
Status of the Cattle in Ancient Indian Literature and Archaeology: A Case Study of Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: In this paper author tried to explain the importance of cattle during many periods of ancient Indian history with special reference is given to Madhya Pradesh. For this purpose author took the help of ancient literary and archaeological sources which give us the immense information about the cattle and its value. Cattle depiction in rock art, on pottery motif, as terracotta figurines and as a symbol on coins all aspect were taken and with the help of them author explained the thoughts, beliefs, cultural and archaeological evolution of human in ancient times.

Keywords: Cattle, Literature, Archaeology, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Historic

Introduction

The sukta 4 of Athrvaveda (*Apāṁyō agrēpratimā babhūvaprabhuḥ sarvasmai pr̄thivīvadēvī, Pitāvatsānāṁpatirādyān' yāsāhastrēpōṣēapi nahkr̄nōtu*) means the bull who is like water and standing like an idol, who is master of all as earth, who is the father of calf and husband of the 'Adhanya' (the one who could not be killed) cows, may make us prosperous through thousand ways (Sharma, 2015).

This shloka from Atharvaveda shows us the importance of cattle in ancient Indian history and literature. The cattle were a symbol of prosperity and wisdom and in every period of ancient India as we can see the importance of cattle through many aspects and here the special reference is given to Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh is the second largest state of Indian union. It lies between 21°16' N to 26°41' N and 74°24' E to 82°43' E and bounded by the Aravalli in the west, the Vindhyas and the Satpuras in the south and Ganga-Yamuna doab in the North. Some parts of the region covered with rich forest and have rich flora and fauna. This type of physical environment had its impact on cultural pattern as well as peculiar political situation of India (Jain, 1997:1). On the basis of Geological formations central provinces divided into six formations such as; Alluvium formations, the Deccan trap formations, The Gondowana

system, the Vindhyan system, the transition system and the Gneissic system (Imperial Gazetteer 1908:6) regionally it's divided into different regions like, Malwa, Nimad, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand. Along the Narmada valley there are some fresh-water beds, they were certainly deposited by streams totally unrelated to the Narmada, which there is every reason to suppose is the most recent river system of India and the fauna we found from Madhya Pradesh included Bison (*Bos gaurus*) too (Imperial Gazetteer, 1908: 11- 12). Today it is divided into many districts and we have so many ancient sites in this region which are related to Mesolithic, chalcolithic and early historical period.

Talking about the history of Madhya Pradesh it started from the Pleistocene period. The evidence of human skull found from Hathnora, Hoshangabad district which acclaimed to be earliest human evidence of not only Madhya Pradesh but even of India. Then we can see the cultural continuity through many periods of ancient history in Madhya Pradesh (Sharma, 2014: 6). We found the name of Madhya Pradesh in ancient literature also; Buddhist and Brahmanical literature mentioned it as '*Vindhyatavi*', and '*Somaparvat*'. During Mahajanpada period the ancient name of some cities were *Avanti* (Ujjain), *Aakar* (Vidisha), *Anup* (Maheshwar), *Chedi* (Tripuri), *Dasharna* (Malwa), *Vats* (Gwalior), *Dashpur* (Mandsaur), *Kaknadvot* (Sanchi) etc. which found from many inscriptions and coins also (Sharma, 2014: 17, 19).

In this paper author is tried to giving the information regarding the cattle and its evidence in ancient literatures and archaeology including art. The reason to choose Madhya Pradesh is that we have the continuous cultural chronology here from the Palaeolithic to historical times, and afterwards. The importance of cattle in this region can be seen through many evidences as it was rich in faunal remains during the Mesolithic period, have rock art evidence of Neolithic period, have bone and artistic remains of chalcolithic and historical period as given in this paper by the author.

Methods

For this purpose literary as well as archaeological sources were taken by the author in which literary sources includes ancient Indian literature, canonical texts etc. and used the archaeological excavation reports, articles and published materials. In this paper author tried to highlight the importance of cattle and its relation with human which changed during the time and how the literature sources portrayed the cattle and their significance. Regarding this research author did some exploration work and visited some site of this region related to Mesolithic, chalcolithic and early historical times. During the exploration some evidences were found by the author included surface collection and will be mentioned in this paper as we study regarding the period and its findings.

Previous Works

During research author got to know that many scholar paid attention to the importance of cattle in literature and archaeology but importance is given to other region not

specifically Madhya Pradesh. For reference few articles were considered by the author. In those articles or papers the research is done on cattle's importance in agriculture during some periods of ancient history (Kaur, 2015: 595-607), regarding the mother earth which can be seen as cow and the father sky which is the symbol of bull according to Vedic literature (Atre, 2004: 283-300) and bullock carts their value, importance and depiction in art forms (Dalal and Raghvan, 2018: 121-147), respectively. Research have done on rock art paintings as we have the report of ASI on Bhimbetka rock shelters (Sinha, 2012), various works regarding exploration and excavations done by Wakankar in Madhya Pradesh region, various books on coinage (Trivedi, 1957) and inscriptions (Upadhyay, 1970) and depiction of animal in art and symbolism which also proved as a guiding light for this research paper. In this paper author tried to give the information regarding the value of cattle in literature and archaeological perspective with special reference is given to Madhya Pradesh and previously neither work is done in this regard nor found during the research of this paper.

Evidence in Literature

India is rich in literature sources as we have the oldest literatures in the form of four Vedas and Brahmanical literature which includes Upanishads, *Aranyakas* also have the Buddhist and Jaina literature, books like *Arthashastra*, *Ashtadhyayi*, *Puranas* and foreign accounts too which give us the immense knowledge and information not only about the religious life of people but about their social, economic and political life too which help us to understand the ancient time better.

