

# HARAPPAN HERITAGE OF ANDHRA : A NEW INTERPRETATION

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## 1. Introduction:

1.1 Most of the early Dravidian speakers of North and Central India switched over to the dominant Indo-Aryan languages in post-Harappan times. The surviving Dravidian languages included in North, Central and South-Central Groups are, with the sole exception of Telugu, non-literate and/or spoken by tribal societies with primitive cultures. None of these languages is therefore likely to have retained words to express the urban and high civilisational aspects of the Harappan culture. In ancient times, the Andhra country extended much farther to the West and North than at present. Daimabad, the southernmost known Harappan settlement in the upper Godavari valley in Western Deccan, was within or near the borders of the ancient Andhra country.

1.2 Telugu is genetically closer to its Northern neighbours, but influenced by the literary languages of the Southern Group, thus acting as a bridge between North and South Dravidian cultures from ancient times. The Andhras are mentioned among the non-Aryan people living beyond the borders of the early Aryan settlements in Vedic times (*Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa*, VII:18; ca. 1000 BCE). Andhra is also mentioned among the territories included in the Mauryan Empire (Asoka's Rock Edict XIII, 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE).

1.3. Andhra attained a high degree of civilisation under the Sātavāhanas in the Early Historical Period (ca.3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE- 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE), with several achievements comparable to those of the Indus Civilisation including,

- Large and well-settled populations living in fertile river valleys producing agricultural surplus.
- Skilled craftsmanship.
- Great cities with monumental buildings.
- Thriving internal and foreign trade.
- Knowledge of writing.

These are some of the reasons why one should look at the ancient Andhra culture and Old Telugu language to search for some vestiges of the earlier Dravidian culture of the Indus Civilisation.

1.4 In spite of such advantages, Old Telugu is at a disadvantage when compared to Old Tamil due to relatively late emergence of literacy. The earliest Telugu inscription is dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. CE, and the earliest literature in the 11<sup>th</sup> cent. CE. Tamil is the oldest literary Dravidian language with inscriptions in the Tamil Brahmi Script dating from about the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BCE, and a vast body of literature (the Sangam works) from about the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE. Moreover, the Sangam anthologies contain many allusions to events from a dimly remembered past which are worth investigating for possible connections with the Indus Civilisation (e.g., Southern migration of the Vēḷir from Dvārakā led by Agastya; cf. *Pura*.201).

1.5 The main reason for this wide disparity between Old Tamil and Old Telugu is political. In the Early Historical Period, the Tamil States were independent, and Tamil, the native language, was employed as the medium of administration and for all purposes in public life. The Andhra-Karnataka regions had become part of the Mauryan Empire and were administered through Prakrit, the language of the Mauryan rulers. The Sātavāhanas who were earlier feudatories under the Mauryas, and even their successors like the Ikshvakus and the Pallavas, continued to patronise Prakrit upto about the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. CE.

## **2. Method of Bilingual Parallels**

2.1 I have pondered over the problem of how to retrieve information on the Harappan substratum from the Indo-Aryan languages spoken in North and Central India, and which served as the medium of administration in the Andhra-Karnataka regions in the Early Historical Period. As a solution to this problem, I have developed the method of bilingual parallels which is based on the following assumptions:

- The Indus inscriptions consist mostly of names and titles.
- Some of the more important Harappan names and titles would have passed into Indo-Aryan languages as loanwords or loan translations.
- It should be possible to compare the pictographic signs of the Indus Script with the bilingual parallels to discover the original meanings of the signs even when the phonetic values cannot be determined.

2.2 I proceed to illustrate the method with select examples relating to the Andhra culture. However, I shall mention briefly at the end of this presentation that the results can be extended to other regions of the country where the spoken languages are Dravidian or Indo-Aryan, as both are inheritors of the Indus Civilisation.

