Southern Bengal Delta - A Hub of Ancient Civilization and Cultural Assimilation: A Case Study of Chandraketugarh and Allied Sites

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Abstract: Chandraketugarh is a very important archaeological site located in southern West Bengal. In this paper a deliberate effort has been made to explore the close similarities between the signatures left by the Sapta Sindhu culture and those left by the ancient civilization that had evolved in the delta region of southern West Bengal, highlighting Chandraketugarh. The various aspects like trade, similarity of artifacts, its national and international importance, extent, spread, town-planning, and decay have been kept under observation, and some possible views related to all these aspects have been suggested. So, this is an attempt to justify the importance of Bengal delta as a hub of ancient culture, and important physiographical regions, which like many other sites, displays the importance migrations of the Sapta Sindhu people to other parts of India.

Keywords: Chandraketugarh, Deltaic Southern Bengal, Sapta Sindhu, Trade, Migration, Artifacts, Civilization

Introduction

The assemblage of towns in the Bengal delta (Deltaic Region of Southern West Bengal) as in eastern India is reminiscent of a similar assemblage seen in ancient north-west India during Indus-Sraswati valley civilization. This is due to the availability of resources in the Sapta Sindhu delta, and proximity to the rivers and the Arabian Sea. This is why the region was an ancient cultural hub. Similarly, the Bengal delta region could have become an ancient cultural hub.

The Sapta Sindhu townships were not only regional centres, but their influence spread throughout the world (Borsboom 2016) in order to sustain the civilization’s socio-economic and cultural set-up. This made them people internationally important. They penetrated into ancient cultural zones. Keeping in mind that the paper is an attempt to explore the importance of Bengal delta as a hub of ancient cultural set-up, and
important physiographical regions, which like many other sites, displays the importance of the Sapta Sindhu migrations to other parts of India (Borsboom 2016). The southern Bengal region experienced an essential blend of deltaic condition (facilitating port-based economy), and full-fledged urban township development with extended rurban setup surrounding the central node. In case of the urban setup of the deltaic region of Sapta Sindhu, Upinder Singh writes, “McC. Adams also highlighted the multiple roles played by cities. They were nodes for the appropriation and redistribution of agricultural surpluses (Singh 2008). Similarly in case of the sites in the Varendra region of presnt-day Bangladesh like Paharpur and Mahasthangarh, Sengupta states that these ‘do bring out a very ancient archeological heritage for Bengal consisting of both well-developed urban centers and surrounding ‘rural’ settlements often forming parts of agglomerations (Sengupta 2011). According to Nitish Sengupta (2011), “Several efforts have been made to identify Chandraketugarh with places mentioned in Greek and Roman texts such as Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and the work of Ptolemy. The former text from an anonymous writer refers to a flourishing town called ‘Gang’ located on the banks of River Ganga. Ptolemy also describes ‘Gange’ as the capital city of Gargaridai people situated in deltaic southern Bengal.” If Gangahriday was an eminent kingdom in eastern India then Chandraketugarh could have been the economic capital of the kingdom.

The Sapta Sindhu people had radiated in all directions (Borsboom 2016). Their eastward flow brought them to Bengal. Similarly, the people after settling in southern Bengal, had moved even southwards by land, and also further eastwards via both land and sea.

“According to Rakhaladas Bandyopadhyay (1909), during the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, Gargaridai was independent like Andhra kingdom and was joined with Kalinga. Dr. N.K. Sahu said that the Ganga dynasty of Orissa were the descendents of Gargaridai people who migrated to South India from Tamulk, South Bengal. He further said that Gargaridai people occupied the entire eastern coast of India stretching from Bengal to Kalinga and Madras.” (Sen et al 2015) People also took voyages to Sri Lanka and Indonesia from the port-town of Tamralipta (Sengupta 2011), which was Chandraketugarh’s contemporary.

