Natya) and Shrāvya Kāvya in Laukika Sanskrit. Public performances of Ramayana and Puranas became the main source of the entertainment of society. The demand for innovations in performances led to the evolution of various Ramayanas like Adbhuta Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana etc. During the post-Ramayana era, the performance

of Adbhuta rasa became immensely popular which led to mythologisation of historical legends of Ramayana and Puranas like Shukacharya was depicted as parrot-faced, Gajānana as elephant-faced, Narasimha as lion-faced, Vamana as midget, Kapi as monkey, Rishi or King Mastya as fish, Varaha as boar, Riksha as bear, Naga as serpent, Garuda as vulture etc.

Interestingly, the public performances of Sanskrit kavyas and natakas brought a paradigm shift in the spoken languages of Indian society. The mass migrations of Vedic families from Sapta Sindhu region to other regions at the end of Rigvedic era led to the evolution of numerous dialects of Proto-Sanskrit in India. Before Ramayana era, the knowledge of Sanskrit language was limited to Rishis, Acharyas and their students because the Vedic education was imparted strictly in the medium of Sanskrit. It was also expected that the speakers of Sanskrit must have the knowledge of grammar. Since it has been artificially evolved based on a complicated grammar, Sanskrit could not become a popular language of common people during Vedic and Post-Vedic era. Seemingly, the people of north India spoke the dialects of Proto-Sanskrit and the people of South India spoke Sen Tamil and Kudun Tamil. During the post-Ramayana era, the public performances of Sanskrit kavyas like Ramayana and Puranas had inspired a large section of the society to learn Sanskrit. Gradually, a majority of Indian society learnt Sanskrit and started conversing in Sanskrit without the proper knowledge of Sanskrit grammar. Consequently, Prakrit language was born out of Sanskrit during post Mahabharata era (after 3162 BCE) because common people could not maintain the discipline of Sanskrit grammar. Many dialects of Prakrit language also came into existence like, Shauraseni, Gāndhari, Māgadhi (Pāli), Ardhamāgadhi, Kāmarupi, Maharashtri etc. Sanskrit Nataka texts refer to many other dialects of Prakrit such as Dramili, Odri, Dakshnātya, Prāchya, Shabari, Abhiri, Chāndāli, Bāhliki, Shakari, Takkadeshi and Apabhramsha.

Hemachandra calls Ardhamāgadhi as Arsha Prakrit and others as Deshya Prakrit. It appears that the early Prakrit was very close to Sanskrit because it was derived out of Sanskrit but gradually, it started mixing up with the dialects of proto-Sanskrit and evolved into various dialects of Prakrit. The dialects of proto-Sanskrit faced extinction under the influence of Prakrit around 3500-2500 BCE. Concerned with the corruption of Prakrit dialects, Vararuchi Kātyāyana of Nanda era (1710-1610 BCE) was the first who wrote a grammar of Prakrit. The Prakrit dialects which strictly followed the grammar of Vararuchi were called Arsha Prakrit and the Prakrit dialects, which may not have strictly followed the grammar were called Deshya Prakrit. Gradually, the dialects of Deshya Prakrit have been evolved into modern North Indian languages.

Seemingly, Proto Sanskrit might have been evolved into archaic Tamil in South India. Archaic Tamil might have existed around 11266-7000 BCE. After 7000 BCE, archaic Tamil had been evolved into two dialects i.e. Sen Tamil (spoken in the south of Venkata hill) and Kudun Tamil (spoken in the north of Venkata hill) as indicated in Tolkappiyam, a treatise on ancient Tamil grammar. Rishi Agastya II wrote grammar of Tamil language probably in the beginning of the second Sangam era (~6800 BCE). Classical Tamil language of Tamilnadu generally followed the Agastya's grammar and came to be known as Sen Tamil. Classical Tamil language could survive in its original form since ~7000 BCE because of Agastya's grammar. Kudun Tamil of Karnataka and