### 3. The Arrow Sign : A Nominal Suffix ↑

3.1 The sign is easily identified pictorially as an ‘arrow’. It occurs mostly in the final position and functions as a nominal suffix after names and titles. In the Dravidian model, it is most likely to be a person-number-gender marker (PNG suffix).

3.2 The most common word for ‘arrow’ in Dravidian is: *ampu* (Ta., Ma.) or *ambu* (Te., Ka.) (DEDR 178). *-(a)mpu* is also the Dr. nominal suffix added to non-masculine singular nouns.

Old Te.: *-(a)mbu, -(a)bu, -(a)mu*

Old Ka.: *-(a)m, -(a)mu, -(a)vu*

Ta. : *-(a)m*

(e.g.) *nāgabu*: Personal name on a pillar in the Amaravati Stūpa (ca. 2nd cent. BCE.).

*samvatsarambuḷ*: ‘in the year’ (Cikilla Plates, 6<sup>th</sup> cent. CE).

*kaṭuntērambu*: ‘one with fast chariot’ (Inscription of Mahendra Pallava, ca. 600 CE).

3.3. This is a good illustration of the rebus method, by which the sign depicting an arrow (*ampu*) is interpreted as the Dr. non-masculine singular suffix *-(a)mpu*.

### 4. The JAR sign : The most frequent nominal suffix ∪

4.1 The **Jar** sign is by far the most frequent sign in the Indus Script. It depicts a vessel with lips and handles (ears). Its position in the texts is mostly final. It functions as a nominal suffix after names and titles. The **Jar** and **Arrow** signs are functionally alike, but mutually exclusive (with rare exceptions). Since the **Arrow** sign has been identified as *-(a)mpu*, the non-masculine singular suffix, the **Jar** sign, its more frequent twin, must stand for the masculine singular suffix *-(a)nru / -(a)ntu*.

Old Te. : *-(a)nru > ru*

Old Ta. : *-(a)nt / -(a)n*

4.2 The phonetic value of the **Jar** sign can also be determined by the rebus method.

**Jar** sign: (pictorially) ‘a vessel with handles (ears)’.

cf. Ka. *aṇḍige*; Te. *aṇḍemu, aṇḍiyamu, aḍigamu* ‘pannier’ (DEDR 127).

Ko. *aṇḍy* ‘milk pot, bamboo pot’; To. *aḍy* ‘clay pot’;

Ka. *aṇḍe* ‘bamboo vessel with handle’;

Tu. *aṇḍe* ‘bamboo or nutshell vessel’ (DEDR 130).

Ta. *antai* (lex.) ‘a *nirai*’ (measure?).

Dr. *-(a)nṛ / -(a)nt*.

By rebus (phonetic transfer), the **Jar** sign stands for the masculine singular nominal suffix: Dr. *-(a)nṛ / -(a)nt* (dialectally).

## 5. Gender classification in Indus Inscriptions as in Old Telugu

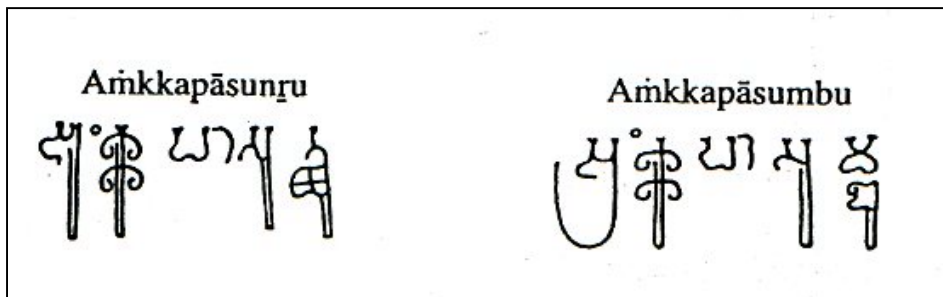
Since there are only two singular gender suffixes in the Indus Script, it appears that the gender markers in the Indus texts follow the pattern as in Old Telugu derived from Proto-Dravidian.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<i>mahat</i>	male	males & females
<i>amahat</i>	female, animal, inanimate.	animals & inanimate