The root of the word Veda is *vid*, 'to know', hence the term Veda signifies knowledge. The Vedas are not work of a single person, but, according to the popular belief, were communicated to a number of rishis or saints, who in their turn transmitted them to their disciples. The seer Vyasa is styled the arranger, or, as we should now say, the editor, of these works (Wilkins, 1931: 3). During the time of Vedas we got so many evidences regarding cattle as it is a symbol of prosperity, wealth and wisdom that's why every person demand for cattle through their prayers to Vedic gods. Even the main deities of Vedic period including *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuna*, *Soma* all were compared to cattle as a symbol of valour, strength, angriness and an ability of attacking their enemy, in many hymns. The life of Vedic people was agricultural so the value of cattle increased and even at some places we can see the cattle as a medium of exchange too. In one hymn it mentioned that the value of the idol of *Indra* is more than 21 cows, that's the example of the value of cattle and as the bull was the medium of transport at that time (and even today also) and helping them in agriculture, the importance of cattle has to be increased in Vedic period.

In some hymns cattle were compared with reproduction as we have the evidence of Indus valley civilization that they worship genital parts of body which may be continued during the period of time hence we got to see the same thoughts and rituals in newer or changed form in Vedic era. Even cattle were called as the provider of food

(here we can say the bull) for earth, it was like *Prajapti* who cure ones poverty and feeding all by growing the food from his legs. Regarding the bull one hymn stated that he throws away the devil from his horns, vanished the poverty from his eyes and he listened the wishes of people from his ears (Sharma, 2015). There is a concept of the saviour of animals as they are the main source of their income and wealth they need a saviour for them so *Yajurveda* mentioned Rudra as the saviour of animals and provider of animals (Vyas, 2015: 55). Rudra is acclaimed as the supreme god of animals. In some hymns which are related to farmers, the composer was saying to people that you should do ploughing with the help of cattle and grow food for the prosperity of our clan instead of gambling (Vyas, 2015: 151). So agriculture is more respected job compare to others.

Vedas mentioned about the food habits of the people of that time as we know that meat consumption was in practice but in contention as scholars have different views on this. The people of Vedic era were consumed meat or not, for the answers we have to look into matter through the Vedic hymns itself as in 10th mandala of Rigveda *Sayan* said that cattle were prepared as food to offer *Prajapati* as the part of a ritual. Even in *Shatpatha Brahman* there is mentioned that cattle and sheep should be prepared to offer king, Brahman and guests. *Brahdaranyaka upanishada* said that the person who wants a son who will be undefeated, intelligent, can became a part of Sabha and Samite (the lower and upper house of Vedic period), a good speaker, can attain the knowledge of Vedas then he and his wife should eat the meat of cattle along with rice and ghee (Vidhyalankar, 1996: 213). These evidences showed that cattle meat consumption were practised during Vedic era but some scholars said that the name which were taken in these hymns were not animals but the zodiac signs, according to them Vedic people did not consumed meat and in this regard they gave the example of cattle specifically bull (*Vrishabha* in sankrit) does not only mean the animal but also denotes to address the deity *Soma* and *Chandra* (the moon). If we understand the meaning of *Vrashabha* for *Soma* so the phrase of Veda 'amate tubhra vrashabham pachani' means *Indra* ripe the *Soma* and the word 'Uksha' and 'Mahoksha' in Veda were meant medicines not animal (Vidhyalankar, 1996:214). 'Adhnya' the word used for cow means the one which cannot be killed also suggest that cattle were not used for meat purpose (Vidhyalankar, 1996: 215).

The Jaina canonical literatures also gives us the knowledge of cattle and their importance in ancient times as their first Tirthankara *Rishabhdeva* or *Adinatha* have bull as their symbol or *Lanchana*. According to Jaina texts it was he who taught people the art of cultivation, weaving, writing and painting etc. The economic systems that emerge during his period were a system of self – sufficiency (Jain, 1980: 2). Thus the people practiced Ploughing as a regular process followed in the field of cultivation. First of all land was ploughed with the help of bullocks and soil was prepared for sowing. Ploughing was an important occupation. At some places the land was ploughed with 100 and 1000 of ploughshares (Jain 1980: 16). Bullocks were used to drive the plough, lift water from the well and thrash the crops, they were also utilises

for the purpose of transport e.g. to draw the carts. They have been considered as one of the important parts of the wealth of an individual family. There is reference of castration of bulls and piercing of their noses for taming and yoking them as to utilise them for agricultural operations and transport purpose (Jain, 1980: 20). Animal husbandry was an important occupation in those days. It appears from the text that the economic usefulness of the domestic animals was fully realised and valued by the people. Different animals have different uses and they were utilised accordingly. The cattle constituted an important part of the household property an account of their economic value. The cattle were used as Drought animals, for the production of meat, for dairy farming and for hides and skins (Jain, 1980: 27).

The Jain canons laid stress on Ahimsa and prohibited the consumption of meat (including beef), honey and wine. *Sthananga sutram* mentions that meat is obtained by killing animals having all the five sense of organs. It is bad smelling and not worth taking. Yet meat eating in those days was largely in vogue. There is mention of slaughter houses. Meat diet was prominent among *Mlecchas* (lower caste) but even higher class did not object to meat eating. Cattle were butchered for the purposes but the teaching of *Mahavira* had a slaughter effect and killing was reduced to some extent (Jain, 1980: 28).

