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Ancients Ruins of Mahabharata Prominence Hastinapur Giving Vindication of Bioarchaeology

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Abstract: ***Hastinapur, capital of the Kuru Kingdom in the era of Mahabharata. Some ancient structures imply the name of Mahabharata personages such as Karna Ghat Mandir, Draupadi Ghat Mandir, Pandeshwar Mahadev Mandir, Pandv Tila, or Ulta Khera Mound, etc. In the year 1950-52 some portion of Ulta Khera and Mound of Raghunathji was excavated by B.B. Lal. He found 5 culture strata starting from Pre 1200 B.C. to the early 15th Century A.D and the first time he brings in limelight a new ceramic industry Painted Grey Ware. The recovery of somehow Kushan Period bones(?,for exact time period, the Archaeological Survey of India should remove all these evidences from the site and go through carbon dating.) from near site HST 2 connects this mound with Bio-archaeology.***

Keywords: Hastinapur, Ulta Khera Mound, Mahabharata, Bioarchaeology

I. INTRODUCTION

Hastinapur needs no introduction. Hastinapur is described from the “Jay” of *Veda Vyasa* to the “Mahabharata” of *Sauti* (or may be composition of several authors). *Veda Vyasa* had composed a book called "Jay", in which the battle of Kauravas and Pandavas was described. This war was related to the padding of Hastinapur. Hastinapur was named after King Hastin. This beautiful city, built by King Hastin, was ruined during the time of King Nichakshu. During the reign of King Nichakshu, there was a heavy flood in the river Ganges due to which beautiful Hastinapur was turned into ruins over time. Substantiation of this flood is also obtained from the excavation on Ulta Kheda Mound. In the year 1950-52, excavation work was started for the first time by B.B. Lal on a mound named Ulta Kheda in Hastinapur. However, the purpose of this excavation was probably not to elicit the dogma of Mahabharata [1]. The main pursuit was then, as reported, the stratigraphic position of Painted Grey Ware (PGW) to other ceramics in the early period. Although today some historians do not accept PGW as complete evidence of the Mahabharata Period. A Painted Grey Ware Pottery is still a matter of long debate. A PGW culture from Hastinapur completely perished due to floods. Then again a civilization started and Hastinapur started to develop but during the reign of Bindusara, everything came to an end once again due to the grueling fire. After a long period, Hastinapur was re-populated and developed in between Early 2nd Century BCE to Late 3rd Century AD i.e. Kushan Period. Some pots were also recovered by the author some time before from the Ulta Khera Mound, the upper surface of most of the pots were round but some were oval [Image 1]. These ovals may have indicated more of a catastrophe. However, there were remains of some edible material in these pots. All these pots were placed on top of the sand, the remains of coal were also found near some pots. Then after some time, a lot of bone remains [Image 2] were found near Raghunathji Mahal (we discuss this in another paper) and there were also broken remains of pottery. The pottery which was recovered was in a form of a motley. The fully recovered pottery was handed over to Mr. Arvind Rana, staff of the Archaeological Survey of India placed in Hastinapur.



Image 1: Kushan Period Pots [Courtesy :Priyank Bharati; handed over to Archaeological Survey India]

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Image 2: Bones recovered near Raghunathji Mahal. Might be there is ancient crimination Centre here. There is one jaw of animal (?) also found near this bone and mingled potsherds also seen at this site (in Sept,2020).

Now recently received biological evidence has made it clear that along with history, archeology, there is full potential for bio-archaeology.

II. LOCATION OF SITE

The bone and skeleton are found in the East direction from the colony on Ulta Khera Mound locally known as Pandav Tila. Refer Image 3 to Image 10.



Image 3: Entrance gate for Ulta Khera Mound near colony side

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Image 4: Location of part of Mound from which skeleton, bones seen.



Image 5 : Ancient Wall near the site



Image 6: Skull and bones of skeleton. Behind the skull there is a wall like structure.

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Image 7: Bone in between bricks. The brick is likely to be as same as Kushan Time brick



Image 8 : Potsherds of Red ware Industry



Image 9: Showing skull and bone



Image 10 : Skull and bones. On upper side of skull red sandstone is visible

A. Ancient Construction work on Ulta Khera Mound, Hastinapur in Period 4 i.e. Early 2nd Century BC to Late 3rd Century AD.

