

# The Lady of the Beasts or The Lord of the Beasts A Reappraisal

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The famous Paśupati seal has been one of the most significant finds of the Indus culture. Although, the seal title is more or less established, the nature of the deity at the centre has been debated. Earlier Sullivan (1964) had expressed views that the deity was the "Mistress of Beasts" stating that 'hunting was clearly an important activity in the peasant communities of Sind and Baluchistan. He concludes: ' It is not unlikely, then, that the goddess should have been not only the giver of vegetational life but also the "Mistress of beasts" and the patroness of the hunt.' He drew attention to two other seals where pigtailed of the deity are clearly visible on seals. Latest addition to this controversy is an article by Atre (1985). According to Atre, the deity on the seal is neither the lord of beasts, nor the mother Goddess but is 'the virgin of beasts'. In support of her views, Atre has drawn parallels with the other seals representing the same deity and the mother Goddess statues from the Indus culture. She has also drawn parallels of a pictorial representation on the seal from Kalibangan with the Greek ritual of female sacrifice and concludes that the deity on the Paśupati seal represents the virgin of beasts, a female deity.

In the present article I have refuted the view of the central deity being a female deity by comparisons with the rituals and internal parallels supplied by other seals from the Indus culture. The methodology as recorded in ancient literature is more or less accepted in the field of the Indus culture studies.

## *Methodology*

So long as a bilingual seal or graffiti is not traced or found the decipherment of the Indus seals will have to be attempted by comparison and parallels. Asko Parpola (1985) has given three widely accepted routes for drawing parallels and interpretation: There can be no doubt that three most important sources for interpretation are (1) the internal parallels supplied by the Harappan civilization itself, (2) the parallels offered by ancient West Asia, (3) those provided by the later civilizations. By later Indian civilizations Parpola implies the post-vedic period. But his contempt for those drawing parallels from the vedic civilization is not concealed, when he writes, 'while some fanatics especially in India have tried to force vedic analogies to back up their preconceived claims of the Aryan identity of the Indus people, the sober scholars have usually cited parallels from the post vedic, classical Hinduism or from the modern times. These comparisons with Hinduism have often been accepted, at least tentatively, with the result that some identifications have been repeated from one book to another.' Here the personal bias of Parpola has overcome the true scholar within. Throughout the monograph, Parpola has drawn parallels from the vedic literature, however his sudden shift to the Dravidian roots is a different topic altogether. In support of his argument he repeats the theory propounded earlier, that the Aryans invaded the Indus region in two waves, first to come were Dāsas relatable to the Hissar III culture of the north eastern Iran and then came the Rgvedic Aryans. The Vedic literature is the outcome of these two successive large scale acculturations.

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Atre too follows the same line of arguments. According to her, it will be more "appropriate that we free the Harappan civilization or to be more precise the Harappan religion from the narrow frame of either the vedic or of the later day Hinduism."

But it becomes equally difficult to accept the proposition to relate the so called virginity cult in the Indus civilization with the very late Diana worship in the Greek culture around 495 BC. It is as if the Indus culture and religion totally disappeared from the continental area extending from Afghanistan to Uttar Pradesh and from Himachal Pradesh to Diarmabad in Maharashtra and took solid roots in the distant Greek islands after remaining dormant for centuries. On the other hand one finds such a smooth continuity of ideas from the Indus civilization, nay from the pre-Indus periods to the present day Hinduism that it becomes absolutely untenable to alienate the Indus religion and culture from the past and the present Hindu cultural ethos, inclusive of the vedic and the post-vedic periods.

If one is to follow Parpola regarding his views on drawing parallels from the classical and the present day Hinduism, obvious contradictions arise. If the Aryans had completely wiped out the Indus culture how could the post vedic and classical Hinduism be replete with the Indus culture antecedents, the Vedic culture remaining completely aloof. It was not so. There is continuity of cultural and religious belief ever since the pre Indus periods. Religious beliefs through symbols have been recurring since the pre-Indus period. Some of these are dealt with below. The list is not exhaustive, there are many more but only the prominent ones specially those referred to by Parpola are dealt with here.