The Sapta Sindhu culture and its antecedent ancient civilization that had evolved in the region of southern West Bengal (Figure 1), were both delta-based, and were possibly built by the same people. They might have had constituting city-states. Both had many stages of evolution as well, and it seems that had shifted locations with time and according to convenience. They exhibit other similarities too- in their heavy reliance on trade, and the important position they occupied in silk route trade network, and in terms of similar techniques in navigation might have had used. It is widely known that they hold a significant place in the history of the nation. Not only this. They were of international nature, and this led to cultural exchanges. To add to this, both the geographical regions have yielded a lot of artifacts which prove that they were adept in
the use of terracotta. Moreover, both exhibit similar artifacts (pottery, figurines, jewellery, etc.). Interestingly, similar artifacts have been noticed in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and other places in the ancient world also. Apart from this, there are other miscellaneous similarities.

**Figure 1: Map of Study Area**

The significant research project published by the Kharagpur IIT also stresses on the similarities between the two cultural hubs, and that both were built by the same people. (Sen et al 2015) In order to substantiate the arguments a series of pictures showing the marked similarity between the artifacts used by both the civilizations have been provided in the course of the paper. “Between circa fourth century BC to 3rd century AD large settlements emerged in southern, western and northern Bengal, consisting of West Bengal and Bangladesh. Mahasthan, Bangarh, Chandraketugarh, Tamruk, Mangalkot, Pokharna are some of the principal urban centres.” (Sengupta 2011).

**Location and Timeline of Chandraketugarh**

Chandraketugarh consists of several villages located in the North 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The latitudinal and longitudinal extension of the node is 22°41’48.28”N & 88°41’19.38”E. As stated by Nitish Sengupta (2011), “Chandraketugarh now ranks with
such famous archeological sites as Mathura and Taxila, located in the Deganga police station of North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal and comprising several villages like Berachampa, Ranakhula, Ghorapota, Dhanpota, Singrati, Shanpukur, Jhikra and Ghazitala, these sites contain priceless terracotta artifacts and pottery works produced between the third century BC and the third century AD."

Chandraketugarh was the most important site, and on the basis of these points it can be justified that it could be a part of a well-developed civilization, similar to the Indus-Saraswati culture. Similarities of Bengali artifacts with foreign artifacts (like Egyptian) further signify its international importance. The evolution of Chandraketugarh has a span of 2000 years. Nitish Sengupta (2011) has provided a timeline of the successive stages of development of Chandraketugarh (Table 1).

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<td>AD 300-AD 500</td>
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<td>C. 300-200 BCE</td>
<td>Maurya</td>
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<td>AD 500-AD 750</td>
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<td>Period-III</td>
<td>200 BCE-AD 5</td>
<td>Sunga</td>
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**Similarities in Trade Routes and Same Locational Characteristics**

Harappan sites and post-Harappan settlements in different parts of India seem to hint that Indus migrants, traders, colonizers, etc. had established many centers outside the land of the seven rivers. In a 2016 *The Times of India* news report, Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey writes: "A detailed study conducted by IIT-Kharagpur - using GPS, one of the latest tech tools - could well turn the clock back on Varanasi, indicating that the holy town has been a continuous human settlement since the days of the Indus Valley Civilization, around 6000 years ago...The results that have come from a detailed geo exploration through the GPS conducted through 100 metre deep bore holes all over Varanasi shows continuous settlement history till 2000 BC...The researchers are also trying to set up a riverine route from Kolkata to Varanasi to Prayag (Allahabad). Since ancient times, people used this route but the advent of the railways stopped it." (Pandey 2016). It has been mentioned in the ‘project one’ on Chandraketugarh: Rediscovering a missing link in Indian history- “The position of Chandraketugarh has been acknowledged on the basis of Maritime-Land route memoirs and textual historic evidences obtained from within India and also from the eastern and western parts of Asia.” (Sen et al 2015) It is believed that Chandraketugarh, one of the oldest known urban sites of Bengal attributed to Harappan immigrants, is not more than 2500-3000 years old. Maybe, it is older. Or, may be a much older Bengali site is awaiting discovery. According to Wim Borsboom (2016), Uschi Ringleb (2016) and others, these
people also went eastwards to distant lands, crossing the borders of present day India. Perhaps Chandrakerugarh was a site where they had halted. Then, some of them left for far off shores, while some stayed back. After becoming aware of the predominantly sea-based migration route (from north-west India to northern Europe) suggested by Wim Borsboom (2016), it now seems that the Phoenicians followed the footprints of the bell-beaker culture people who had possibly migrated to Scandanavia from Asia (most probably India) before them. It is possible that the Phoenicians were doing it without the knowledge of their bell-beaker predecessors. Or, maybe they themselves descended from the bell-beaker people. The possibility that the Phoenicians might be Indians (or half-Indians) was suggested long ago in a 1902 essay by Rajeshwar Gupta (1902). Before the Adi Ganga and other channels dried up due to human intervention and other natural factors, the same channels were possibly followed in different ages (Pre-Mauryan to British) for trade and transport in Bengal.

