



Essence of Indian Traditions

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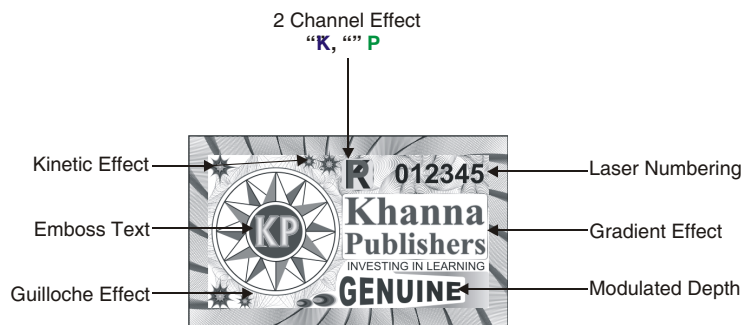
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Preface

The subject of Essence of Indian Traditions is about the explorations of India since ancient times. The emerging trend to know more about ourselves to advance further in various fields such as science and technology has driven to compose this book. This book shall be useful for numerous degree and diploma courses in technology. Such courses are now also have been mandated by AICTE for syllabus in B.Tech courses. The syllabus of this course has been extensively covered in this text book. In addition to this, the book is also useful for people who are interested in acquiring knowledge about Indian traditions, its origins and its development through the course of time.

Traditional knowledge is extremely important in understanding the basis of the development, which remains a continuous eternal process. Our ancestors assert many conceptions pertaining to our daily chores like eating, sleeping, waking up, working etc. in very simple ways and after research, they have been proved as the right ways according to science. Based on those propositions, various ways of living are devised. On being asked about the way of living, most people admit to have learnt that from their parents, but tracing its originality in deep rooted culture is extremely difficult. I still remember my mother calling a Vaidya to check my fever and prescribe medicines. The Vaidya next day used to bring some leaves, roots or some form of herbs as medicines and after two or three days, I used to be fine. Those ways of medical treatments were inheritances from his ancestors to the Vaidya. Similarly, we tend to behave and work in a manner which has been widely accepted and subconsciously, we find no anomaly in this. This tradition unknowingly has become a part of our lives.

This book is about the Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge, which has stood the test of time. Based on the archaeological findings, it has been established that Indus valley civilisation was the first civilisation of the world. Gradually, people developed many rituals and ways of working, some of which can still be found today. Worshipping, rituals, celebrations of festivals, paintings, constructions, agriculture, singing, playing music, fighting wars, governing people, practice of justice, punishments, jails, sports, transportations, clothing, ornaments, touring etc. are some of the human activities which are ancient but still an inevitable part of today's human life.

This book consists of eight chapters and in order to acclimatize the reader, I would like to give a brief description of each one.

Chapter one is about the brief description of civilisations from Ancient India to independent India. This chapter describes the early Indian civilisations such as Indus Valley, Mohan-Jodaro, and Harappa etc. The way of living of human beings involving various amenities in earlier times are also mentioned. Various dynasties which built this country in different ways are also mentioned to acknowledge the efforts of Indian rulers in welfare of public. Primarily, India was the native land of Hindus but gradually Muslims, Christians and Parsis also became permanent residents of this country. Religions like; Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were developed in due course of time. Buddhism and Jainism spread not only in India but also in the neighbour countries like Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Burma, Bhutan, Thailand etc. In latter decades India became land of multiple religions and beliefs.

Chapter two is about the Indian Traditional Knowledge which has been transferred from generation to generation giving lot of information about administration, trade, transportation, entertainment, sports, justice, agriculture, petting, medicines, warfare and educational hubs. This information is used in managing various problems arising in the above mentioned fields. This knowledge is sometimes organised or scattered in form of tales and numerous anecdotes. The knowledge gained from our ancestors during passage of time remains quite valuable and is helping millions in getting the food security, medical attentions, social justice etc. even today.

