



A REVIEW STUDY ON SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO UPPER GANGA PLAIN

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Abstract: The Present study reviews the settlement pattern and cultural adaptations in Upper Ganga Plain. The settlement patterns and cultural adaptations in the Upper Ganga Plain reflect a great extent of human interactions to the environment, technology, and socio-political systems. The archaeological investigations in Upper Ganga plain have revealed a long cultural sequence in the history of human civilizations. The excavations conducted during last few decades have brought to light Pre historic culture in Upper Ganga Valley and presence of Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Painted Ware cultures in Upper Ganga Valley. The Upper Ganga Plain, has also evidences of rich pottery culture deeply rooted in its ancient history. Pottery in this region reflects the interplay of civilizations, socio-cultural practices, and advancements in technology over time.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of civilization, settlement has played a significant role in the visible imprints that humans have left on the physical landscape through cultural occupancy. The interaction of the local ecological circumstances, inhabitants' cultural and social values, technology, management systems, and the settling process over time determines how an area's settlement has developed and grown. The term "settlement" describes an organized human colony that can range from a basic farmstead to a very complex city, from a makeshift camp of miners or hunters to more sedentary homes for farmers and city people (Ahlawat, 2017). Settlement consists of lanes, streets, highways, parks, places of worship, and play areas in addition to the different types of structures used for different purposes. Settlement features have simple forms and are closely related to the environment in the early stages. However, the degree of heterogeneity in their size and form increases as civilization spreads and knowledge grows.

India's history and archaeology are significantly influenced by the Indo-Gangetic plain. The Upper Ganga Plain, Middle Ganga Plain, and Lower Ganga Plain are the three primary divisions of the entire Ganga Plain. The entire Ganga basin is a plain, with the exception of the northern Himalayan foothills. In terms of physiography, it is a portion of the Indo-Gangetic plain, which is composed of Pleistocene and recent alluvial deposits from the Ganga and its tributaries and is primarily flat and featureless. The research area has been significantly shaped by recent human activity, river course changes, and river erosion.

Transverse Profile – Indo Gangetic Plains

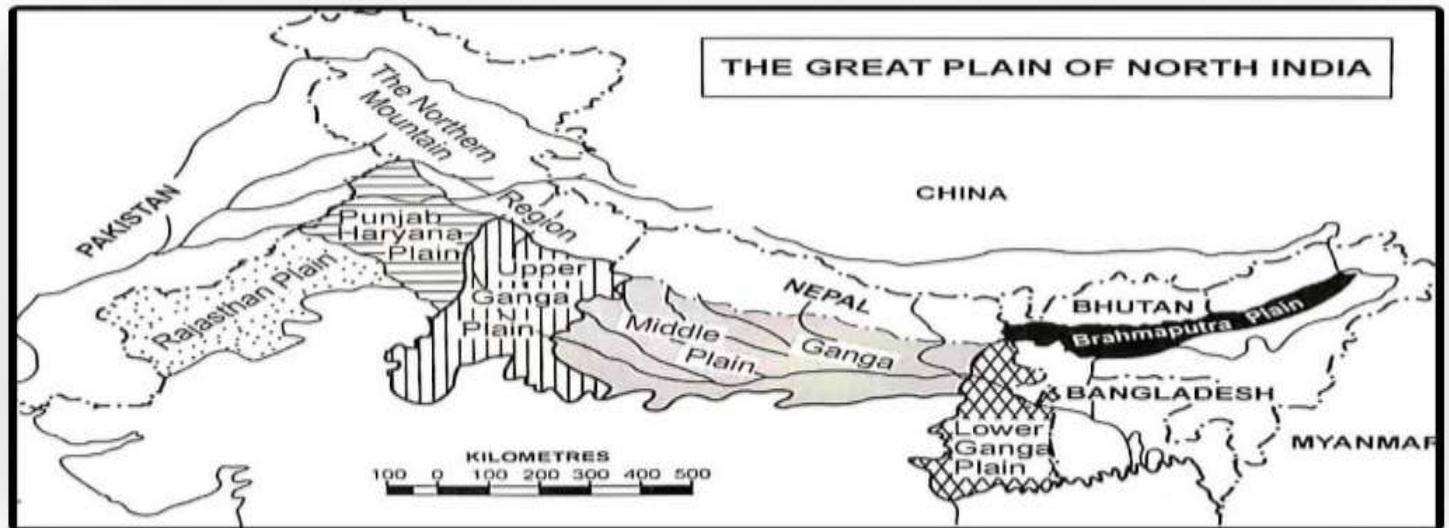


Image source <https://sudarshangurjar.com/indo-gangetic-brahmaputra-plains/>

A human settlement is any collection of homes, regardless of size, inhabited by people. To put it another way, the process of settlement entails the grouping of people and the distribution of land as their basis of resources. Only the spatial distribution or arrangement of settlements within a specific area is referred to as a "settlement pattern" (Gangal, et.al., 2010). The Upper Ganga Valley's prehistoric sites and diversity demonstrate the presence of human occupation during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic eras. Although there are some areas in the Upper Ganga Valley that demonstrate evidence of Harrapa and Harappan culture, their habitation was very small and limited to the areas of Meerut and Saharanpur.