#### *Continuity of beliefs and religious ideas*

*Aśvattha leaves and tree:* Popularly known as pipal (*Ficus religiosa*) the tree has special significance in the Vedic as well as later day Hindu religion. Its leaves were painted on the Indus pottery depicting sanctity. Parpola refers to the significance of the leaves in the R̥gveda etc. The pipal tree appears to have acquired sanctity even before the Indus culture period. The pipal leaves are painted on the pottery of the Period IV at Mehargarh belonging to the third quarter of the 4th millennium and also on the Mundigak pottery belonging to the Period IV -1 of the immediate past of the Indus civilization time span. The pipal tree, branches and leaves are painted on several earthen pots of the Indus period. There are many Indus seals bearing the pipal leaf marks. In the vedic and post vedic and even the current

Hindu tradition the Aśvattha occupies position akin to godhood. The analogy of Aśvattha in the Bhagavad Gita chapter XV chapter is famous.

*Peacock:* This bird is frequently painted on the pre-Indus culture pottery. Pottery at Mehargarh from the Period III belonging to the first half of the 4th millennium BC carries peacock designs (Jarrige 1977). There are innumerable such instances from the Indus culture which indicate that peacock had acquired not only aesthetic but also religious significance. Parpola states 'I would like to suggest that this bird, the peacock covered with many "eyes" or "stars" represents Varuṇa in his "sky garment" of the star spangled night.' In the R̥gveda it is above all Varuṇa who is watching from the sky with his eyes (sun, moon and the stars). The vedic funeral monument is built in the shape of a bird (cf. SB 13.8.3.9): it functions like the bird shaped fire altar with which Prajāpati flew up to the world of heaven (cf. SB 10.2.1.1) Parpola also gives the peacock figure from the Indus funerary pottery.

*Swastika:* Swastikas, both the right handed and left handed and also with decorations are painted on ancient Indian pottery. The Swastika pattern is painted on the pottery from Mehargarh since the pre-Indus period and from Mundigak (Casal 1961). There are several patterns of Swastika on the Indus pottery, seals and buttons, etc. Swastika is a unique symbol which though sacred has no folklore or legend associated with it. In the classical Hindu tradition which may be traced to a few centuries BC, Swastika stood as a sign for the Lord Gaṇeśa (Pandeya 1973). It may be said that the word 'Swasti' in the vedic literature meaning well being is represented by the symbol Swastika. The grid iron pattern of town planning of the Indus cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa may appropriately be named after the Swastika pattern. As such, there is architectural pattern of house building named after Swastika. The symbol still occupies very prominent position in the Indian household. Ladies drawing Rangoli patterns for decoration start with drawing Swastika first. Thus in both the ritual and household tradition the Swastika symbol has occupied an unique position ever since the pre-Indus period.

*Funeral rites:* While in the near East the royal tombs dotted the land, no influence of the custom was observed in any of the Indus cemeteries, i.e. R 37 and H, etc. The bodies lay extended with head towards the north and legs to the south (Wheeler 1966) This is perfectly in tune with the age old belief of the south being the direction of the God of death, Yama. While the living human being is forbidden from sleeping directing legs to the south, the dead

body is invariably laid with legs pointing to the south in India.

The custom of wearing bangles by ladies, adoring the Brāhmi bull, etc. still continue to be current in India ever since the pre-Indus period. There are many such beliefs and customs which appear to hold their sway ever since the pre-Indus period till to-date. How is it possible to isolate only the vedic, post-vedic or classical Hinduism from the religion of the Indus people? One regrets that an ace research scholar like Parpola deviates from the very obvious conclusions because of his bias for the so called Dravidian roots of the Indus culture. Similarly Atre's proposition of isolating the Indus culture from the ancient culture in India becomes irrelevant.

#### *Mother or virgin*

Atre points out that the mother goddess statues as found all over in the near Eastern and ancient European cultures are absent in the Indus culture. The typical nude female figurines with protruding breasts, heavy hips and belly portion, or where pregnancy seems to be the focal point of worship or sanctity are absent in the Indus culture. The female figurines of the Indus are not nude. On the contrary they are mostly the statues of shapely young maidens. Apparent contrast between the two types of the female statues can be easily verified from nearly sixty illustrations presented by Agrawal. Of these the first 19 illustrations are of the typical mother Goddess type and found in the Western culture. From the illustration 20 onwards, the ancient female statues from the Indus and the neighbouring region are given (Agrawal 1984), while the mother goddess statues are least decorated. Atre rightly points out that the Indus female statues are invariably ornamented and clothed around waist and point to these being virgins. This trend also continues to the Pre-Indus times. The Mehargarh female statues of various periods as arranged by Jarrige also fit into the maiden - virgin pattern rather than the mother goddess pattern. As Atre points out, the statues serve some other purpose because, "the iconography of these figurines is not even in a single instance repeated on the seals and sealings which are equally important as a source of Harappan religion" (Atre 1986).

