

## REVIEW

### “PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN”

THE publication of “Prehistory and Proto-history in India and Pakistan” is an important event not least for the time is ripe for assembling data unearthed during the last one hundred years of Archaeological Research in India. Professor Sankalia has produced a book which successfully fills a conspicuous and long standing gap in Archaeological literature. He has very skillfully distilled into this invaluable, excellent and compact book his methodical, careful and cautious approach and the extensive knowledge and vast experience of Indian Archaeology. The dedication of the volume to one of his illustrious pupils the late Professor Dr. B. Subbarao is indeed touching and speaks very high of Professor Sankalia's affection for his students.

The book is the revised and elaborated published version of the 1960 Pandit Bhagwanlal Indrajit Lectures delivered by Prof. H. D. Sankalia. The introductory part of the book is fairly exhaustively written and deals with most of the fundamental concepts and the history of Archaeology. It is here that the reader is introduced to the precise demarcation between Prehistory and Protohistory and Prof. Sankalia has done it quite convincingly though it may not allay all the confusion. The chronological table constructed by the author will be found to be of great help by the readers to facilitate their understanding of the progressive cultural evolution of India.

The main body of the book comprises four chapters only. The Lower and the Middle Palaeolithic cultures are discussed in the first two chapters respectively; the third chapter deals with the Mesolithic cultures while the description of both the Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures constitutes the fourth chapter. Two chapters for Palaeolithic and a single chapter for both the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic cultures may seem a lopsided and disproportionate distribution of subject matter but judging from the knowledge that has amassed one would certainly appreciate Prof. Sankalia's attempt. The insufficiency of data regarding the Neolithic-Chalcolithic complex justifies the

treatment of these two cultures together in one chapter.

Taking the reader into the realm of hoary past Professor Sankalia gives a panoramic view of the progressive development of human cultures in India. In the collocation of archaeological discoveries, each site small or large receives the consideration it deserves. Comments regarding the cultural contacts, environmental back-ground and the other features concerning each culture are given towards the close of each chapter soon after the description of important tool types. This resume of each culture leaves behind a lasting impression on the mind of the readers who should have otherwise found the technical description of each site somewhat taxing.

A very important aspect of this book is the factual description and the correct assessment of the facts. The reader is immediately impressed by the extraordinary cautious approach of the author in the evaluation of the data. There being no scope for speculation and theorization. Frequently the author draws attention to the gaps in our knowledge, insufficient material evidence, the necessity of fresh excavations and the difficulties in correlation between the ecological background and the cultural phases thus suggesting new lines of research to a specialist. The book is replete with guarded comments on the work of others and even the controversial views are very carefully presented.

To criticise such a valuable book may seem ungenerous. It is hoped that the reviewer will be forgiven a rather far-reaching criticism it is that the book should have been concluded with a suitable chapter dealing with some general problems relating to all the cultures and suggestions for advanced research which one lamentably finds discussed towards the end of Chapter IV, the most improper place for them.

The general plan of the book is pleasing and it contains a wide range of illustrations from line drawing to photographs which go a long way in enhancing the value of the book. Some of the maps such as Figs. 11, 16, 50 & 71 are likely to cause inconvenience to readers for they are partly bound up in the volume and the legends in some of

them have been reduced to illegibility. The manifold large tables at the end of the book are a bit too unwieldy. The standard of printing and illustrations is fairly satisfactory.

Professor Sankalia is to be congratulated on producing this outstanding book which fills a gap in the literature on Archaeology. In the opinion of this reviewer such a learned

and weighty volume will be most welcome and widely used by both the specialists and the non-specialists. Although the price is rather high it should certainly be on the library shelf of everyone interested in the hoary past of India. The book is likely to remain in use as a standard work for many years to come.

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