From prehistoric adaptations to the early historic creation of sophisticated communities and urban centers, the Upper Ganga Plain is a microcosm of India's larger cultural evolution (Kosambi, 1965). In archaeology, settlement pattern studies cover a wide range of topics related to prehistoric landscapes and human use of them, including ancient habitation patterns, historical population studies, migration, trade, exchange, and resource areas.

With a vast expanse of sedimentary land, including the Upper Gangetic Plain (UGP), and perennial rivers like the Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna, Ghagra, Gomati, Gandak, and several tributaries, the Gangetic Plain established the groundwork for agriculture in India by the earliest farming communities. It is also regarded as the mother of much of the agriculture practiced in other regions of the nation. Since these elements are critical to agricultural production and the expansion and development of agriculture and civilization, the Gangetic landscape's fertile soil and welcoming environment of river valleys and plains have drawn the majority of human inhabitants to the area over the millennia.

Since the Neolithic era, one of the main locations for the emergence and development of agriculture in India has been the Upper Gangetic Plain, which is the western portion of the greater Gangetic Plains (Fuller, 2008). The local population has been drawn to domesticating plants and animals due to the region's excellent climate and landscape. As a result, sedentary agriculture evolved from pastoral nomadic living. Because of these factors, this region developed valuable genetic diversity in a variety of crops and made economic advancement more quickly than other places. India's economy is currently mostly reliant on agriculture as a result of its population growth, new settlements, and/or the sharing of its products and knowledge with other regions.

The department of history and archaeology was established in 1976 with the founding of Garhwal University, and it began to gain notoriety under the direction of Dr. A.P. Nautiyal. The department team also investigated the Bharat Mandir in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, in 1981–1982, which had remnants of homes from the Pre- and Post-Gupta eras. Numerous priceless idols were discovered at this location. In 1984, a site was excavated in the Panduwala region, which is situated between Haridwar and Kotdwar, to discover relics of Kushana-era dwellings and temples.

In the same regard, excavations in the locations of the villages of Malari in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district and Purola in Uttarkashi district were also noteworthy. A settlement in the Mid-Himalayan region of Malari, which is 3800 meters above sea level, had remnants of the Palaeolithic era.

Settlement Patterns in the Upper Ganga Plain

In the alluvial plains, extensive surveys employing remote sensing and GIS have uncovered new Paleolithic and Mesolithic sites. Elevated terraces and closeness to paleo-channels are preferred at several locations, suggesting an adaptability to changing river courses and water supply. Early sedentism along with agriculture, especially rice production, has been demonstrated by excavations at locations like Lahuradewa and Jhusi. As farming gradually replaced foraging, settlements were frequently small groups of semi-permanent mud and reed constructions. Neolithic settlements in the region show evidence of handmade pottery, often plain or with simple cord impressions. Pottery during this era was primarily made from locally available clay, fired in open kilns, and often had a coarse texture.

Findings at locations like Hastinapura, Atranjikhhera, and Kaushambi demonstrate how urban growth was marked by fortifications, planned communities, and clearly delineated social areas. A hierarchy of settlements developed, with smaller villages serving as agricultural hinterlands encircling larger cities (like Hastinapura).

The employment of composite tools during the Mesolithic and more varied toolkits during the Neolithic has been demonstrated by advanced investigations on lithic assemblages. Additional analysis of iron's use throughout the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) periods demonstrates its use in both agriculture and warfare. A mixed economy of agriculture and pastoralism has been validated by archeobotanical research. Although there is evidence of secondary crops like barley and pulses, the agricultural record is dominated by rice (*Oryza sativa*) and wheat (*Triticum* spp.).

Conclusion: Research indicates that the pattern of settlements shifted from nomadic or semi-nomadic communities that relied on riverine habitats and natural rock shelters for availability to food, water, and raw materials to permanent settlements, particularly in the vicinity of the Upper Ganga Plain's lush alluvial plains. Evidence of technological advancement includes the use of quartzite tools (such as hand axes, cleavers, and scrapers), hunting and gathering, and an emphasis on megafauna and plant resources. During the Upper Ganga Plain's settlement and cultural development phase, environmental and cultural influences were also seen. Pottery often held religious and cultural significance, used in rituals and offerings. Pottery styles in the Upper Ganga Plain reflect the region's unique cultural and historical trajectory while also showing connections with broader Indian subcontinental traditions. The Ganga and its tributaries' water supply and lush alluvial plains had a big impact on where people settled and how they farmed. Trade, architecture, and agriculture were all transformed by the switch from stone to copper and iron implements. An active cultural and social milieu was created by the interaction of native customs with outside influences (such as Indo-Aryans and Mauryans).

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