## 6. Paradigm of Gender Suffixes In the Indus Script

𑀓	<b>Masculine Singular</b>	<i>-(a)nr / -(a)nt</i>
𑀔	<b>Non-masculine Singular</b>	<i>-(a)mpu</i>
𑀕𑀕	<b>Epicene Plural</b> (when combined with basic signs)	<i>-ar / -ir</i>

## 7. PNG suffixes *-nru* and *-mbu* in Old Telugu Inscriptions



**Cave Inscriptions of Mahendra Pallava (ca.600 CE).**

Meaning: 'one who (wields) the noose in battle'.

Note that the same word ends with either suffix because in one case the name is regarded as in the masculine gender, and in the other, the object (*pāśa*) in the neuter gender. cf. *nāga(m)bu*.


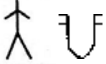

## 8. Origin of the name *Andhra*

In Vedic times, the non-Aryan people living beyond the borders of the region inhabited by the Indo-Aryan speakers were known as the *andhra* (*Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa*). Since virtually every Dravidian male person had his name ending with the suffix  $-(a)nṛ$ , it is easy to see how the Dr. etymon  $-(a)nṛ$  was borrowed as a loanword into Indo-Aryan to denote the name of the neighbouring Dravidian-speaking people.

Thus Dr.  $-(a)nṛ$  > IA *andha* / *andhra* > *āndhra*.

## 9. Hierarchy in Harappan Polity and Early Andhra Society

According to my interpretation, the nominal suffix (**Jar**) and the two signs frequently following it, represent three levels of hierarchy in the Harappan polity with an interesting parallel in Early Andhra Society.

	JAR	Dr. - $(a)nṛ$ > <i>andhra</i>	Masculine singular suffix. A Dravidian people.
	JAR-MAN	Dr. - $anṛ- aṇ$ > <i>andhra-bhṛitya</i>	‘One subordinate to another person’. Name of an Andhra clan.
	JAR-HARROW	Dr. - $anṛ-kuṭi$ > <i>andhra – jāti</i>	‘One who is a tenant or tiller under another person’. Name of an Andhra clan.

### Notes:






1.  $-aṇ$ : cf. Ka. *aṇaku* ‘subdue, control’; Te. *aṇaṅgu* ‘to submit’ (*DEDR* 112).
2. *kuṭi* > *jāti* with the meaning of ‘family, lineage’ (*DEDR* 1655).

## 10. Sāta names of Andhra Kings based on JAR Symbol

When the Indus Script ceased to be a coherent writing system in the post-Harappan period, the **Jar** sign evolved into a symbol representing priestly and royal clans. A kind of sacrificial vessel in Vedic ritual is called *sata* (*VS, ŚB*). *Sata* in Pkt. seems to have meant a vessel carrying sacrificial food offerings and also the food carried in it. In a pair of Buddhist cave inscriptions of the Sātavāhana Period at Kanheri (Luders 985 & 986), the terms *sata* and *pāniyaka* are employed as parallel expressions to mean

respectively ‘food’ and ‘beverage’ (*JESI* 1979: 46-49, with my revised interpretation). Cf. *sādamu* (Te.), *cātam* (Ta.) ‘food (cooked rice)’ derived from *sata* ‘vessel carrying food offerings’ > ‘food (offered as sacrifice)’. This derivation sheds new light on the *sāta* - names of Andhra kings as shown below.

## 11. Harappan origin of the names of the Andhra Dynasty

	JAR (with handles)	<i>sata-karṇa</i> > <i>sāta-karṇi</i>	ears of sacrificial vessel Andhra dynastic name
	ARROW	<i>śalya</i>	arrow, lance
	BEARER	<i>vahana</i>	bearing, carrying
	JAR- BEARER	<i>sata-vahana</i> > <i>Sātavāhana</i>	jar-bearing > food-bearer, name of Andhra dynasty
	ARROW- BEARER	<i>śalya - vahana</i> > <i>Sālivāhana</i>	arrow-bearing > arms-bearer, name of Andhra dynasty

## 12. Harappan Heritage of Andhra: A Summary

A total of 9 words occurring as names or titles in Early Andhra history have been identified from the Indus Script as derived ultimately from the Indus Civilisation.

