

**A GLIMPSE IN TO THE CONDITIONS OF SINDH
BEFORE ARAB CONQUEST**

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ABSTRACT

Ancient history of Sindh dates back to Bronze age civilization, popularly known as Indus valley civilization, which speaks of glorious past of Sindh. Sindh was a vast country before the invasion of Arabs. King was the administrative head in the political setup of the country. Next in power to the king was the minister who exercised great influence over the monarch. King was also the commander of his army. Though king acted as the supreme judge of the country, yet he followed systematic manner in dispensing the justice. The society was divided into two broad classes. The sophisticated upper class consisted of ruling rich and their poets and priests. The lower class consisting of peasants, weavers, tanners, carpenter smiths and itinerant trades men. Family system was patriarchal; women enjoyed a high position in patriarchal society who had liberty to choose their mate. Sindh was a prosperous and fertile country, with flourishing trade. Sindh was abode of various religious groups and sects before the advent of Arabs. On the eve of Arab conquest of Sindh there was rivalry between Hinduism & Buddhism. People of Sindh being unsatisfied by the rule of Brahmans came into contact with Arab invaders and helped them to succeed Brahmans.

Keywords: Sindh, History, Religions and Social Conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Sindh is one of the ancient regions of the world. It now forms integral part of Pakistan.

“Sindh or Indus valley proper is a land of great antiquity and claims a civilization anterior in time to that of Egypt and Babylon” (Pathan, 1978:46).

“Sindh properly rendered “Sindhu” is primarily the indigenous name of the river known in the western world as “Indus”. The erroneous form prevailed because it was thus used by the companions of Alexander The great, in narratives of his expeditions, which achieved great popularity; and such as metatheses in the

pronunciation of proper noun is not common in the oriental speech. We find a more correct version, *Sinthohs*, in a Greek work produced in 1st century after Christ (Lambrick H.T., 1975:1).

“*Sindhu*”, the Indus has been described in Vedas as a self-moving river of golden hue, roaring down the snow-clad mountains rushing through fine forests passing along fair fields and expanding into vast waters in which the sun sank (Jafarey, 1981:64).

ANCIENT HISTORY OF SINDH

The history of Sindh dates back to half of third millennium before Christ. It was Bronze Age civilization, known as Indus Valley Civilization. Indus Valley Civilization represents the glorious past of Sindh. During those ancient times, the culture of Sindh was at its peak. Mohen-jo-Daro was the capital of Sindh, a well-planned city with flourishing culture, trade and sound political system. The evidence revealed that the people of Mohen-jo-Daro worshipped mother goddess, Shiva and other deities. The causes of destruction of such monumental cultural civilization are yet to be discovered.

Europe believed that history had started with the Greeks and India was continent inhabited by barbarians until their civilized cousins, the Aryans brought them the light of civilization. Its dream was shattered in 1924 A.D. by breath-taking discovery of the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa a few hundred miles to the north. The excavations disclosed four or five super-imposed cities with hundreds of slightly built brick houses and shops ranged along wide streets as well as narrow lanes and rising in many cases to several storeys. The evidence indisputably established that during the third and fourth millennium B.C. there existed in the area a very highly developed city life, houses with wells and bathrooms and an elaborate drainage system and a general condition of citizens superior to that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt (Jethmalani, 1980:viii).

ARYANS AND OTHER FOREIGN INVADERS IN SINDH

The Aryans of India are reported to have been savage people, who learnt art of civilization into the Indus Valley. History reports that Aryans who occupied Sindh came from Iran and not from Punjab, these were known as Panchalas (Pathan, 1978:62).

Ali A. Jafarey in his research article “Sindh and Sindhis in early Aryan age” writes “The Aryans were settled in a vast region in sixteen lands in Avestan Period. In addition to their patronymic and

tribal names, they must have had a way to designate each other collectively by the names of their respective lands. That is why we find that Achaemenian Shahs of 2500 years ago provide us, in their rock inscriptions, with some thirty names of sixteen Aryan provinces. Among them we have Hindu (Sindhu) and its adjective Hinduya (Sindhi)''.