Same is the case with silk-route trade. Perhaps the route too, contrary to the accepted belief, was active for thousands of years before the Han dynasty (207 BCE- 220 CE). Uschi Ringleb (2016) notes “…it is clear that Indian traders and navigators penetrated Southeast Asia in the pre-Christian era: evidence from Rig Veda shows that there was considerable maritime voyages and trade going on during and perhaps long before the Indus Valley civilization.” This means that South East Asia (or parts of it) was possibly colonized by Indians (or Indo-Iranians) well before the Christian era. So, all these might point towards a much earlier date for the silk-route. (Note: It is also believed that China, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, or at least parts of these, were colonized by the historic and pre-historic North-west Indians or Indo-Iranians).

Same thing might have happened in Bengal- the province might have been colonized long before the estimated date. The Sapta Sindhu people were the masters of the rivers and seas and it seems that they did not stop showing their skills even after settling in Bengal. Moreover, through Bengal, they were able to access the Bay of Bengal, which was the gateway to South East Asia and beyond. It is being conjectured that Chandraketugarh might have played an important part in Mauryan and silk-route trade. “It is believed that the city [Chandraketugarh] had trade contacts with international frontiers or lands like countries in the Southeast Asia and also in the Mediterranean and perhaps, indirectly with even the later Greco-Roman world in its formative and early days” (Sen et al 2015).

With the help of satellite imaging (Google Earth), the channel patterns in and around Chandraketugarh and De Ganga have been detected. This is also very important in this context. Like the Adi Ganga, the Suti river (a spill channel flowing between Hooghly River in west and Ichamati River in East), which used to be an important trade-channel for Nilganj, which is approximately eight kilometers from Barasat town, and other places, is also extinct today. Moreover, the Bagjola canal (Sonai River) has become weak now. It was used by the Britishers, and judging by the Mauryan ruins found at Clive House, Dum Dum, it is being inferred that it was also an active channel.
during the heydays of Chandraketugarh. Also, it is being hypothesized that the Sonai and Nowai were sister channels whose water currents were utilized by the traders used for moving in and out of Nilganj. A similar technique might have been in use thousands of years ago, as suggested by Thor Heyerdahl (1984) and Wim Borsboom. This could be cultural continuity, or just sailors’ common sense.