Andhra Pradesh could not follow the rules of Agastya's grammar. Gradually, Kudun Tamil might have been evolved into Archaic Telugu-Tulu-Kannada language around 4000-3000 BCE and Telugu, Hale Kannada and Tulu languages were born out of archaic Telugu-Tulu-Kannada after ~2000-1000 BCE. Malayalam was the last entrant of South Indian languages and probably evolved out of Tamil, Tulu and Kannada around 1st century BCE or CE. Though various Indian languages have been evolved in their respective regions but pan-Indian languages like Sanskrit and Prakrit have highly influenced the evolution of these languages. This is the reason why all Indian languages have many Sanskrit words.

Seemingly, the Proto-Sanskrit of early Vedic era had a script that was based on a corpus of symbols. Brahma and Saptarshis have envisaged to have a structured language and script. Brahma was the founder of the business logic of phonetic script. Therefore, the phonetic script of Vedic era came to be known as Brahmi. Since the knowledge of Sanskrit was limited to only learned men up to the Ramayana era, the use of archaic Brahmi script was also strictly limited to Sanskrit language only. The majority of Indian society might have used the script of Proto-Sanskrit and its variants up to Mahabharata era. Sanskrit came into a popular use around 5000-3000 BCE and Prakrit dialects were born around 3000 BCE. At the same time, archaic Brahmi script also became popular and the script of the dialect of Proto-Sanskrit faced extinction around 3000 BCE. Brahmi and Kharoshthi scripts have been evolved from Archaic Brahmi script around 2500-2000 BCE. All Indian scripts have been evolved from Brahmi script. Old Avestan, Aramaic, Pahlavi, Armenian and Georgian scripts were either born out of Kharoshthi script or influenced from it but these scripts adopted the logic of Greek alphabets under the influence of Greek script around 1800-1200 BCE.

In view of the chronological evolution of Indic languages and scripts as discussed above, the Indus script was probably the script of the dialect of Proto-Sanskrit which was in vogue in north-western India around 5000-3000 BCE. This script was a logosyllabic script and has approximately 450 symbols. Evidently, the Indus script is not a phonetic script. Therefore, the language in which these seals were written cannot be Sanskrit or Prakrit. Many scholars have claimed the successful decipherment of this script but it is not possible to accept any claim until we find a bilingual inscription. The archaeological sites found in Pakistan and India are dated around 8000 BCE to 2000 BCE. These sites were the cities and villages of Post Vedic era and the post Ramayana era. Monsoons have been again weakened after 5000 BCE. North-western India had to face a long drought of 900 years around ~4500-3600 BCE. After Mahabharata war (3162 BCE), Dwarka, Dholavira and Lothal cities of Gujarat were destroyed in a Tsunami. Therefore, all Indus seals must be dated before 3000 BCE.

Now the question arises what was the dialect of Proto Sanskrit that used the so-called Indus script. All Prakrit dialects evolved after 3000 BCE. Moreover, Sanskrit and Prakrit cannot be written in a logosyllabic script. Most probably, Central Pakistan, Sindh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat regions of ancient India spoke Paishāchi language, a dialect of Proto-Sanskrit. Literary sources clearly indicate that Paishāchi was neither Sanskrit nor Prakrit.

Paishāchi or Paishachika dialect of Kekaya and Shurasena was the probable language of Indus seals. According to traditional legends, Gunādhyā wrote Brihatkatha in Paishāchi language. Though there are many references of Paishachi language in Sanskrit and Prakrit literature but unfortunately, there is not a single quotation of Brihatkatha written in Paishachi language. Paishachi was also called Bhutabhāshā, a language of dead. Evidently, Paishāchi became extinct before the time of Katyayana of Nanda era (1710-1610 BCE).