Chapter three is about the contribution of Indian traditional knowledge in the fields of science and technology. The knowledge shared among many generations is helping and making grounds

for modern development in the fields of science and technology. The ancient Indian scientists were pioneers in the field of mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicines and manufacturing.

Chapter four talks about the great Scriptures of India which have been evolving since 1500 BCE. The Aryans in India established classical civilisation which is known as Vedic tradition. The revolution of Veda and its interpretations by our Rishis, Gurus and forefathers is unique for the whole world. Veda is said to be the first doctrine from God on this earth. Vedanga, Upveda, Upanishad, Puran, Darshans, and other Bhakti texts have also been discussed to acknowledge the scholarly approach of Indian lives.

Chapter five illustrates about Yoga being one of the unique features of our ancient knowledge which tells about keeping one's body and mind healthy. The description of Ashtang Yoga has also been mentioned briefly. The concept of holistic life and curing of diseases is very important to keep the society progressive. Therefore, the importance of healthy life has been also mentioned in Vedas.

State and Polity in India has been mentioned in Chapter six. The evolution of state, its governance, different social institutions and harmony among them has been described in detail.

Chapter seven is about Indian religion, philosophy and practices, which mentions about the eminent Dharm gurus such as Shankracharya, Vivekanand, Dayanand Saraswati etc. and their contributions.

Chapter eight illustrates about the Indian literatures. The various works of the eminent authors of India in various languages have been briefly covered here. For example Kautilya's Arthashastra, Sanskrit poetic works of Kalidas etc. This chapter also mentions the South Indian languages and their eminent composers.

I express my immense gratitude to Shri A. B. Shukla (IAS) who guided me to bring this book in this form. My friend Sh. Sampat Kumar helped me to understand the philosophy of South India since ancient time. I am in debt of my family members for supporting me in composing this book by sparing me from odd hours of their routine. I would like to thank my peers and friends who have been critical but enthusiastic to see my work on floor.

At last, I wish to thank my publishers to bring out this book in an excellent form. Critical evaluation and thorough multiple readings have been done in order to keep the book error free however some errors might have crept inadvertently. Corrections, modifications and suggestions from the readers are heartily welcome to make the book better in all regards.

—Dr. O.P. Mishra

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Ancient India

1.1. INTRODUCTION

India is a nation in South Asia whose name is derived from the Indus River. Another name 'Bharata' is referenced from the ancient legendary ruler, Bharata, whose story is told, in parts, in the Indian epic Mahabharata. Human movement in the Indian subcontinent dates back more than 250,000 years, and it is, in this way, perhaps the most seasoned area on earth resided by people. Archaeological excavations in last 50 years have significantly changed the comprehension of India's past and, by extension, world history.

India has been wealthy in its practice of social values since the civilization existed and also the world pioneer economically, technically and socially. The Indian traditions are so profound and deep-rooted that they require rigorous scrutiny and investigation. The historical backdrop of India can be broadly categorized into four periods which are Pre-history, Ancient History, Medieval History, and Modern History. If we gaze into the history, the political map of ancient India was constituted by various small and big kingdoms with ever-fluctuating boundaries.

1.2. EARLY CIVILISATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

This part of Indian history can additionally be categorized into Pre-Vedic and Vedic periods. The period of early civilisation is estimated 5600-2600 BCE on the proof of excavation of Rakhigarhi, Dhoulavira and other parts of India. The exploration outlines the Harappa as the first kind of civilisation in world, which is spread in Basin of Saraswati River. This civilisation is also known as Indus Valley civilization, which was spread in flood plains of Indus River. During the same period, the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China were also thriving. The age of Harappan