The words can be classified as follows:

(a) Dravidian grammatical morphemes:

*-(a)nṛ*, *-(a)mpu*, *-ar* / *-ir*

(b) Loanwords from Dr. to IA:

*-(a)nṛ* > *andhra*

(c) Hybrid of loanwords and loan translations:

*āndhra-bhṛitya*, *āndhra – jāti*




(d) Loan translations from Dravidian to Indo-Aryan:

*Sātakarṇi*, *Sātavāhana*, *Sālivāhana*

### 13. Harappan Heritage in Indian Historical Tradition

My study has shown that the Indus Civilisation was inherited by both successor-civilisations, Dravidian as well as Indo-Aryan. In case of Dravidian, the inheritance is linguistic as shown by retention of the root words, though with later linguistic modifications. In case of Indo-Aryan, the inheritance is culturally through loanwords, loan translations and synonyms with or without semantic shifts. The following chart illustrates this important phenomenon with the example of the BEARER Signs of the Indus Script. It is interesting that the name of our country , Bhārata, is ultimately derived from the BEARER Sign of the Indus Script.

#### Harappan Heritage in Indian Historical Tradition

			
<b>Harappan:</b>	<b>Bearer</b>	<b>Jar-Bearer</b> (food-bearer)	<b>Arrow-Bearer</b> (arms-bearer)
<b>Vedic:</b>	<i>bharata</i>	<i>bharadvāja</i>	<i>bharanta</i>
<b>Puranic:</b> (Andhra)	(-vahana)	<i>sātavāhana</i>	<i>sālivāhana</i>
<b>Old Tamil:</b> (Sangam Age)	<i>iru(m)porai</i> , <i>poraiyan</i>	<i>(s)ātaṅ poraiyan</i> (who carried food in the Bhārata war).	
<b>Religious Tradition:</b>	<i>kāvaḍi</i> (Tamil), <i>kavaḍiyā</i> (Hindi): 'ceremonial carrying of food offerings on a yoke'.		

Notes:

1. *bharata* from the root *bhr* 'to bear' ; *vah* 'to carry (as load)'.  
2. *vāja* means here *annam* 'sacrificial food'.
3. *bharanta* means 'those who bear arms' (Sāyana).
4. *iru(m)porai*, 'a Chera dynastic name, is derived from *iru-porai* 'twin loads'.
5. The legend of the Chera (*Porai*) supplying food during the *Mahābhārata* war (cf. *Pūra.2*) is ultimately derived from the food-bearer sign of the Indus script .
6. The widespread tradition of carrying sacrificial offerings by yoke (*kāvaḍi*) in north and south India may be traced to the Harappan culture from this evidence.

(See the author's forthcoming book *Interpreting the Indus Script : A Dravidian Model* for fuller documentation and more examples).



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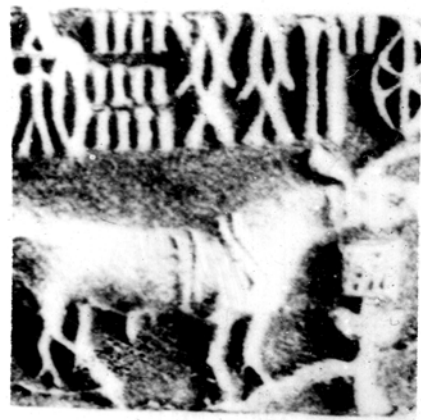
2



3



4



5

Indus Seals with:

1. ARROW Sign

2. JAR Sign,

3. BEARER Sign

4. JAR-BEARER Sign

5. ARROW-BEARER Sign