Evidence of 'Sartha' meant caravan of traders, also established the value of cattle in the way of transportation during this period too and there is mentioned a special group of *Bhamdi Sartha* the caravan of the traders who carried their commodities to different centres by carts and *Bahilinga* the one who used camels and bullocks for their trade and transportations (Jain 1980: 65). Also the bull is perceived as an auspicious symbol and an icon of fertility, as seen in the legend of the birth of *Mahavira*, when his mother *Trishala* saw a bull among fourteen auspicious signs (Manatunga, 2018: 138).

The village settlement during the period of Buddha mentioned by scholar Rich David, according to him the houses were made in centre of the village and surrounded by agricultural land. The farmers do agriculture by themselves without any help. They domesticate animals and the person who appointed to take care of their animals called 'Gwala' and the qualification of him includes that he should have the knowledge about all kind of disease and their remedies related to animals, he should have known the places where the animals can get water or grass to eat (Vidhyalankar, 1975: 334-335). These things give us the knowledge about how the people of that time think so much about the well-being of their animals. In *Pali nikaya* we got to know about the social and economic life of that time. Agriculture was still the main occupation, *Pali Nikaya* mentioned that huge amount of land were occupied by Brahmana and feudalists and hundreds of bullocks were used to plough their field. But the condition of farmers were declined in this period as denotes at one place in *Pali Nikaya* that a farmer who requested for help to his king for money as he wanted to buy a new cattle which he was not in a condition to buy and even some farmers were borrowed cattle to plough their field (Mishra, 1994:207-208). *Pali Nikaya* mentioned four type of cattle where some

were capable to pull cart, some were capable to pull chariot, some can plough their field, some can do both work and some were not capable to do any of these work were considered as useless cattle (Mishra, 1994: 211). Even hunting was also practised at that time.

Some Jataka tales mentioned about caravan also where bullocks were used as a transport medium and 500 to 1000 bullock carts were being part of these caravan and for the security they have guards with weapon also (Vidhyalankar, 1975: 338). The price of animals during this period varies, according to *Gamanichanda and Kanha Jataka* one pair of cattle cost 24 *Karshapana*, horses cost 1000 *Karshapana* and donkeys cost 8 *Karshapana* and cattle wars were held for entertainment purposes. There is mentioned about that during *Yajna* and *Shradh* rituals Brahman used to eat meat and some *Dharmasutras* and *Smritis* also denotes the same. Lord Buddha was follower of ahimsa but he also never denied for consumption of meat. *Majjhima Nikaya* mentioned some name of the businessman who did the business to kill animals and sell meat even 'Goghataka' word denotes the consumption of cow meat. Butchering houses and meat selling shops were also there and two types of hunters were present in those days one that lived in forests and kill the wild animals and sell them in market and second who lived in city areas and practice hunting as a business (Vidhyalankar, 1975: 279-341).

Kautilya mentioned 'Pakwamausik' the one who sells cocked meat in *Arthashastra* (Vidhyalankar, 1975: 358). The head of the animal department called 'Goadhyaksha' and the qualification for the same were also given in *Arthashastra*. The types of cattle were given by Kautilya are the calf, younger calf, the cattle who can do ploughing, one who can pull cart called 'Vahino', bullock who did not sterilized and the last one was bull, these are the six type of cattle were mentioned. During this period there a practice of marking the animals for that they used royal seal to punch them and this practice is called 'Vajrapayaga'. The food for cattle was also mentioned in *Arthashastra* which stated the exact amount of grass or some kind of food mixture which is suitable for the cattle (Gairola, 1962:161-162). The next prominent post related to agriculture was 'Sitadhyaksha' the head of agriculture department who should have the knowledge of all the disciplines of farming, measurement and dendrology and there should be no direct connection of them with the equipment of farming and animals so there is less chance to forgery. The time mentioned for farming was also fixed according to the astrology. Butchering of animals continued in this period also as the post called 'Sunadhyaksha' who was the head of the butchering department. There is restriction of killing some animals like deer, calf and cattle and the penalty to kill them was 50 *pan* and brutality with other animals was also not accepted by Kautilya as the penalty was 50 *pan* for that too (Gairola, 1962: 144-53).

Megasthanese mentioned about the ritual where a person can marry more than one woman and for that purpose he has to give one pair of cattle to her parents and the sacrifice of cattle specially bull for prevention of illness (Shukla, 2004: 40,127). The animals which were used in vehicles during the period of Patanjali they named after

the vehicle for example the cattle who used to tie with 'Shakat' called 'shaakat', the one who pull chariot called 'Holic' or 'Sainik' etc. (Agnihotri, 2001: 238). The cattle especially the wild bull was difficult to control that are why the domestic one was sterilized at that time (Agnihotri, 2001: 291-92).

During the period of *Puranas* the philosophies regarding cattle were changed and they considered as the pious and godly animals. We have the evidence of cattle worship in Vedas also but in *Puranas* we can see the extension of this spiritual thought and broadness of its context. In *Linga purana*, and *Shiva purana* cattle were associated with the lord Shiva a later form of Vedic *Rudra*. Cattle especially bull was considered as his mount which driven by kala, this white bull, *Vrsha* or *Vrsabha* Brahma gave him both as chariot and banner. On this bull *Devadeva* sits with *Uma*. He is therefore called *Vrishanka* the one whose emblem is a bull and *Vrishabhaditya* (Fausboll, 1902: 150). In *Linga purana* we have the story of *Nandikeshwara* or *Nandi* (a form of cattle bull in religious context) who was the son of *Shilad* a devotee of Shiva and for getting a son who can be immortal he prayed to Shiva and asked him for a boon, then Shiva said he himself took birth as his son with the name called *Nandi* (the one who give joy or *Ananda* called *Nandi*) hence *Shilad* gave this name to his son. After that *Nandi* prayed to lord Shiva and devote himself to him, Shiva not only chooses him as one of his *Gana* but also made him head of all his *Gana*, then *Nandi* started living with Shiva on *Kailasa* (*Lingapurana*, 169-179).