#### *Were These the Playing Dolls?*

It is also to be noted that though the female statues are of young, slim females, their features and ornaments are appallingly crude. Look at the artistic skills of the Indus artists, their expertise in carving

numerous Indus seals with precision, the most proportionate statues from Harappa which can be envied by a modern sculptor, their skills in painting intricate patterns on excellently baked pottery and so also the impressionist mode of drawing animals on baked pottery; it is inconceivable that they could have fashioned the numerous female virgin statues in such a crude manner, if they were to be the object of adoration. But compare them with toys and toycarts, these are also equally unfinished and crude. The terracotta female statues and the animal toy figures from say Mundigak can be compared for this purpose. Although baked, they were not made very carefully. Wheeler too gives similar figures of terracotta bullock cart, the bulls, hen, dove, cat, etc. along with a figure of a beast looking like a boar covering his mouth with front legs. (Wheeler 1966). He further comments that the makers of terracotta at Mohenjodaro enjoyed a sense of humour, shown by numerous grotesque figurines. Thus these figures of the animals and maidens crudely made were toys for kids. While making these toys the artist did not pay much attention to make them attractive or aesthetically good looking. This trend was followed right till recent times, as late as early fifties and sixties. I remember the baked but crude toys which I used to play with, especially on the eve of Pōlā when oxen are worshipped annually on the new moon day of Śrāvṇa month of the Indian calendar. Many of these statues are half bust or made in sitting position on a broad base or pedestal. This is because the kid playing with them can position them easily. Piggot has given the figurines of women on broad bases from Kulli culture which have lavishly made hairdressing studded with ornaments. (Piggot 1961). The modern day kids in India are lucky to have not only the variety of toys made of different materials but they are aesthetically made with right features.

#### *Population Trends*

Considering the population trends, even during the Indus culture period, more than half of the human population must have been of youngsters below 15 years. There too the survival rate among the female children being higher, more than half the population of kids below 15 years must have been that of young girl - kids. Scholars and the Indus culture experts have overlooked this strata of society. Up to the age of 12 or so the kids needed some toys to play with. As it has been recalled till recent times, the female child preferred to play with dolls. And there are hardly any instance of the experts pointing to the female terracotta figurines being girls,

toys especially made for them and not that they are less in number. The statistics of the female figurines is given by Marcia Fentress: "At Mohenjodaro a total of 136 figures were found, and at Harappa a total of 91, female figurines numbered 123 at Mohenjodaro and 69 at Harappa, confirming more or less to the expected 2 : 1 ratio. Male figures were in reverse proportion, 13 at Mohenjodaro and 22 at Harappa." (Marcia 1979). Fentress too states that there is no conclusive evidence that in the Indus culture human figurines functioned in a religious or ritual capacity. Nay they were dolls. One can understand that while the male child used to go out for playing outdoor games the girls used to play preferably indoor games, say dolls or *mock family affairs* imitating the female folk at home (known as *Bhātukali* in Marāṭhi) till recently say late fifties or sixties. They continued to play these indoor games till they attained the age of twelve. This trend must have been followed even during the Indus period so that apparently very large proportion of female toys can be explained in the light of this social custom.

A question immediately arises as to why these toys were baked, and energy expended. The reason is also apparent. Since these toys and toy dolls were handled by kids mostly in the age group of say 3-8 years, those with calcium deficiency must have been inclined to suck those toys. Baked figures prevented the clay being sucked by kids. It was also appropriate that the dolls be of young females. Because the young girls must have been playing with them and therefore they were with hairdresses and ornaments. These statues must have inculcated in the minds of these girls that very soon they might have to prepare themselves like those female figurines and be married to suitable young men.

It can be concluded that the terracotta female figurines in the Indus civilization were neither mother goddesses nor the virgin goddesses but were toy dolls for young girls. They were the Indus culture maidens out to attract attention of young people enticing them with their attractive attire and lady's finger like shapely body. As Atre has rightly observed the figures of these statues are not to be seen on any of the Indus seals because they had no religious significance. They were mere toys.