Perhaps trading was seasonal, and the traders waited for the right time of the year, very much like the peasants. For instance, the ‘Bali yatra’ is a festival that is still a part of Oriya culture (Orissa Tourism n.d.). “Monsoon plays a predominant role in the daily life of the people of South Asia. Use of the monsoon wind in the Indian Ocean for maritime trade was a boon to sailing ships to reach overseas countries. The first known evidence about knowledge of monsoon wind is from Hippalus (AD 45–47). Mariners from Orissa, India used to set out on their journey to Southeast Asian countries during the northeast monsoon (trade wind) and return during the southwest monsoon. The flow of wind and current was favourable for both the onward and return journey. Similarly, during the historical period, Arabs sailed in the Indian Ocean with the help of monsoon wind and Europeans, particularly the Portuguese, sailed their vessels in such a manner that they could reach the shores of India before the southwest monsoon and return only after the beginning of the northeast monsoon. This note details the historical evidence, which indicates that the mariners of Orissa were aware of the monsoon wind and currents and its use for maritime trade since the last two thousand years, if not earlier. Additionally, the study shows that maritime trade to far-off countries was a seasonal phenomenon and there is no change of seasons of southwest and northeast monsoons since then.” (Tripathi and Raut 2006). “The presence of Kharoshthi script in some of the inscriptions of Chandraketugarh suggests close contact with the north-western part of the subcontinent where this script was prevalent.” (Sengupta 2011).

**Complex Urban System and Surrounding Urban Set-Up**

It is believed that by 200 BC Chandraketugarh had become a well-established site. And it lasted till 1200 AD/ CE. However, its golden period was 200 BCE-200 AD. It can be discerned very easily that all the eminent cities of the Indus-Saraswati valley got their ultimate stage of development through successive sub-stages (Indus Valley Civilization n.d.). Different geographical factors and attraction for international trade encouraged the pattern and extent of growth. Chandraketugarh should have followed such sub-stages to reach to its ultimate prosperity (Banglapedia n.d.). Number of evidences have been gathered by the archeologists, that reveals its existence in the Pre-Mauryan times to the times of the Pala and Sena dynasty. As the available artifacts are from circa 600 BCE, so the consecutive layering of urban development could have taken place from its origin to its ultimate decay. But the question should be the magnitude of the extent of the city. The contemporary urban or semi-urban centers are large enough to acquire or carry huge population load. But this does not mean that the condition was optimum. The selection of the location for building a city could reflect the nature of
predominating occupation. In a port-based city the dependence on the trade was the main base of economy and such evidences are quite common in the historical records.

**Factors that Might have Affected the City’s Growth**

Though the vast deltaic plain could have given a significant scope to cultivation, but the salinity in the soil and frequent flooding can be considered as main hindrance for agricultural growth.

**Siltation and change in river course:** The process of siltation and the changing course of the rivers through the ages might have had an impact on the urban set-up and civilization. Though siltation influences channel morphology and, as we know, continuous siltation reduces channel depth, the question arises about the fluvial stability of the region, and consecutive growth of the city. It can be justified in such a way that a city of such magnitude could not be built if the river (i.e. Bidyadhari River) changed its course frequently. Though such changing nature of the fluvio geomorphic set up of the southern Bengal delta might have always played an important role in the changing nature of the cities, kingdoms and civilizations. As stated by Nitish Sengupta (2011), “The history of the delta is inextricably linked with these rivers and their intersecting streams. Kingdoms and cities have come and gone as these rivers changed course”.

Nitish Sengupta (2011) also provides an example: “Frequent changes in the riverine courses have affected prosperous tracts and indeed the entire communication system. One of the most spectacular examples we find is the transformation of the present-day Sunderbans. According to archeological evidence this was at one time a prosperous and populous tract, but got depopulated and turned into a vast estuarian forest land inhabited by tigers and crocodiles.” However, it is possible that people changed locations along with the change in the course of the rivers. During this phase the rivers could have gone through the successive changes of its course. The ‘numerous changes in course of the rivers Ganga and Roopnarayan appear to have played havoc with many of the ancient ruins’ in Tamluk (Sengupta 2011). But if the city of Chandraketugarh had maintained the same location then it would be very interesting whether the river has changed its course with time or not.

**Tidal influence:** With decreasing or increasing water flow in the rivers due to tidal influence, the town expansion might have become modified. For instance, “While Fa-Hien describes Tamrallipta as situated on the seaboard, by the time Hieun-Tsang came to Bengal; He noticed that it was situated on a creek somewhat away from the main Bay of Bengal. According to Hieun-Tsang this port town spread over about 250 miles and was the point of convergence of the land and the sea trade-route.” (Sengupta 2011).