The material used in the archaic construction work found on the mound is also not of anyone period, it is clear that when the population has started, then people made their living places there with the material which was available there in the past. The same thing has happened in the remains of the palace, at some places red sandstone has been used, and in some limestone has been used. As per the report of excavation in Hastinapur published in Ancient India no 10 and 11, in the construction of houses burnt bricks are used and for flooring purposes square bricks are used. Excavation reveals some rooms, bathroom, and drain plans. In excavation complete housing plans are not known due to limited excavation as the author describes. In the year 2020, some walls were visible due to the formation of rain gullies these walls were of the Kushan Period [refer to Image 12].



Image 11: Bricks of dimension 47x23 cm near the Ancient Wall

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Image 12 : Walls or floor of Kushan Period

B. Hastinapur was fully developed in the Kushan period.

Coins of Kushan King Vasudeva, Yaudheya, and Mathura rulers were found in the excavation of 1950, according to the excavation report [1], coins were received throughout this period i.e. Period 4 (Early 2nd Century BC to Late 3rd Century AD)[1]. The inscribed utensils and seals were also found in this period. A ॐ shaped potshard (Image 13) and some pots were also received from this mound last year (2020) by the author. In this period, large bricks were used for the floor. Toys made of terracotta, rings, and pearls showing high workmanship were obtained from this period. The most favorite among animal sculptures are the Humpback Bull. The statue of Bodhisattva Maitreya was executed following the Mathura school of sculptures from the upper level. Antimony Road and a bell of Copper were also obtained. Some important antiquities of this Period are mentioned in Table 1.This clearly means that Hastinapur was fully developed during the Kushan Period.



Image 13: Om like structure is inscribed on potsherd

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TABLE 1 : ANTIQUITIES RECOVERED IN HASTINAPUR EXCAVATION DURING 1950-52 [1]

Button knobbed lid
Bottle necked sprinkler
Vases
Use of stamped and incised decoration
Ring wells
Axe-adze, bell and a handled pan
Terracotta figurine, figure of Bodhisattava Maitreya, female and bird
Rotary quern and large number of lids
1 inscribed seal of terracotta
Rings and Beads for ornaments. Beads including terracotta, jasper and carnelian
10 coins of Kushan King Vasudeva
Coins of Mathura Rulers
2 inscribed pots
Carved ivory handle might be of attached to mirror
Coins of Yaudheya Kings

C. The Potential of Bio-Archaeology to Uncover the Secrets of Hastinapur.

Bio-archaeology is the scientific study of human remains recovered from archaeological (historical) important sites. On prima facie, the skeleton consists of the skull, right arm bone (radius?), and right leg bone (fibula?). Skull is in north direction and feet are in south direction. A wall-like structure is also visible on the back side of the skull. Behind the skull there is one another bone which is stuck in between bricks of Kushan Period (?). Some brickbats are also visible on surface. There is a mixture of potsherds near these bones. Potsherds belongs to the Red-ware industry, wheel turned with fabric medium. All this evidences is visible from the upper surface, if excavation is done at this site, then perhaps the reason for the end of Kushan Period or post Kushan Period in Hastinapur can be traced. Hastinapur is now showing historical, archaeological as well as bio-archaeological evidences.

III. CONCLUSION

From the excavation done in the past, it becomes clear to us that Hastinapur was fully developed during the Kushan period in between early 2nd Century B.C. to Late 3rd Century A.D. Perhaps at that time, the work of making idols in Hastinapur was at its peak we can say this because the idol of Bodhisattva was found and figurines made of terracotta were also found. The proper drainage system was also found in the excavation in Hastinapur during the same period.

The culture of Northern Black Painted Ware ended from Hastinapur due to the horrific fire, on the other hand, the reason for the end of the Kushan period (or subsequent period) could not be known in Hastinapur. In the past, the author had found pots from the Kushan period in the second part of this mound, indicating a pottery industry. However, this site was only explaining the scene of some devastation. Now in this way, the biological sample, the bone located in between brick and the skeleton makes it clear that some natural calamity must have been the reason for the end of this period i.e. early 2nd Century B.C. to Late 3rd A.D. in Hastinapur. We also know that coins of Yaudheya Kings were found from Hastinapur during excavation. Yaudheya/Nag Dynasty also fought wars from Kushans in or before the 2nd century A.D. [2]. Therefore another reason perhaps may have been an attack on Hastinapur during the Kushan period, due to which there was heavy devastation.