Jayadratha (An Aryan) The Ruler of Sindh represented his country (Sindh) in the Great War (Mahabharata) as an ally of Kuruvras, and was killed by Pandavas the opponents, after this time the history of Sindh sank into oblivion until sixth century B.C. when it was over ran by "Skylax" a commander of Darius one, The Achaemenian King of Persia. Skylax declared Sindh as 20th Satrapy of Achaemenian empire.

Alexander the Great a renowned Macedonian king brought Sindh under his sway in 326 B.C. Alexander slew the gallant and patriotic Raja Sambus of Sindimana.

Several foreign intruders like Greeks, Bactrians, Sythians and Parthians for about two and a half century, ruled the country of Sindh, i.e. from 1500 B.C. to 50 A.D. Kushans ruled over subcontinent including Sindh from 50 A.D. to 226 A.D. Afterwards Sassanids ruled Sindh on different occasions from 2nd century to 4th century. Huns and Guptas remained also the masters of Sindh in various years. When Sassanid emperor Nousherwan, a Persian ruler invaded the country of Sindh, Land lords of the country welcomed the Invader (Lakho, Ghulam Muhammad, 1997:6).

According to Dr. N.A. Baloch "The chronology of the rulers of Sindh before the advent of Muslims (93 AH/712 AD) is confused due to want of adequate records". The only source of relatively detailed information is in the two preceding dynasties, viz. the Brahman Dynasty and Rai Dynasty, as described in Fateh Namah-i-Sindh (alias Chachnamah).

Dr. N.A. Baloch further writes: weighing all the evidence on records and relying upon valid inferences the regal periods of Sindh extending back to 4 A.H./626 A.D. could be set forth as follows:

BRAHMAN DYNASTY

Dahar 13 years	80-93 AH/699-712 AD
Chandar 7 ½ years	72-80 AH/691-699 AD
Cach 40 years	32-72 AH/652-691 AD

RAI DYNASTY

Rai Sahasi, ii 28 years 4-32 AH/626-691 AD

Rai Seharas, ii d.4 AH/626 AD (Baloch N.A.,1981:890)

Rais belonged to royal family of Chitor. Capital of Rai rulers was Alore. During their reign, Sindh consisted of four provinces. Historians record that Rai Dynasty Rule was a prosperous and peaceful one. Rai Sahasi-II, the Last ruler of the dynasty ruled for 28 years but died without Issue. His widow Suhandi, who was already engaged in an affair with Chach a Brahman Minister, married him and paved the way for him to establish himself as the ruler of Sindh. Thus ended the Rule of Rai dynasty and began that of Brahman rule in Sindh.

Muhammad Bin Qasim, a commander of Banu Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus, put Raja Dahir's Rule to an end. Thus Sindh Was brought under the sway of Muslims.

CONDITIONS OF SINDH BEFORE ARAB CONQUEST

Sindh was a vast country before the invasion of Arabs. Its political boundaries extended from Kashmir to Arabian Sea and from Thar Desert to Qalat (Kaykanan) region.

“The limits of his dominions extended on the east to the boundary of Kashmir, on the west to Makran, on the south to the coast of the sea and Debal, and to the north mountains of Kurdan and Kikanan” (Kalichbeg Mirza, 1982:11).

Administration: The king occupied the supreme position in the political setup of the country and his word was law and binding on the masses. A minister, a chamberlain and a secretariat of clerks and writers in the administration of the state (Pathan, 1978:79).

Next in power to the king was his minister who exercised the great influence over the monarch. Minister was selected from intelligentsia and was a man of versatile genius. Ram, the minister of Rai Sahasi-II and Budhiman that of Raja Dahar are well known in the history for their wisdom and statecraft. Chamberlain another important personality of the country served as inter mediatory between the people and King.