Evidence in Archaeology

Archaeological evidences regarding cattle found from many parts of India so as from sites of Madhya Pradesh (Figure 1). As we know that during the evolution period humans started behaving according to the environment in which he lived in that was the time when he started exploring the use of animals according to his need, regarding this he got to know about the various uses of animal to utilize them hence domestication of cattle started. The relation of human and animal was much connected before the domestication of animal as our ancestors were hunter and gatherer.

As climate changed human started to live a hunting and gathering life where they used to hunt the animals around them for food purposes after that they lived settled life and started domestication of animal when gradually they know about the other benefits of an animal apart from using them only as their food, they used them in their own way for example in the case of cattle they started taking other work from them like agricultural and for travelling also.

Domestication of *Bos indicus* started in Neolithic period, then animal husbandry came into existence, utilisation of animal power and products for different requirements form the principal aim of animal husbandry (Kumar, 2014; 234-35). As time passes cattle became the prime means of transportation and traction, therefore the bullock of carriage, haulage and tranship of goods during the protohistoric and historic period in south Asia has been the humble bullock-cart. Stud bulls and humbler bulls are the

main type. The bullock cart empowers the centralized of surplus grain production, identified as one of the traits of the Bronze Age urbanization (Manatunga, 2018: 122).

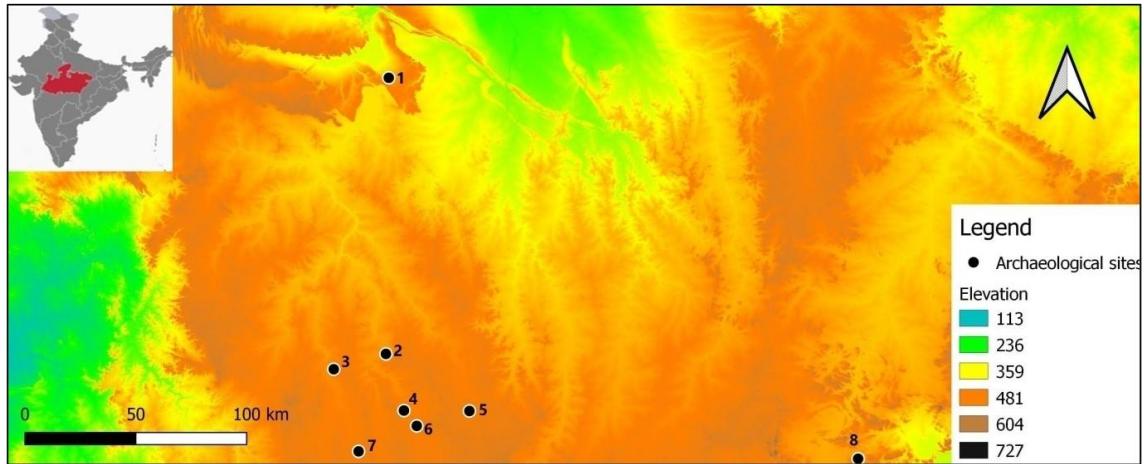


Figure 1: Map showing the Archaeological sites of Madhya Pradesh: - 1) Charturbhujinala, 2) Mahidpur, 3) Nagda, 4) Sodung, 5) Kayatha, 6) Ujjain, 7) Dangwada, 8) Bhimbetka)



Figure 2: Cattle Depiction in Rock Art Paintings of Bhimbetka

As mentioned earlier by author that in Madhya Pradesh we have number of archaeological sites related to every period from Mesolithic to early historical. The evidence of cattle found from some major sites whose brief information is given here:- In Mesolithic period we have the rock art caves and depiction of paintings specially. Here are some sites which have paintings of cattle which help us to understand the value of cattle and its relation with humans during this time.

Bhimbetka (22.9395° N, 77.6124° E) is the rich and important rock painting site of Madhya Pradesh. Bhimbetka (Figure 2) was found and excavated by V. S. Wakankar in 1957. Here in the Mesolithic period we found evidence of ashes and bones which indicates that human from this period was used to eat cooked meat of animals as the remains of deer, cattle and wild boar were found, which have cut marks also on it (Sharma, 2014: 104-5). At Bhimbetka we found large number of fossils of cattle, their

fossils include jaw bone, head with horns, long bone etc. on the basis of the study of the fossils it is clear that they were huge and majestic animals. Some of their fossilized head with horns measure more than 6ft. from one end to another (Varma, 2012: 63-64). This site has paintings of cattle also, where they depicted with hump and without hump sometimes. The horns and the spinal cord are painted in outline. The animal bones includes which were found from this place were broken and charred and presence of ash proved that these animal were used for food purposes. There is a cave in Bhimbetka which is given the name Bull cave by Wakankar because there is a huge painting of a bull inside the cave as information given by Narayan Vyas who surveyed the site but the cave is not accessible in present time.



Figure 3: Rock Art Paintings of Chaturbhujinala

Charturbhujinala (24.6832° N, 75.6672° E) is another site in Madhya Pradesh. The site explored by V. S. Wakankar and located in Mandsaur district. It is located 6 km from Gandhisagar and nearby a lake which is surrounded by forest. Chaturbhujinala has so many rock art paintings (Figure 3) related to various subjects including hunting scenes, war scenes, horse-riding and chariot riding also. Many animals were depicted here like Horse, Cattle, Boar, Elephant, Neelgai, Sambhar etc. (Sharma, 2014: 144). Author also

visited this place in a survey done for research purpose. Painted in red colour the cattle depiction is worth noticeable, the bull painting has a hump, horn, tail and a bulky body this kind of depiction shows us the importance of cattle as it was hunted by them for food purposes.