civilisation falls under Neolithic (5000-1800 BCE). The matured stage of Harppan culture is also known as Indus valley civilisation and is estimated from 2600-1800 BCE. The Indus Valley Civilization is thrived in the basins of the Indus River, one of the significant waterways of Asia, and the Ghaggar-Hakra River, which once coursed through northwest India and eastern Pakistan. At its pinnacle, the Indus Civilization may had a population of more than 5,000,000. Occupants of the old Indus stream valley developed new methods in craftsmanship (carnelian items, seal cutting) and metallurgy (copper, bronze, lead, and tin). The Indus cities are noted for their urban planning, baked brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, and clusters of large non-residential buildings. After Indus valley civilisation Vedic age (1500-600 BCE) is very important in ancient Indian history. During this period rich evidence of Indian scriptures are developed. Rigved was the first Indian scripture of this period and after this three more vedas were composed. Harappa and Mohanjodaro are symbolic of two different civilisation of Indus valley. Among the settlements were the major urban centres of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Dholavira, Ganeriwala in Cholistan and Rakhigarhi.



Fig. 1.1. History map of the Indus Valley civilization

1.2.1. The Harappa

The Harappa is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. On the basis of the archaeological findings the Harappan civilization has been dated between 2600 B.C–1900 BC. Recent excavation of Dholavira clearly states the Harappa period was fully civilised in 2650. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is exploring this civilisation since 1967. Harappa sites were, to a great extent, devastated in the nineteenth century AD when British specialists diverted a significant part of the city for use as ballast in developing the railroad and numerous structures. Some of the parts had already been destroyed by residents of the neighbourhood town of Harappa. This civilisation first discovered by archaeologist JP Joshi in 1956, but excavations at Dholavira started only 35 years later in 1990 under R.S. Bisht of the Archaeological Survey of India. In 1990 excavation, besides Dholavira the other major Harappan sites discovered so far are Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Ganeriwala, Rakhigarhi, Kalibangan, Rupnagar and Lothal. The ancient site at Dholavira is situated in Bhachau, district Kachchh in state Gujarat, lies in the island of Khadir which, is surrounded by the salt waste of the Great Rann of Kachchh. Prof Basant Shinde (2019) has mentioned in his book about excavation of Rakhigarhi district Hisar of Haryana (India). After DNA test of the findings of excavation, it is confirmed that Harappan civilisation can be estimated from 5600-2800 BCE and this site is located in the basin of Saraswati river. It is also sometimes referred to as the 'Indus Valley civilization' because in the beginning majority of its settlements discovered were in and around the plains of the river Indus and its tributaries. Thus, Harappa civilisation was spread in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Western Uttar Pradesh and also in some provinces of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thus, the whole period of Harappan civilization can be studied into three phases:

- (i) Early Harappan phase (5600 BC–2600 BC): it was marked by some town-planning in the form of mud structures, elementary trade, arts and crafts, etc.
- (ii) Mature Harappan phase (2600 BC–1900 BC): it was the period in which we notice well developed towns with Baked brick structures, inland and foreign trade, crafts of various types, etc.,
- (iii) Late Harappan phase (1900 BC–1400 BC): it was the phase of decline during which many cities were abandoned and the trade disappeared leading to the gradual decay of the significant urban traits.

Regrading destroy of Harappa civilisation by Aryan mentioned by western authors is nullified by Professor Vasant Shinde, the lead author of the paper in the scientific journal *Cell* (September 5, 2019). He reported that there was no Aryan

invasion and no Aryan migration and that all the developments right from the hunting-gathering stage to modern times in South Asia were done by indigenous people. These indigeneous people were no other than Aryan. It has been also proved that the distruction of Harappa civilisation is due to regular floods in the basin of saptrivers but not due to invasion by Aryan, which has been promulgated by western historians.