Giving the reference of Chachnamah Dr.Mumtaz Hussain Pathan accounts that “the king conducted his Expeditions in person and led the armies against the foreign Invaders”.

Raja Dahar who commanded his army against Arabs lost his life fighting honorably against the enemy. From the account of Chachnamah and other historical works produced on history of Sindh, it is asserted that rulers of Sindh maintained a disciplined and well paid army in the capital in order to face any emergency. The country was well protected by maintaining garrisons at frontier posts as well as important strategic towns. Establishment of strong forts was also included in the priority of the rulers.

Law and Justice: The administration of justice in Sindh was based on same pattern as in other parts of the subcontinent. King acted as the supreme judge of the country in the institution of Law and Justice. At the king's court (Sabha), every possible measure was adopted to dispense justice to the people. Though king's decision was supreme, yet he followed a systematic manner in dispensing justice. The king listened to and followed the advice of Brhamans and elders, who were well versed in the field of justice.

“The legal procedure adopted in pre-Islamic period seems to have been highly developed and marks an apogee of Hindu jurisprudence” (Pathan, 1978:83).

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

People: “The society was divided into two broad classes. The sophisticated upper class consisted of the ruling rich and their poet-priests. From their midst rose the warriors who, now and then, fought each other or over-flowed eastwards forcing their ways into the Ganges Valley. The chief Raja was elected and controlled by a council. His wealth lay in his men, horses, chariots, cattle, gold, garments and pomp. Occasionally he joined other rajas to wage a collective war. And the poet-priest was always at hand to laud loudly his feats and those of his gods in his sacrificial ceremonies.

To the lower class, belonged the peasants who toiled hard for their herds, flocks and fields, as well as all weavers, tanners, carpenters, smiths and itinerant tradesman” (A.A.Jafarey, 1981:66).

About the common people of Sindh A.A.Jafarey mentions “The people danced in time with music, raced and gambled. They held marriages and funeral processions. While priests ceremoniously consumed concentrated juice of soma, the poor were happy with sura, a kind of beer. Like their early Avastan brother in the west the early Sindhis were a peaceful people. Their arrival in the Indus valley seems to have been more of a mass migration than an invasion. Minor

skirmishes must have taken place, but they were not important enough to give rise to boastful epic” (A.A.Jafarey, 1981:66-67).

Position of Women: “The Indo-Pakistan society was based on patriarchal family system in which the absolute control was exercised by the parents over their children” (Pathan, 1978:85).

Women enjoyed a high position in patriarchal society and were allowed to choose their mates. Divorce is not mentioned and lifelong companionship in body and soul is emphasized. Sati (Sutee) did not exist (A.A.Jafarey, 1981:66).

Dr. Mumtaz Hussain Pathan writes with reference to Vedic age “There is nothing to show that women occupied a position inferior to men in social setup of pre Islamic Indo-Pakistan people. A wedding hymn in Rigveda indicates that a newly wedded wife rules over her brothers in law and even her husband’s parents”.

Dress: Men and women dressed alike in lion cloth and shawl, lengths of cloth draped around the body and over the shoulders and fastened with a belt and pins. The women’s clothes were heavily embroidered than the men’s. Ornaments of gold and precious stones were worn. Per-spoils reliefs give us the first vivid glimpse of the Sindhis and then close cultures relative—The Gandharians in the north, the Sattagyidians in the north-west and Macians in the west. All are shown to belong to a hot climate. They wear lion clothes tight tunics, shawls and sandals. All carry broad swords. The Gandharians carry spears and shields and the Sindhis double-edged axes” (A.A.Jafarey, 1981:67-68).

Rulers of Rai Dynasty were Buddhists. During their Rule, society was free from cast discrimination. People of Sindh enjoyed a peaceful and harmonious life. Rai Dynasty Rule was succeeded by Brhaman Dynasty. Brahman Rulers were Hindus and they believed in caste system. On the eve of Arab conquest of Sindh caste system was vigorously imposed in Sindh. Society was divided into four varnas, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras (Pathan, 1978:85).

