

# UNIT 141 – UPSC - Geographical knowledge of the vedic period.

The geographical evidence as to be found in the hymns of Vedas thros some light on the course of Indo-Aryan migration and the origin of Hinduism. Whether the Indo-Aryans came from Central Asia or not depends largely on the interpretation of the geographical allusions in the Rig and Yajur Vedas. The hymns in praise of rivers in the 10th blcok are interesting. The author while singing the greatness of the Sindhu enumerates at least 19 rivers including the Ganges. The fifth Stanza gives a list of 10 streams, small and great-Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Satluj, Ravi, Chenab, Jhelum, Maruwardwan (in J&K), Sushoma (Rowalpindi District) and probably Kanshi in the same district. This system of rivers did not remain the Saraswati. The existing delta of the Indus has been formed since the time of Alexander the Great.



The Vedic hymns reveal the initial Aryan settlements in India : western tributaries of the Indus, the Gomti (modern Gomal) the Krumu (modern Kurram) and the Kubha (modern Kabul). The one river mentioned in the North of Kabul is Suvastu (modern swat).

But the main focus of the Rig Vedic settlements was in the Punjab and the Delhi region. When the Rig-Vedic hymns were compiled the focus of Aryan settlement was the region between the Yamuna and the Sutlaj, south of modern Ambala and laong the upper course of river Saraswati. The most frequently mentioned rivers are the Sindhu (Indus), the Sarasvati (modern Sarsuti), the Drishadvati (modern Chitang), and the five streams of the Punjab.

Regarding the other geographical features, the Vedic poets knew the Himalayas but not the land south of Yamuna, since they did not mention the Vindhayas, In the east also the Aryans did not expand beyond Yamuna; for the river Ganga is mentioned only once in one late hymn.

And possibly, the Aryans had no knowledge of the oceans since the word 'samudra' in the Vedic period meant a pool of water. But the later Vedic knowledge shows that the Aryans knew the two seas, the Himalayas and the Vindhyan mountains and generally the entire Indo-Gangetic plain.

The Aryans used various kinds of pottery and the sites where the painted grey ware are found, confirm the Aryan settlements. The Vedic texts show that the Aryans expanded from the Punjab over the whole of western Uttar Pradesh covered by the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. The Bharatas and Purus known as Kuru people first lived between Sarasvati and Drishadvati just on the fringe of the Doab. Soon the Kurus occupied Delhi and the Upper portion of the doab, that is the area called Kurukshetra, After this event, the Kurus joined with the people called Panchalas who occupied the middle portion of the Doab or the modern districts of Bareilly, Dadaun and Farrukabad. It was the Kuru-Panchalas who had set up their capital at Hastinapur situated in the district of Meerut. Later the Kauravas and the Pandavas belonging to the same Kuru clan fought out a battle which led to the extinction of the Kuru clan.

And by 600 B.C. the Aryans spread from the Doab further east to Kosala in Eastern U.P. and Vedeha in north Bihar. The former town is associated with the story of Ramchandra, but it is not mentioned in Vedic literature.