**Floods:** The cities located on river banks and deltaic regions have faced consecutive flood conditions in a year. “The three most ancient civilizations on Earth all developed
on fertile flood plains. The flood plains between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what are today Syria and Iraq, are known as Mesopotamia, “the land between the rivers.” Ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia include Sumeria, Akkadia, Assyria, and Babylonia. The flood plains of the Indus River, in what is today Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan, gave rise to the Indus River Civilization, also known as the Harappan civilization. Finally, ancient Egyptian culture developed around the fertile flood plains of the Nile.” (National Geographic n.d.).

The deltaic fluvial environment goes through changes with time. The aerial view of Chandraketugarh shows its location beside a semi-wide paleochannel, which could be the former Bidyadhari. But the flood condition could have affected the prosperity. Floods could be the reason behind the decay of the Harappan culture (Dales 1965). It is possible that like the Indus cities, the city of Chandraketugarh had changed its location due to floods.

For instance, Madhabpur village is located beside Suti river in the North 24 Parganas, to the north of Barasat town. Few years ago an earthen pitcher shaped pot with sculpted face of Lord Buddha was unearthed at Madhabpur village (Roy 1980). This was an excellent old example representing magnification and extension of Buddhist culture or Buddhism in this area. Moreover, Kashimpur village is located at a distance of few kilometers from Madhabpur village. In this village a statue made of black basalt locally called ‘Shiver Hati’ (Roy 1980) is well-known for purpose of worship. According to the specialists this was the hand of a thousand years old statue of Lord Buddha.

The artifacts unearthed in Madhabpur and its vicinity could be the remnants of the artifacts used in Chandraketugarh and its vicinity, which might have been washed away by flood waters to Madhabpur, many kilometers away. Otherwise, some scattered habitations (which could be a fishing village, for instance), carrying some signatures of artifacts used during the Pala age, might have had developed around Chandraketugarh. It is being suggested that the people of Chandraketugarh might have built artificial embankments or constructed artificial mounds to counter the rising flood waters. Annual flooding was both a boon and a curse for the Indus-Saraswati people too. Wim Borsboom believes that the first rudimentary step-pyramids were built by the Harappans. These served as artificial embankments to check flooding. They carried this knowledge to the Nile valley via Mesopotamia (Note: Mesopotamians too had the knowledge of building Ziggurats). Thor Heyerdahl suggested that the Sumerian ziggurat in Oman (the first just discovered outside the Tigris-Euphrates valley) resembled the structure he later saw in Mohenjo-daro in the Indus valley. (Borsboom 2017).

**Cultural Homogeneity or Cultural Continuity?**

In case of the Egyptian pyramids, much of its original outer casing is lost today. It has been used through the years in the construction of the mosques and palaces of Giza.
Even many bricks from the ruins of Mohenjo daro were removed and used for the railway project in the British age. Of course they did not know how historically important those bricks were! Same might have happened in and around Chandraketugarh, Nilganj and other places. During the field trip to Rangpur, Nilganj, three brick platforms (refer Figure 2, series 1, a-h) were noticed along the dry bed of the once important Suti river. These are supposedly not more than 150 years old, according to the locals. But the bricks closely resembled those used in Chandraketugarh’s excavated mound known as ‘Khana Mihirer Dhipi’ (refer Figure 2, series 1, I and j). The site of Chandraketugarh lasted till the Pala-Sena age. Hence, it can be suggested that this might be the result of copying or imitating earlier forms of architecture. This is also seen in the ancient Indus valley where, interestingly, a certain model or pattern was followed by generations, and the houses and other structures were built according to the earlier blueprint.

Moreover, the circular kind of brick-patterns which were seen and photographed at Rangpur, Nilganj (refer Figure 2, series 1, f), is eerily reminiscent of the brick-made designs seen on the ruins of ‘Khana Mihirer dhipi’ (refer Figure 2, series 2, a and b), one of the excavated mounds at Chandraketugarh, which supposedly belongs to the Gupta age, as informed by the ASI. The ruins were photographed during a field trip a few years ago.