Neolithic age redefined the culture and history of humans in all new way. V. Gordon Child gave this term to the era of new, more developed, polished tools made by mankind. Agriculture started in this age and also the domestication of animal. The domestication of animal is the most important and developing step of this age. This is the possibility that during the initial phase when cattle was domesticated by people it was young in age and then in 3000 BCE when the use of cart and plough started the value of cattle increased so much that they realised the hump of the cattle can actually help them to plough their field and hence gave the cattle the immense power to pull the cart more easily (Habib, 2015: 40-42).

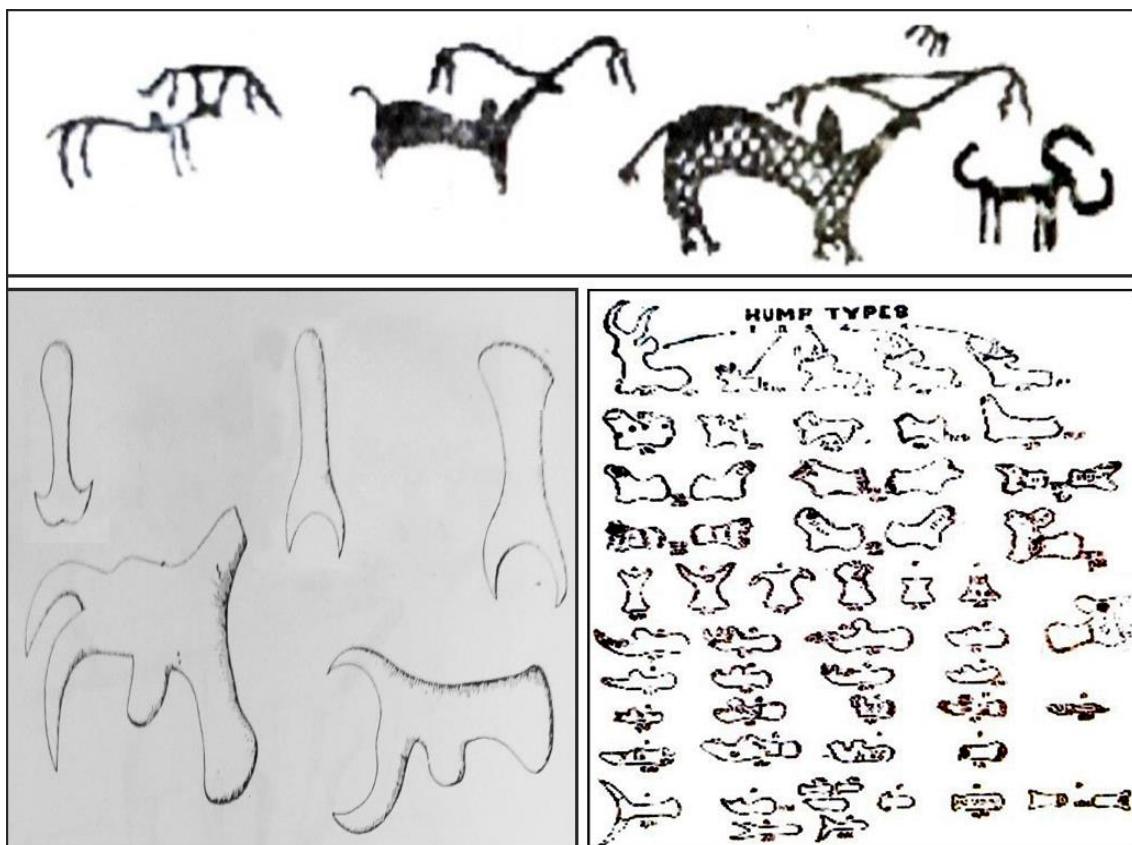


Figure 4: Cattle Figurines and Pottery Motifs from Kayatha (Courtesy: Wakankar 1967)

There is also one thing to notice that in the initial stage the bones of animal which were found from so many sites were hunted in young age but after time passes the bones were found and shows that the animals were hunted in more mature age after serving the proper work for them, so we can say that at first they used these animals for meat purpose only but after when they realised that they could help them in other ways also they started using them for other works too (Habib, 2015: 49-50).

In chalcolithic period about four thousand five hundred years from now, a small band of people well acquainted in agriculture activities moved in thickly vegetated river valley of *Charmanvati* (Chambal) which was then infested with tigers, panthers and wild cattle. They cleared the landscape and made the land for agricultural activities. These agriculture communities had a highly developed ceramic industry which was probably developed in their original home land and doab with pre – Harappan design traditions and a few Harappan shapes (Bhatt, 2006-7: 435-462). They used to eat the meat of fish, deer, antelope, wild boar and occasionally cattle of various types, during this period we saw evidences of cattle worship from *Daspura* region and the pottery also bears the painting of the animal.

Not only on pottery but in this period we have the evidences of chariot paintings in rock shelters too. Here author have to mention about the chariots because they were drawn by the cattle also. So far no depiction of chariot either on pottery or seals has been found from any chalcolithic site. The paintings of chariots have so far been observed in rock shelters in ShahadKarad, Firangi, CheelDant, Kathotia, Mahadeo-Piapariya, Jaora, and Bhimbetka. Chalcolithic cattle riders are reported from Chiklod and Bhimbetka (Bhatt, 2006-7: 435-462).