Brahmans and Kshatriyas occupied super most position in the society, while Sudras and Vasyas were subjected humility by imposing on them the status of untouchable.

Chachnamah speaks of many tribes of Sindh which were brought under the category of low caste by Brhaman Rulers. They were Sammas, Sehtas, Lohanas, Lakhas and Jats. Brahmans treated married women well, but widows were subjected to lead a miserable life. Mostly widows were forced to burn themselves on funeral pyre

of their husbands. They believed that a widow thus will be in heaven with her diseased husband.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The records of early historians account that Sindh before the advent of Arabs was a fertile and prosperous region. The two great rivers Sindhu and Hakro were the main source of its fertility. Lush green fields and huge gardens laden with fruits spread all over Sindh. Arab traders exported fruits like mangoes and oranges of Sindh that were well known for their taste and quality, to the west.

Trade in Sindh was also in flourishing state before Arab invasion “Al Diabal, the Seaport of Sindh, served as intermediary anchorage for ships of the east and the west. Almost every commodity manufactured in lands as far as China could be had in abundance at al-Daybul on cheap rates. The voile cloth of Sindh because of its quality of thinness was in great demand in Arab world (Pathan, 1978:91).

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

Various points of view regarding the language spoken by the people of Sindh have been put forward by researchers on the history of Sindh.

“Gautama Buddha came to Sindh for the preaching of Buddhism. Due to the influence of Buddhism Pali language related to Buddhism gained considerable influence in Sindh. Arab geographers state that language of Indus Valley people was Sindhi. Modern research reveals that language of Sindh was Apbharmsa which was coupled with Parakirt” (Pathan, 1978:92).

“Nevertheless, a study of Sanskrit, old Persian and Avesta shows that in the early Aryan age, *ariya* was the inter-provincial language and that a Sindhi could converse as easily with a Persian, Parthian or Sogdian as he can do today in his dialect with a Jadgal in South-eastern Iran or a Kacchi in Western India. Ariya was as uniformly extensive in that age as its offshoots are diversely limited today” (A.A.Jafarey, 1981:67).

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

Sindh was abode of various religious groups and sects before the Arab conquest of Sindh. Dr. Mumtaz Hussain Pathan has given a detailed description of different religious groups and sects in Sindh.

He writes: “The first group among those was that of Buddhists, who adored the idol of Buddha. The second group was of Maha Kalia Hindus, who worshipped devil like idol of Mahakal. The others were moon and sun worshippers” (Pathan, 1978:93).

J.E. Van Lohuizen writes in her research article: *The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sindh*. But of the numerous monuments that have existed in the early historical period prior to the Arab conquest A.D. 711-12 A.D. only a handful remain. If we may believe the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who travelled through Sindh in 642 A.D., there were ten thousand Buddhists monks living in this country in several hundred monasteries (Hamida Khuhro, 1981:43).

A.A.Jafarey writes about Sindh people’s religion “their religion though not monotheistic, taught them to be truthful, righteous and above all monotheistic. Their gods and goddesses represent the finest human qualities – strength, kindness, nobility, love, tenderness, beneficence, helpfulness and friendliness (The ultimate paternal and maternal qualities).

On the eve of Arab conquest of Sindh there was a rivalry between Hinduism and Buddhism. Brahmans were considered usurpers, as they had illegitimately occupied Rule of Sindh by displacing the Rais. For this act of usurpation Brahmans were disliked by the masses, who were Buddhists. The majority of masses due to religious cum social differences were unsatisfied by Brahman Rule. The masses opened the gates of their towns and welcomed the Arab invaders, offering no resistance.

CONCLUSION

Sindh an ancient country with a glorious past had always been attracted by foreigners from the times unknown. Various people made this country their home and Arabs were one of them. Before the Advent of Arabs, Sindh was a country with an advanced administrative system, rich culture and a developed society. On the eve of Arab conquest religious differences between Hinduism and Buddhism contributed greatly to the establishment of Arab rule in Sindh.

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