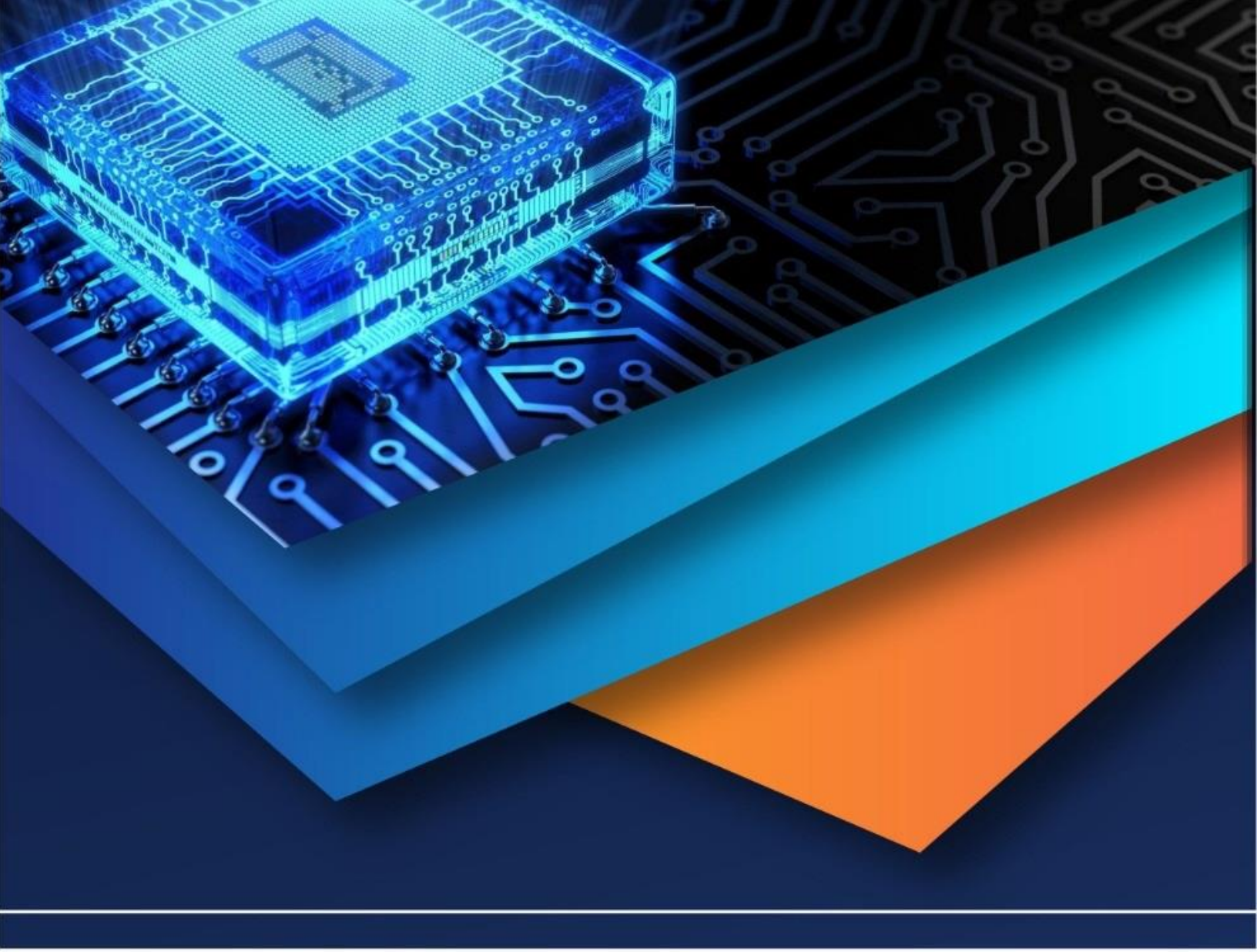
All this is on the basis of prima facie, there may be some revulsion in the facts after excavation, till then it can be considered ntegral?.

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