Kaytha (23.2363° N, 76.0189° E) located on the right bank of the Choti kali Sindh, a tributary of kali Sindh in district Ujjain. The site was discovered by V.S. Wakankar of the Vikram University who carried out a small scale excavation here in 1965-67, later excavated by Deccan College, Pune in 1968. The cattle figurine of Kaytha culture (Figure 4) is singularly unique variety. Their representations are naturalistic as well as stylized. In most cases the head with the horns and hump are present, but the whole hind part is absent and in its place we see a stem with a rounded end. Sometimes the end is flat and thus serves as a pedestalled base, probably for keeping the figurine on the platform during ritual. These stylised cattle, perhaps used as votive offerings, have no parallel elsewhere (Ghosh, 1991: 217-220). Some scholars mention this as a cattle cult in Kayatha chalcolithic. An important terracotta figurine found from kaytha which is broken and crude, the bull figure was not fired red hot hence remained black. There is a trident mark on the right hip; measurement was not given by the excavators.

Nagda (23.4561° N, 75.4227° E), situated on the bank of Chambal in district Ujjain, the excavation here carried out by the excavation branch of archaeological survey of India under the direction of N.R. Banerjee in 1955-56 and 1956-57. The ancient dwellers of Nagda, as of all other allied settlements, depended extensively for their life on cultivation as the most of the chalcolithic culture had. We have the evidence of trade also. All this evidences have their own importance regarding the various changes in their life. Talking about the terracotta the cattle take the precedence over the lion and the dog, and would rather represent the youngster's casual diversion than any serious business of indulging in art or meeting the needs of any ritual. The people must also have domesticated some animals, especially the cattle, which are represented apart from the skeletal remains of the young animals and also by tiny terracotta's, the

humped cattle and other animals in terracotta suggest the animals domesticated by the folks, as these were tame representations of familiar animals the cattle from their frequency seem to have cast on them an especial fancy (Banerjee, 1986). We have evidence of pottery also from here the animal had his motif on them (Figure 5), one figure of a bovine animal which have the body made by outline, it has a hump, a long head and two large horns, found from the mid-level of period I. In a second potsherd a humped animal with two twisted horns were also found from same period.



Figure 5: Cattle Figurines from Nagda (Courtesy: Banerjee 1986)

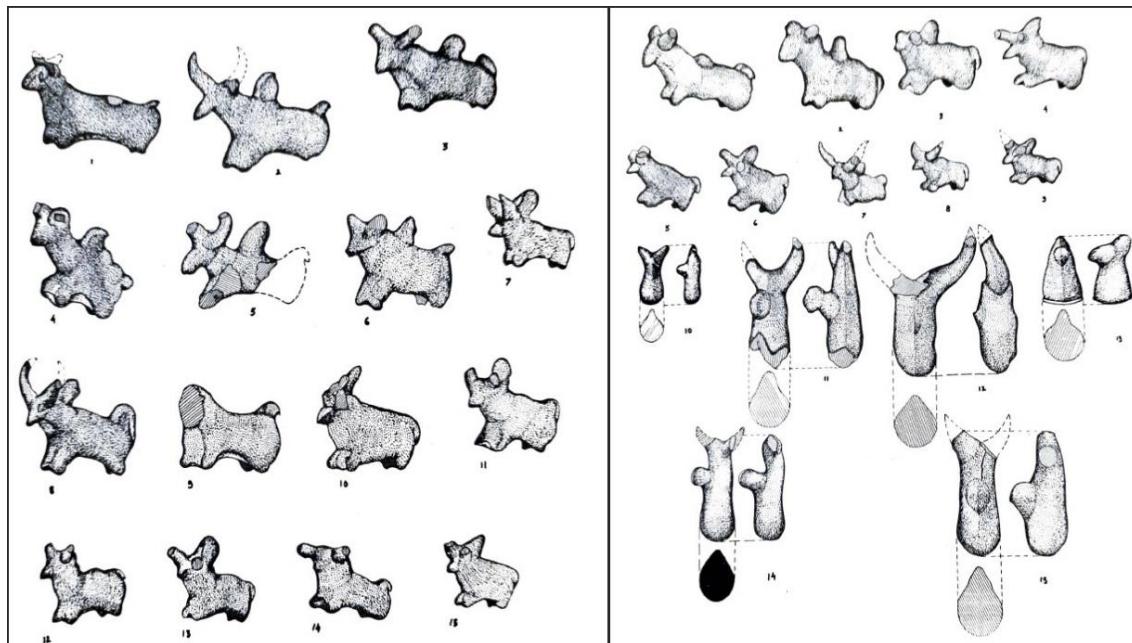


Figure 6: Cattle Figurines from Mahidpur (Courtesy: Ali et al. 2004)

Mahidpur (23.4857° N, 75.6545° E) (dist. Ujjain) have the chalcolithic mound which is locally known as *bhasma-tekri* (the mound of ash); and is situated in the close bank of the river kshipra – a tributary of the river Chambal. The excavation of Mahidpur took place in three seasons 1986-87, 1989-90, arid 1998-99 by Rehman Ali, Ashok Trivedi and Dhirendra Solanki (Ali, 2004). A good number of terracotta cattle figurines were found from the excavations at Mahidpur. The majority of figurines are in naturalistic form; and they differ artistically from those terracotta cattle which were found from Maheshwar, Navdatoli and Kayatha the other chalcolithic sites of Madhya Pradesh. The terracotta cattle figurines are made of extremely fine clay free from any sort of impurities and are baked at a uniformly high temperature. No cattle figurine is treated with any slip of any kind and there is no attempt at ornamentation (Figure 6). The only decoration found in a few figurines is the pinching of nail mark and drawing of the circle on the thigh of the cattle.