General Living of Harappa

Harppan were pioneer of well-planned city, textiles, Ayurveda, yoga science etc. The Harappans were agrarian but developed large architecturally complex, urban centers and a sophisticated material culture coupled with a robust trade system. Waterharvesting with the aid of dams, drain, reservoirs and storm water management which eloquently speak of tremendous engineering skill of the builders of the Harappans. The urban communities of this period were bigger than contemporary settlements in different parts of the world, were arranged by cardinal points, and were made of mud blocks, frequently kiln-fired. Houses were developed with a large courtyard opening from the front entryway, a kitchen/workroom for the cooking food, and smaller bedrooms. Family gatherings usually took place on the facade of the house, especially the yard and, this way, they are similar to what has been derived from destinations in Rome, Egypt, Greece, and Mesopotamia. The Harappan people were literate and recent studies suggest that the Harappan script consists of about 400 signs. However, the script has not been deciphered as yet. It is believed that they used ideograms i.e., a graphic symbol or character to convey the idea directly.

Divinity of Harappans

The people of the Harappan Civilization worshipped many gods and engaged in ritual worship. Statues of different gods have been found at numerous locations. The chief among them, terracotta pieces depicting the Shakti (the Mother Goddess) suggesting a popular, common worship of the feminine principle. The Harappan religion is normally termed as animism *i.e.*, worship of trees, stones etc. The evidence of fire worship has also been found at some sites such as Kalibangan and Lothal.

1.2.2. Mohenjo-Daro

Mohenjo-daro was a great city now in province of Sindh, Pakistan. The site was discovered in the 1920s. Mohenjo Daro, or “Mound of the Dead” is an ancient Indus Valley Civilization city that flourished between 2600 and 1900 BCE. It is one of the

largest settlements of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation. Mohenjo-Daro was an intricately developed city with streets spread out uniformly at right angles and a sophisticated drainage system. The Great Bath, a central structure at the site, was heated and seems to have been a focal point for the community. The residents were skilled in the utilization of metals, for example, copper, bronze, lead, and tin (as evidenced by artworks such as the bronze statue of the Dancing Girl and by individual seals) and cultivated barley, wheat, peas, sesame, and cotton. The trade of these agro-products was an important source of commerce of Mohan-jodaro.



Fig.1.2. Excavation site at Mohenjo-daro (Source- web)



Fig. 1.3. Ruins of Mohenjo- Daro

1.3. ARYANS OF INDIA

In Sanskrit, the word 'Aryan' means 'a noble man'. Aryans were the most illustrious race in history. Some historians say that the original home of Aryans was Central Asia. German scholar Max-Muller opined that the original home of the Aryans was somewhere near the Caspian Sea. They had migrated to the European countries. It is believed that Aryans came to Persia and India in two groups. The Aryans who had migrated to India are known as the 'Indo-Aryans'. They were the first people who entered India through the north-western passes. Whereas, A new study published in 2006 based on DNA of the skeleton found at the Rakhigarhi site in Haryana has claimed that Aryan were inhabitants of Indus valley civilisation and are indigenous people. This has ended the controversy of Aryan as invader and challenges the theory of Invasion by Aryan, which ended the Harappa culture. The existence of Aryan can be traced back to 7000 BCE. Bhagwan S. Gidwani, in his book, "The Return of the Aryans", claims that Aryans were the original inhabitants of India and from here they migrated to other places in the world. In his arguments, he claims that nowhere Aryans have mentioned about their migration in Indian scriptures such as Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads. According to Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aryans originally inhabited Siberia but due to the falling temperature, they had to leave Siberia for greener pastures. Aryans are supposed to have devised the major components of the Indian culture like Sanskrit language. The Indo-aryan languages which are spoken today in northern, eastern and western part of India find their origin in Sanskrit language. In addition to this, the creation of Vedas, the primary writings of Hinduism is also credited to the Aryans.

The Aryan created urban culture in Indian subcontinents, which was the most civilized society. This period was viewed as one of the most innovative ages and is the period when Hindu Religion evolved around the Indian sub-continent.

