

Sonipat through the ages

Kuldeep

Asstt. Professor, History

Govt. College Jassia

Email-berwalkuldeep04@gmail.com

Abstract- The state of Haryana holds an strategic importance in Indian History. Located between the Shivalik Himalayas in the north and Aravali on the south Haryana has been considered a gateway to enter the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains. This area has witnessed several important incidents which have decided the fate of Indian history. Thus, keeping the importance of regional history writing, present paper tries to shed light on the Historicity of the Sonipat district of Haryana. Located on the G.T. Road and adjacent to delhi this area has been a place where several important historical events took place from protohistoric to the post independence times.

Keywords – Drishdavati, Swarnaprastha, Settlements, Exploration, Harappan, Chahmanas, Jagir.

नित्वा दूधे वर आ पृथिव्यां इकायास्पदे सुदिनेले अछाम दृष्टपत्यां

मानुष आपयायां सरस्वतीच्यां रेवदग्ने दिदीही विदीही ॥

This verse mentioned in the third part of *Rgveda*, points towards a pious land, illuminated by the holy fire of Vedic *yajnas*, where *Drishdavati* (*Ghaggar*), *Apaya* and *Saraswati* river flows, which we currently know as Haryana region.¹ Geographically Haryana State lies between the Shivalik ranges in the northern sides and Aravali mountains in southern sides, 'Thar' the great Indian desert lies in its western sides while the river Yamuna in determines its western boundaries. Due to its unique geographical structure, Haryana has been the gateway of civilizations and cultures that entered India during different periods. As a result of it Haryana has rich and diversified the history.

Compiling of past events in history is solely depends on the basis of historical sources of literary and archaeological nature. In this regard, the sources of archaeological nature are considered more authentic and often it also helps to validate the authenticity of literary sources. Therefore, the purpose of the present research paper is to highlight the historical importance of Sonipat district of Haryana by reviewing the archaeological and literary sources. The origin of the name of Sonipat is from *Sonprastha*. Which means in Sanskrit language. *Swarnaprastha* i.e. the golden place (the place of gold).² It is one of the *Panch Prasthas* (*Indraprastha, Panipat, Tilpath, Baghpat and Sonipat*). that Yudhishtira demanded from Duryodhana to stop the Mahabharata war. Sonipat is an ancient historical city.³ According to historians, this city was established before 1500 AD. and was named after the name of Raja Sam.⁴ There has never been any doubt about the antiquity of the district. Earlier, this area has been explored by A. Cunningham and B. B. Lal. In 1972, Dr. Silak Ram also conducted archaeological explorations in this area and reported the existence of numerous sites belonging to different cultural periods. After that Dr. R.C Thakran also explored this region during his Ph.D research work, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture of K.U. Kurukshetra. Ashok Kumar and Gulab Singh, student of dept. of History of M.D.U.

Rohtak explored the Kathura and Mundlana blocks of this district, Ramdhan Dhankhar (1989-90) (M.D.U.) and Vinay Kumar (2006-07) of K.U explored Ghohana block, Yashpal (2012) from D.U. during his Ph.D. course work and recently Anita (2022), P.G. student of Deptt. of History & Archaeology, C.U.H., Haryana explored this region. As a result of these surveys a total number of 206 archaeological sites has been plotted on the map laying in the territory of Sonapat District.⁵ These works have confirmed the existence of human settlements from proto-historic period. Ceramic assemblage along with cultural material of Early, Mature and Late Harappan period, O.C.P., Painted Gray Ware confirms the above said. These cultures were succeeded by Early Historic/Historic, Early Medieval Medieval cultures in this area, which shows the existence of different cultures in different parts of the district. Apart from archaeological evidences literary sources, are scant to give a clear outline of the historical development of the district during the early stages but after the *vedic* period we came across several evidences which throw ample light on historical development occurred in this region.

The Early Harappan people were the earliest people to live in this area and were followed by the Mature Harappan, late Harappan and O.C.P. cultures. While Rindhna-I, Thaska-I, Kalpa, Gadhwa-I, Khanpur-I Kalan has yielded the ceramic assemblage of Early Harappan Period,⁵ While ancient sites located in Gadhwa, Rindhana villages belongs to Mature Harappan Period.⁶ Archaeological material recovered from Thaska, Chapra, Baroda, Khanpur Kalan villages represents the late Harappan phase in this area. O.C.P. (Ochre Colored Pottery) culture succeeds the Harappan culture in this region, potsherds of this period has been reported from Gohana, Pipli-I, Bhathgaon-3, Baroda and NuranKhera villages. Near the beginning of 1st millennium people belonging to Painted Grey Ware culture settled down in this area, evidence of this culture has been reported from Baroda, Chapra, Khanpur Kalan, Kheri Damkan-I.⁶