The major number of naturalistic cattle forms confides the religious significance, perhaps their faith in some sort of 'cattle cult' as assumed by Ansari and Dhavalikar in similar case of Kayatha. The cattle cult prevailed at Mahidpur contemporaneously with the Kayatha in 2nd millennium BCE. It is worth to mention here that from the time immemorial cattle has been treated as a sacred animal not only in India but in whole of the western Asia. Besides its utility to the agro-pastoral community, it is a symbol of power and vitality. Thus these cattle might have been used for both the purposes i.e. ritualistic and toys for children. It is difficult to concede that the stylised forms could have been used for any other purpose than ritualistic. We have pedestalled forms of cattle also which indicates that they were meant for keeping on flat ground or may be a sort of platform. The cattle forms with rounded stem may have also been used for offerings or they could be used to suspend it in neck tied with thread exactly like the

lingayats wear the *lingas* in necklace even today. It is however difficult to infer precisely in absence of may concrete evidence except that there might have been a sort of cattle cult vogue in 2nd millennium BCE.

Talking about the faunal remains found from Mahidpur we have the evidence of 250 animal bones which includes *Bos indicus* (domestic cattle) also. This shows the animal wealth in and around the area of occupation and that of the food economy practices of the inhabitants of Mahidpur. Left lower jaw of *Bos indicus*, a horn core of medium sized and with a slight curve in its length was found from Mahidpur (Figure 7). The evidences of charring and cut marks on some of the bones indicate that the animals diet form part of the food economy of the inhabitants of Mahidpur (Ali, 1987: 63-67). Early historical sites like Ujjain and Dangwada also have the evidence which can prove the importance of the cattle in this period too which can be seen as a continuity from the earlier time.

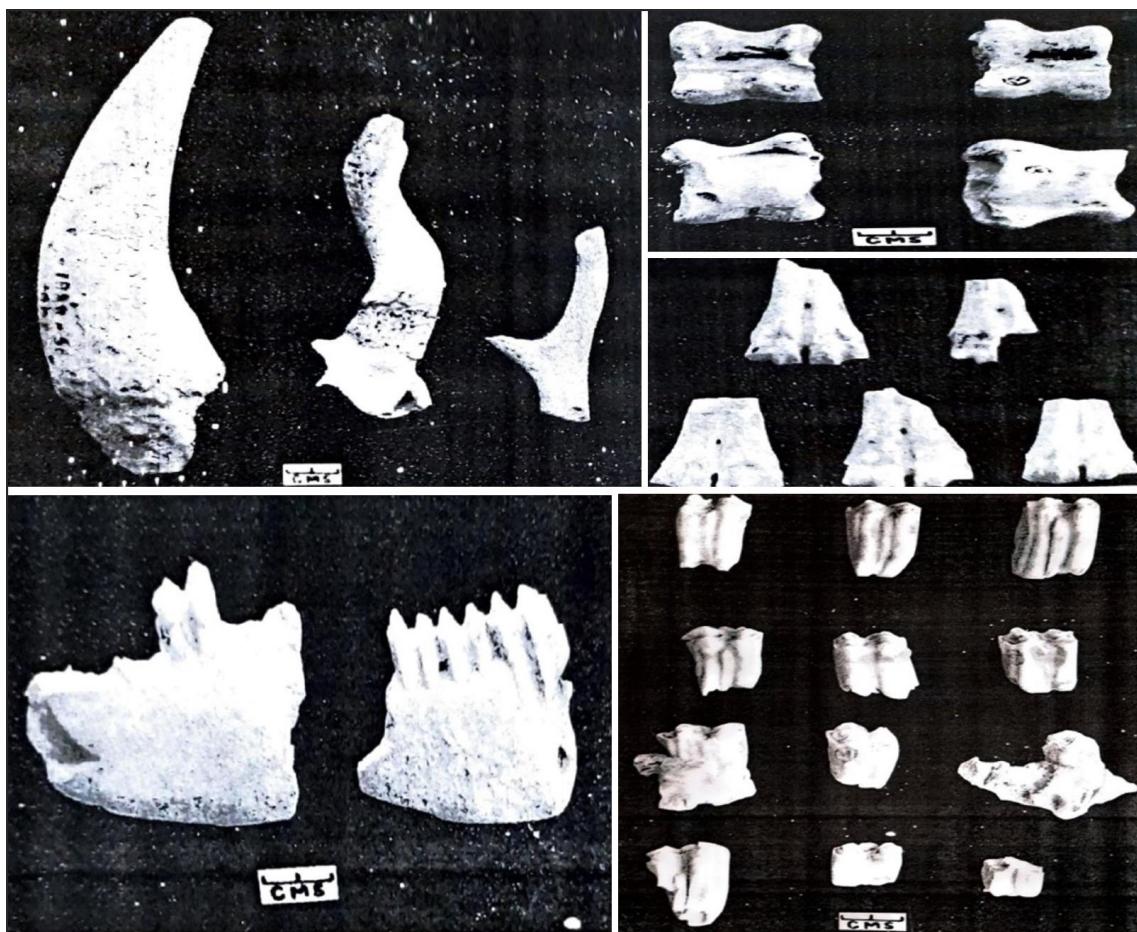


Figure 7: Cattle Bone Remains from Mahidpur (Courtesy: Ali et al. 2004)

Ujjain (23.1765° N, 75.7885° E), Situated on the east bank of Sipra and well known as the capital of Avanti, one of the 16 Mahajanpadas in the 6th century B.C. mentioned in *Meghduta* of *Kalidasa* and as *Ozane* in the *periplus of the erythraean sea* it was an important trade centre of at that time. The first excavation in the site was conducted by

Garde in 1938-39. This brought to light quite a large miscellany of coins, Terracottas, beads and pottery, etc. the site was there for again excavated by A. Ghosh from 1955-58 and in 1964 by Srivastava on the behalf of ASI.