Development of Aryan Culture

Aryans were intelligent and are known to have devised the use of river water for agriculture and trade. It is believed that the areas in the proximity of the seven rivers of India were the most attractive places for the Aryans to settle down which are also called 'Sapta Sindhu' or the group of seven chief rivers. The seven rivers probably were Saraswati in the east, Sindhu (Indus) in the west, Satudru (Sutlej), Vipasa (Beas), Asikni (Chenab), Parushni (Ravi) and Vitasta (Jhelum). The Aryans are thought to have been polytheists (nature admirers). The texts that help to reconstruct the material and other aspects of Aryan culture comprise the *Rig Veda*. These texts present agriculture and pastoralism as the principal sources of livelihood.

1.4. THE VEDIC PERIOD

The Vedic period or **Vedic age** is from 1500 to 500 BCE. It is the period in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age of the history of India. The composition of Veda is considered during this period in northern part of India. Veda is considered as a revelation it is termed as the 'primary' source of knowledge. The content of the Vedas that has come down to us for centuries is said to have been heard by the sages in deep meditation and these sages are therefore known as 'mantradrastas' or the 'seer of the mantras'. It was end of period of the urban Indus Valley Civilisation and start of new urbanisation which began in the central India. Before this Vedic period hinduism is believed to exist from 2300 to 1500 BCE. in the Indus Valley. Hinduism is said to be evolved during this period. Whereas, many Hindus argue that their faith is timeless and has always existed and that is why this religion is also called Sanatan Dharma. In Sanatan Dharma, Hindus believe in one God i.e. Brahma, still recognize other gods and goddesses. Hence, it is considered by numerous, a polytheistic religion comprising of numerous gods. In Vedic religious thought the unreality of the universe is never suggested. People were preached to believe in nature as it was the only real God. Indus civilisation ended at its height by incursion of people from Afganistan and Baluchistan



Fig. 1.4

Table 1: Time Line of Ancient Indian History	
Palaeolithic Age	Up to 10000 BC
Mesolithic Age	10000 to 4000 BC
Neolithic Age	5000 to 1800 BC
Chalcolithic Age	1800 to 1000 BC
Iron Age	1000 BC onward
Indus Valley Civilisation	2900 to 1700 BC
Vedic Period	1500 to 600 BC
Pre-Mauryan Age	5th - 4th century BC
Mauryan Age	321 to 184 BC
Post-Mauryan Age	200 BC to 300 AD
Gupta Period	4 th Century to 6 th Century AD
Age of Harsha	606 to 647 AD
Chalukyas of Badami	543 to 755 AD
Pallavas of Kanchipuram	560 to 903 AD

Chronological Facts at Glance

(500 BCE–550 AD): Ancient India, Rise of Jainism and Buddhism.

- 333 BC – Victory of Alexander on Darius III. Establishment of the Macedonian Empire.
- 326 BC – Ambhi, King of Taxila surrendered to Alexander, Battle of the Hydaspes River
- 321 BC – Chandra Gupta Maurya established the Maurya Empire
- 290 BCE – Chandragupta's successor, Bindusara, extends the Mauryan conquests into central India
- 273 BC – Great Ashoka took over the Maurya Empire
- 266 BC – South Asia, Afghanistan and Iran under control of King Ashoka.
- 265 BC – Ashoka fought Kalinga war and killed lacs of innocents. Later on, Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism.
- 251 BCE – Ashoka's son, Mahindra established Buddhism in Sri Lanka.
- 232 BC: Ashoka died and was succeeded by Dasaratha
- 230 BC – Satavahana Empire was established
- 200 to 100 BC – Evolution of Tamil grammar and morphology

- 184 BC – Mauryan Empire falls with the assassination of Emperor Brihadrata and Establishment of the Sunga dynasty
- 180 BC – Establishment of the Indo-Greek kingdom
- 80 BC – Establishment of the Indo-Scythian kingdom
- 10 BC – Establishment of the Indo-Parthian kingdom
- 68 AD – Establishment of the Kushan Empire by Kujula Kadphises
- 78 AD – Gautamiputra Satkarni took over Satavahana Empire and defeated Scythian king Vikramaditya
- 240 AD – Establishment of the Gupta Empire by Sri-Gupta
- 320 AD – Chandragupta I took over the Gupta Empire
- 335 AD – Samudragupta took over the Gupta Empire and started expanding it
- 350 AD – Establishment of the Pallava Empire
- 380 AD – Chandragupta II took over the Gupta Empire
- 399 to 414 AD – Chinese scholar Fa-Hien traveled to India