Sonapat city is located at a very important (politically and economically) strategic point. It was connected in early historic times to the north-trade route running parallel to the Grand Trunk Road between Mathura and Thanesar. Buddhist text *Therigatha* mentions about two Buddhist nuns *Mittakalika* and *Nandutara* living in the township of *Kurus* named *Kammasadhamma*. This city has been identified as the modern village Kamahspur of this district.⁷ The *Ashtadhyayi* of *Panini* also mention this city as *Sonaparstha*.⁸ Discovery of Northern Black Polished Ware from numerous parts of this district suggests that probably this area was well inhabited during the Early Historic Period. The discovery of a hoard of Indo-Greek coins belonging to Indo-Greek kings-Heliocles, Apollodotus, Strato, Antimachus II, Antialcidas, Philoxenus, Lysias, Menander, Diomedes, Amyntas and Hermaeus from Sonapat, gives us the information about the reign of Indo-Greek during the second century B.C. which lasted till the beginning of 1st. Century A.D.⁹ A discovery of a hoard of 10000 copper coins from Sonapat (reported by Dr. Silak Ram) attests the existence of Kushana and Yaudheys in this region.¹⁰ Thereafter, *Paryag Prashasti* of Samudragupta mentions about his conquest over the yaudhyas indicate that the area of Sonapat would have remain under the domain of Gupta rulers till the advent of Vardhana dynasty in the 6th century A.D.¹¹ A copper seal from Sonapat bearing the name of King Harshavardhana has been reported by J.S. Fleet.¹² After the decline of Vardhanas this area was included in the empire of Mihir Bhoja-I (836-89 AD) of Gurjara Pratihara dynasty. An inscription from Pehowa belonging to the reign of King Mihir Bhoja attests their rule over the Haryana state.¹³ After the decline of Parthiharas, Tomar rulers occupied the Delhi and ruled the whole of Haryana. During the early medieval period, in 1037 CE, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni defeated Dipalhar, the governor of Sonapat. In this war Mahmud's son Masud is said to have been sent from Hansi to Sonapat, possibly via Khokhrakot (Rohtak) to extend his suzerainty over these regions. Later on, the Tomara rulers

were successful in recovering these areas from the Ghaznavis who ruled these areas. As indicated by another inscription of 1328 AD,¹⁴ now kept in the Delhi Red Fort Museum, and Delhi respectively by the middle of the 12th century, this political change allowed these two powers to gain supremacy over Delhi and its environs. ensured a keen competition between the contemporary political powers. In the mid of 12th Century A.D. the Chahmanas of defeated the Tomaras and this area become a part of their kingdom along with Delhi. But their victory couldn't last long as they were defeated by the *Ghurid* rulers in the famous and decisive 2nd battle of Tarain in the year 1192 AD. which established the Islamic rule in Delhi including Sonipat, Due to its proximity to Delhi, Sonipat continued to be under the suzerainty of the rulers of Delhi. During the sultanate period the area of sonipat remained as part of Jagir allotted to important persons. This area was governed by King Balban (1266-86 AD.), Firoz Shah Tuglaq (1351-88 AD.) and Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-26 AD.).¹⁵ The tomb of Khwaja Khizar at Sonipat was built during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi. This monument is a fine example of early Turkish architecture in the region and similarly a square pillar located near the Imam's cemetery, was also built in 1479 AD.¹⁶

Sonipat maintained its strategic position even during the Mughal period. During the time of Akbar (1556-1605 AD.), his minister Todar Mal divided northern India into small administrative units known as circles. The territory of Sonipat constituted parts of the province of Delhi. This land was generally given by the Mughal emperors to nobles in military *jagir*. In the first decade, soon after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb (1707 AD.), this area was witnessed the advent of Sikhs. Areas of Sehri Khanda and Kharkhauda was used a base by the Sikh Commander Baba Banda Singh Bahadur during the years 1709-10 in order to invade Delhi and neighboring areas, but due to internal disturbance in Punjab he couldn't kept his hold over this area.¹⁷ After the decline of the Mughal Empire, the claims of royal grantees were contested by various personalities, but Scindia managed to conquer the region. However, he was not destined to hold out for long west of the Yamuna. Because on December 30, 1802, with the treaty of 'Surji Arjungaon', the western possessions of Scindia went to the British and came under the administration of the North-Western Provinces. And the British were not willing to occupy the large area west of the Yamuna because of their problems and limitations.¹⁸ As a result many prominent people who had either supported the British or remained loyal to Marathas. The British settled in this tract to form a barrier of independent outposts between the frontier and the Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Accordingly Kharkhoda and Sonipat were assigned as life jagir to Lal Singh of Kaithal. But this property ended up in the British Government on the death of Lal Singh in 1818 AD. In 1824 AD.¹⁹ five districts namely Panipat, Rohtak, Hisar Gurgaon and Delhi were carved out. out as separate units and consequently the whole area of Sonipat as well as that of Delhi was brought under the Resident and this arrangement continued till 1832 AD, when the Resident became the Commissioner and Sonipat district was passed to Rohtak and till 1841 AD Stayed there In that year the Rohtak district was abolished and the Sonipat region was once again transferred to Delhi but the very next year in 1842 AD the Rohtak district was reconstituted. And Sonipat also became a part of it. In 1857 AD, the people of Sonipat rebelled against the colonial rule. Under the leadership of Risaledar Birasat Ali and Babar Khan, the Ranghars freed up the large part of this area from the british control. Lt. Hudson was sent to suppress the rebellion and he gained the control over the Sonipat after a tough battle. His statement that 'the Ranghars of Sonipat were fought like Devils' showcases their valor.²⁰ After the Britishers suppressed the rebellion the Delhi region along the Yamuna belt up to Karnal including Sonipat, north of Punjab by British Government Notification No. 606 of 13 April 1858 was transferred to the Western Provinces. But again in 1861 Sonipat was attached to

Delhi. Villagers like Kundli, Samri and Purkha were all deployed in Sonipat to keep a close watch on the activities of the residents. Because they participated in the freedom struggle against the British Empire in 1857. Till 12 December 1911, when the capital was changed from Calcutta to Delhi and Delhi Tehsil was separated from Punjab, Sonipat remained with Delhi but after 1912 Sonipat was transferred to Rohtak from 1 October the very next year and thus remained with Rohtak till 27 September 1972 when the separate district of Sonipat was created.

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