There are four periods reported from Ujjain where we found PGW, NBPW from period I and II respectively. This site yielded many terracotta figurines of human and cattle including the figurine of mother goddess. Period III yielded the evidence from Sunga period to early Muslim. Beads of terracotta, glass and of discs of shell threaded by copper wire, skin rubbers of terracotta, and antimony rods of copper and ivory are other significant findings from Ujjain (Ghosh, 1991: 447-449).

In Ujjain there is a sculpture of cattle (bull) which found from the nearby sites comes under the territory of Ujjain during the historical period, situated in Sandipani ashram (Figure 8). The bull is in standing position but mainly the Nandi (mount of lord Shiva) always carved in sitting position and this is the rare example of a bull standing (if considered as the ritualistic idol called Nandi) and now situated in the front of the Shiva temple in the ashram complex. Some scholars said that it was probably the part of Ashokan pillar capital or maybe pre Ashokan as the pedestal on which the bull was standing is square in shape and the material of the sculpture is crude without the typical Mauryan polish but the capital pillar is missing now but the same pillar capital of elephant found from Sodung, a nearby site of historical period, so maybe the sculpture of bull is pre Ashokan. We found many dynasties coins from Ujjain including Janapada coins, coins of Naga, Yodheya, Kuninda rulers, Indo- Greeks and Kushana coins which depicted the cattle on their coin as auspicious symbol which was related to lord Shiva.



Figure 8: Bull sculpture situated in Sandipani Ashram (Courtesy: www.google.com)



Figure 9: Cattle Figurine found from Dangwada by the Author



Figure 10: Similar Cattle Marking Found from Kayatha and Present Cattle

Excavated in 1978-80, 1982-3 Dangwada has the evidence of Cattle/ bull figurines, occurred in hundreds and may suggest, according to Wakankar, Saivite belief of some kind. This is also supported by some terracotta representations of phallus. Many of the cattle froms bear nail-impressed crescentic decorations. Wakankar further believes that in the Malwa chalcolithic phase of Dangwada bull-worship declined and in its place appeared 'conical cult objects in houses and shrines'. There were pot and with bull and serpent figures and there were serpent designs on the Malwa pottery. There was fire sacrifice in circular fire altars. At Dangwada there is evidence of large hearths which is associated with large quantities of faunal remains and potsherds (Chakrabarti, 2006:

239-40). Author also visited this site during the exploration and fortunately found a broken terracotta bull figurine from site as surface collection; the cattle terracotta figure is unique in its way as in this figure the tail of the cattle made by immense creativity as it in moving position and looking lively (Figure 9).

Conclusions

As we can see through this research that the cattle hold different places in Indian philosophical and literary thought and same as in archaeological aspects. The value of cattle as shown in literature evidence shows us the different kind of thoughts and beliefs of ancient people in different times. First the cattle became the source of food in Palaeolithic time for them then became the part of their artistic skills as seen in rock art paintings of Mesolithic and Neolithic period, then turn out to be main source of their food production and transportation in Neo-Chalcolithic period and became a terracotta toy art entertainment for them in archaeological perspective but in literature sources we can see cattle as a religious figure which was compared with the Vedic and *Pauranic* deities and later became the mount of today's worshipped deity Shiva.

During the research author came to know some theories regarding the presence and importance of cattle not only in one religion or one particular period but the value of the animal continuously can be seen in every period, in every religion, every canonical texts and every dynastic period of ancient history. That's why we found the evidence of cattle in text, in archaeological sites, in inscriptions and on coins too and seen in many ways as the form of food, rock art, medium of agriculture and transport, as a terracotta art form and later on as an auspicious symbol on *Janapadas* and dynasties coins.

The knowledge of cattle and its species changed the life of people in ancient time can also be seen through this research as we have evidence of cattle used as food earlier time but when they got to know about its other significance they started using cattle as drought animal and ploughed their field with the help of this animal which symbolises the changing behavioural and climatic situations of human during the time. But after even realising the other uses of the animal that also did not stop them to consume it as meat because first they utilise the animal during its younger age but later in its old age they convert it to their food, as we saw many evidences regarding this in many sites thorough the bone analysis and the literature sources also denotes the same.

If we talk about the continuity of cultural beliefs regarding cattle during the time we have so many evidences of that, for example Vedic literature mentioned in one hymn that the auspicious cattle can hear our voice and transfer it to directly to the god and this thought still practiced in many temple as we saw devotees make a wish and say it in the ear of bull so that god receive it directly. Another example of ritual continuity can be seen through the marking of cattle as one terracotta figure was found from chalcolithic site Kayatha which bear the marking or stamping on its back and regarding this practice we have literary evidence also as it was mentioned in

Arthashastra and now a day's also the same practice continued, for the reference a picture given from the author's personal collection (Figure 10). We have a long history of this practice as it already mentioned earlier that after knowing the genetic qualities of cattle they use it according to that only as to control the bull they sterilized them so they can use them easily for agriculture and other purposes because wild bull can-not be controlled easily that's why the marking, rearing or yoking was done by the ancient people. Still a culture of cattle worship next day on Diwali called *Govardhan puja* is practiced in author's native village even today.

So through this paper author tried to compare the theories regarding cattle which found from literary sources and their connection or relation with archaeological evidences as we know that peoples beliefs, thoughts and practices continued together and whatever they got from the environment they made them part of their culture and their life same in the case of cattle here. The limited amount of information is given here in this paper as the Future research regarding this topic is ongoing by the author.

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