As explained above, ancient Indian society was a multilingual society since Rigvedic era. According to Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara, Shiva narrated the story of seven Vidyādhara to Parvati. Shiva's gana Pushpadanta happened to hear over the story. Probably, Malyavan also heard the story. Pushpadanta told the story of Vidyādhara to Pishācha Kanabhūti in the forest of Vindhya. It may be noted that Pishāchas were not ghosts in Vedic era. They were the sons of Rishi Kashyapa and Kroshavasha, a daughter of Daksha. According to Nilamat Purana, Northern Pakistan and Kashmir was originally inhabited by Nagas and Pishāchas. Most probably, Kanabhūti wrote the original Brihatkatha in Paishachi dialect of Proto-Sanskrit. Thereafter, it has been periodically updated. Brihatkatha was very popular in central and north-western ancient India. After 3000 BCE, Prakrit dialects of Sanskrit came into existence and Paishachi became almost extinct. Considering the popularity of Brihatkatha, Vararuchi Katyayana of Nanda era (1710-1610 BCE) learnt Paishachi and recompiled it. Vararuchi's Brihatkatha was also almost lost by 500 BCE. Gunadhya, a minister of Hāla Shatavahana also learnt Paishachi and recompiled Brihatkatha in Paishachi but only one lakh verses out of seven lakh verses were survived.

Seemingly, there were two Gunādhyas but Somdeva erroneously mixed up the legends of two Gunādhyas into one. There are two different versions about the history of Gunadhya. According to Skanda Purana, Gunadhya was born in Mathura and the court poet of King Madana of Ujjain. Later sources tell us that Gunadhya was the contemporary of King Hala Satavahana. Probably, Gunadhya I, the court poet of King Madana was the original author of Brihatkatha and he might have flourished around 2500 BCE. At that time, Prakrit language was well established in Ujjain. King Madana of Ujjain did not like the poetry in Paishachi. Either frustrated Gunādhyā I destroyed the major portion of Brihatkatha or it was lost by the time of Nanda era. Seemingly, Vararuchi Katyayana learnt Paishachi and translated Brihatkatha into Pali in the title of "Vaddakathā". Subandhu's Vasavadattā refers to Gunādhyā's Brihatkatha. Later, Gunādhyā II recompiled "Vaddakatha" in Pali during the reign of Hāla Shātavāhana around 500 BCE. King Durvinita of the Ganga dynasty of Karnataka had translated Vaddhakatha in Sanskrit around 150 BCE. Later, Kshemendra wrote Brihatkathamānjari, Somadeva wrote Kathasaritsagara and Budhaswami wrote Brihatkathaslokaśāṅgraha.

In all probability, Gondi language of the Vindhya region of Madhyapradesh is probably a direct descendant of Paishachi language. In my opinion, Indus seals were written in the Paishachi language and its script. The script of Paishachi became extinct around 3000 BCE but the language might have been survived up to the lifetime of Vararuchi Katyayana (17th century BCE). It may be noted that though ancient Indian kings had the knowledge of Sanskrit but preferred to

communicate with common people in their own language. It is evident from the inscriptions of Ashoka, Ikshvakus of Andhra and Shātavahanas. The Indian kings of the period 1765-400 BCE used Prakrit as the language of communication because it was the language of masses. Sanskrit was still limited to learned men only. Evidently, the Indian kings of pre-Mahabharata era used Paishachi and its script as the official language and script for effective communication with the common people. This is the reason why we find Indus seals of pre-Mahabharata era written in the so-called Indus script instead of Brahmi or Kharoshthi.

Interestingly, Ekashringa or unicorn animal (a type of horse or bull) was indeed existed in ancient India. This rare species of unicorn animal became completely extinct during the 900-year long drought around (4500-3600 BCE). This unicorn animal is found depicted in many Indus seals. According to ancient Greek scholars, unicorn animal used to find only in India. Seemingly, the unicorn animal was still existed in India when Yavanas migrated to Anatolia and Greece. This may be the reason why unicorn is found mentioned in the legends of Greek literature.