Medieval Period (550 AD to 1526 AD)

The medieval period can be divided into the following two phases:

1. Early Medieval Period (Upto 1300 AD)
 - 606 AD – Harshavardhana became the King
 - 630 AD – Hiuen Tsiang traveled to India
 - 761 AD – First Muslim invasion by Mohammed Bin Qasim
 - 800 AD – The birth of Shankaracharya
 - 814 AD – Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I became Rashtrakuta king
 - 1000 AD – Invasion by Mahmud of Ghazni
 - 1017AD – Al-Beruni travelled to India
 - 1100s AD – Rule of the Chandelas, Cholas, Kadambas, and Rashtrakutas
 - 1120 AD – Vikramaditya VI introduced Vikrama Chalukya Era
 - 1191 AD – First battle of Tarain between Mohammed Ghori & Prithivi Raj Chauhan III
 - 1192 AD – Second battle of Tarain between Ghauri and Prithivi Raj Chauhan III
 - 1194 AD – Battle of Chandawar between Ghauri and Jayachandra
 - 1288 AD – Marco Polo came to India

1. Late Medieval Period (1300 AD to 1500 AD)
 - 1300 AD – Establishment of the Khilji Dynasty
 - 1336 to 1565 AD – Vijayanagar Empire
 - 1498 AD – First voyage of Vasco-da-Gama to Goa
2. Modern History: 1500- 1818: various rulers across India (Mughal Dynasty)
1818 to 1947: Colonial era: British Rule

Southern and Western Indian Dynasties at a Glance

1. Kushan Dynasty: 200 BC - 300 BC. The geographical
2. Chola Dynasty: 300 BC to 1250 AD. The main part of kingdom was Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Bengal and Sri Lanka.
3. Satvahna Dynasty: 3rd century BC; The area was Andhra Pradesh
4. Pallava Dynasty: they ruled for 500 year of southern part of country
5. Chalukya Dynasty: Chalukya Dynasty ruled Southern part of India; Gujarat and Karnataka. The ruling period is said to be 600 AD -800 AD and 1000 AD -1200 AD.
6. Hoysala Dynasty: 1000 AD to 1400 AD. Karnataka.
7. Kakatiya Dynasty: 1100 AD to 1475 AD. The area was Andhra Pradesh
8. Kalachuri Dynasty: Central part of India. i.e. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan
9. Khiljee Dynasty: 1201 AD -1390 AD. The area of this Dynasty was western part of India i.e. Gujrat, Malwa and Ujjain
10. Maratha Dynasty: 1674 AD - 1818 AD. Founded by Shivaji Bhosle
11. Pala Dynasty: 750 AD – 1174 AD, Bihar and Bengal were region of rule.
12. Vijayanagar Dynasty: This dynasty ruled Deccan (Karnataka). The period of rule was 1336 AD - 1646 AD.

1.5. A BRIEF OF INDIAN DYNASTY

India was the country of several kings. The rules in kingdom were defined by great Indian scriptures. King used to believe in Vedas, Guru and their traditions. King used to follow Raj-dharma to rule the people of his kingdom. The King keep fighting war at regular intervals to extend their boundaries, on the other hand interstate marriage were very common to establish good relationship between two kingdoms. Some of Indian dynasties established milestones in field of governance, religions and other welfare issue. Their traditions and achievements are guide-lines for today's governance. We will discuss few dynasty for their high contribution in development of the people. These knowledge are very important to learn our past.



Essence of Indian Traditions

About the Author



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