Figure 2: Shapes of Bricks, Arrangement of Bricks and Architecture

**Figure 2 References:** 1) *Series of Brick Shape*: a) Bricks from the first platform/ ghat along the dry bed of the Suti river (Pic.: Authors.), b) and c) Bricks from the second ghat that leads to a pond, which was once a part of the Suti only (Pic.: Authors.), d) and e) Arrangement pattern of the bricks from the second ghat (Pic.: Authors.), f) Closer view of the circular brick-pattern at the second ghat (Pic.: Authors.), g) Bricks from the third ghat along the now dry Suti river (Pic.: Authors.), h) Side view of the third brick platform (Pic.: Authors.), i) and j) Khana Mihirer Dhipi, Chandraketugarh (Pic. courtesy:

**Figure 3: Similar Artifacts from Different Regions**

**Figure 3 References**: 1) *Series of Female Figurines*: a) Sapta Sindhu and Mauryan (Pic. courtesy: Bibhu Dev Misra), b) Chandraketugarh (Pic. courtesy: Pinterest), c)

The ancient architecture and bricks found at the Moghalmari site in West Midnapore district are worth-mentioning (refer Figure 2, series 2, d). The ruins are that of a Buddhist monastery which was active during the Pala period. It is being thought that the Madhupur archaeological site might shed some light on the whole issue. After going through freelance writer and traveler Rangan Datta’s blog (Rangan Datta n.d.), it has been noticed that the ruins excavated at the ‘Khana Mihirer Dhipi’, Dhosa, Tilpi, and Moghalmari sites show marked similarity in the shapes and sizes of the bricks used.

**Similarities in the Artifacts Used**

As stated earlier, both the cultures were of international nature, and this led to cultural exchanges. To add to this, both the geographical regions have yielded a lot of artifacts which prove that they were adept in the use of terracotta. Moreover, both exhibit similar artifacts (pottery, figurines, jewellery, etc.). Interestingly, similar artifacts have been noticed in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and other places in the ancient world also. Apart from this, there are other miscellaneous similarities. Therefore, a cultural continuity can be seen (Figures 3 and 4).

**Time-Based Nodal Development and Shifting**

Perhaps the people of Chandaketugarh built 2 important centres, one in the Sunderbans, and another one in Dum Dum during Mauryan times. Apart from the possible reasons presented earlier in the paper, population pressure might be the reason (or one of the reasons) behind this. Evidence gathered at Sunderban shows existence of town-like structure or buildup more than 200 years younger to Chandaketugarh (Pandey 2016). Another ruin of ancient town has been found in the ‘Dhosa’ village near Gocharan, South 24 Parganas.

Artifacts of the excavated site represent a cultural development of 1st and 2nd century BCE. Surprisingly, the artifacts have survived the extreme salinity of the Sunderban region. The ‘Dhosa’ excavation is reminiscent of a similar civilization ‘Gangaridae’ as mentioned by Fa Hien. It was also a prominent Buddhist site (Datta 2007).
**Figure 4 References:** 1) *Series of Male Torso and Attire*: a) Male torso, from Sapta Sindhu (Pic. courtesy: Google.), b) Jina statue from Chandraketugarh (Pic. courtesy: SANDHI.), c) Priest-king statue from Sapta Sindhu (Pic. courtesy: Google.), d) Male dress from...

The photograph of the Dhosa site does remind one of the Indus valley sites’ base-level construction-patterns, especially as seen in the 9500 year old site of Bhirrana (Figure 5).

Figure 5: a) Bhirrana (in Haryana), Sapta Sindhu; b) Dhosa-Tilpi (South 24 Parganas), Southern West Bengal

Connecting the Sites
The consecutive excavations at Chandraketugarh, Moghalmari, Dhosa and Tilpi represent the ancient modern cultural setup that had developed on the Bengal delta. The average distance between these sites and Chandraketugarh is 30-35 kilometers. It can be assumed that number of different townships or urban centers have grown up by surrounding the node of Chandraketugarh.

Places like Nilganj and Madhabpur might have gained importance in later phases, when the city started declining or losing its earlier importance. The major port city of
Saptagram (Figure 6) was very important too. It is also possible that they were built by the outcasts from Chandraketugarh, or the people of Chandraketugarh only, who started spreading in different directions. The continuous urban shifting could have converted Chandraketugarh into a necropolic state.

![Location Map of the Sites](image)

**Figure 6: Connecting Chandraketugarh and Allied Sites**

If it is kept in mind that Kotalipara was the capital of the Gangahridai (as the Kharagpur IIT research states) then it can also be stated that the Chandraketugarh could have had developed in the westernmost portion of the region to grab the availability of the trade route with the international trade nodes through Adi Ganga and Bidyadhari. The political stability could be a prime factor that helped to encourage the prosperity and stability of trade in Sapta Sindhu and also in the case of Bengal delta. Supporting the view of Gideon Sjoberg (1964), Upinder Singh argues that the ‘political control was crucial in maintaining the social organization of empires and providing the stability necessary for the development of trade and commerce’. (Singh 2008). But it could also be possible that sometimes the political inter-collision can affect the trade. If it is assumed that the prosperity of the trade in Chndraketugarh has encouraged other political powers to grab Gangahriday then the unstable political environment could have ruined the prosperity of the whole kingdom. Since Chandraketugarh was the most eminent port city at the south-west apart, if it was struck first or made to suffer a political turmoil by the rival or expanding kingdoms, then it would have been easy to weaken this kingdom.
The probable age of these artifacts found in these sites ranged from at least 1500 years ago. This can be concluded that within a phase of 2500-1000 years the southern Bengal delta has experienced development of urban settlement and urban trade-based economy. Though a centre or significant town had become prosperous, but other small cities had also developed surrounding the city, thriving on the available facilities. As it is known that ‘silk route’ was the most significant trade route covering the international market by sea, the delta region with enormous and significant inner waterways helped these towns and specially Chandraketugarh to relate with international trade. This helped to build an eminent port-based city 2000 years ago. It is now very difficult to say about the expansion of the Chandraketugarh city but on the basis of the nature, magnitude and probable relation with the trade routes, it can be assumed that Chandraketugarh could have been as large as any of the Indus valley civilization towns, and had expanded on both banks of the Bidyadhari.

**Conclusion**

The paper is an attempt to connect the dots. Changes in ancient physiography brought changes in demography, and resulted in the development of new towns and cultural centres. Moynamoti, Paharpur and Pandu rajar dhipi are some other important sites in West Bengal and Bangladesh which could shed a considerable amount of light on the Gangahridaya kingdom. Chandraketugarh’s true importance can never be estimated if it remains unexcavated. Whatever is visible above the ground in Chandraketugarh might just be the tip of the iceberg. It is possible that Chandraketugarh was a city-state- a city-state that included a main city, assemblage of agricultural villages, trade ports, and industrial zones. Dr. Ranajit Pal opines that the Phoenicians might have taken the concept of the city-state to Greece from Indo-Iran. Similarly, people of the Harappan civilization might have brought the concept from their Indo-Iranian homeland to the land of ancient Bengal. Perhaps several strong city-states like Chandraketugarh had gradually merged to form the kingdom of Gangahridaya.

**Scope for Further Research**

Proper dating of the civilization is required. It would confirm its antiquity, the true date of the influence of the Indus-Saraswati culture on the region (the cultural assimilation), and might place it at par with the Indus-Saraswati culture too. Further research on a broad scale is needed to determine the highest extent and importance of the Gangahridaya kingdom, and its connections with other contemporary kingdoms and cultures of India. The possible migration of the people to other parts of the world-cultural exchanges, their influence on other cultures, and colonization of new lands.

**References**