#### *The seal figures: male or female*

In order to point to the feminine nature of the central figure on the Paśupati seal (No. 1) Atre points to a seal of cow woman and horned tiger from Mohenjodaro (Marshall 1232). The feminine character of the bending figure with horned headgear can

be judged from the protruding breasts in half bent position.

Another characteristic of femininity of the central figure being the long plait of the central deity on similar Paśupati seal (Vats 1940) refers to a cylindrical seal from Kalibangan (Thapar 1979) which according to Atre, shows sacrifice of the virgin goddess.

Thus the above observations of Atre lead us to the following conclusion about the Indus civilization:

1. Female or female deity could be shown with horned headgear.

2. Long plait is indicative of female sex, i.e. it was only the female who used to maintain long hair as the Indian ladies do now. The corollary of this being that men did not maintain long hair but used to have their hair cut, or combed into a bun.

3a. Female figurines are clothed while male figurines are invariably nude.

4. And as the Kalibangan seal depicts virgin sacrifice, there must have been the custom of virgin sacrifice prevalent in those times. All these conclusions are examined below.

#### *Horned headgear*

Apart from the Paśupati seal referred to above, there is a triangular prism seal from Harappa referred by Paropala, where he has given the original three faces of the seal (after Vats 1940 Pl 93: 305) supplemented with rough sketches based on detailed autopsy copies drawn by him. In all these figures the human figure is wearing a horned headgear and it is shown to be ithyphallic in nature. Parpola compares these figures with proto-elamite seals from Susa where it is invariably the bull figures with similar headgear. Ithyphallic nature of the Paśupati seal will be dealt with in detail in the following sections.

There is already a seal of bull man from Mohenjodaro. As regards the cow woman seal, referred to by Atre the protruding breasts are obvious but the figure also appears to be phallic. Thus it is a composite figure, i.e. it has both the female type of breasts and also penis. It has headgear and a long tail. The original seal needs to be re-examined without any bias, as the seal photograph however enlarged does not help to come to very firm conclusion in this regard. If one were to go by bull man seal alone and Parpola's parallels with proto elamite seals, this seal should be of a bull man rather than bull woman. But it is a very enigmatic figure.

Thus based on the triangular prism seal, the Paśupati seal and the comparison with proto elamite seals it can be concluded that horned headgear was shown only for male deity or figure and not for the female figure. Even in Western cave arts only the male figures were provided with pair of bovine or cervix horns (Leroi-Gourhan 1968).

There are two more observations that further support this conclusion. The demon Mahiṣāsura who was slain by Goddess Durgā is always shown with bovine horn headgear and he is male. When the tribal gonds of Madhya Pradesh, India, perform ritual dance wearing such horned headgears, it is always the male performer who wears it and not the female.

### *Long plaits*

There are a) two male statues from Mohenjodaro with beard and bun and b) a statue of possible priest-king in sitting posture whose head is cut but the long curly hairs on the back can be clearly seen (Marshall 1931). And no single statue of a woman with long plait is available. But from the hair dressing they too appear to maintain long hair.

Thus it can be seen that long plaits are no sure indication of the figure being that of a female. It could also be a male figure.

### *Female sacrifice*

According to Atre, the cylindrical seal from Kalibangan represents virgin sacrifice. This seal has two separate scenes. There are shown two human figures wearing bun and holding spear-like rod in their hands and a central figure with long plait. In addition there is one more composite figure of human torso and animal body. Of the three human figures the central figure is sacrificial victim, a virgin. This proposition raises certain doubts about the seal.

As already pointed out, the long plait is no sure indication of the figure being that of a female. But further inquiries into sacrificial procedures point to the type of weapon to be used for killing a sacrificial victim. Normally the executioners prefer shorter weapons like dagger, axe, sickle, etc. in which case a strong single stroke severs the head of the sacrificial victim. This is to prevent him from being tortured before death.

Both the weapons held by human figures are curved spears with blades at one end. They are disproportionately long and being curved may not serve the purpose of killing instantaneously. Thus they are in no way useful for being used as weapons for sacrifice. There is a clear reference to the male

sacrifice in the vedic lore in the story of Śunaṣṣepa (Taittiriya Saṁhitā v.2.1.3) and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 6). But the custom of female sacrifice is mentioned. On the contrary in the later Indian tradition the goddesses like Durgā, Kālī, were slayers of male demons.

It is not that virgin sacrifice was not at all prevalent in India. The virgins especially young girls before attaining puberty were sacrificed stealthily for acquiring wealth or lease of life for ailing person. But these were practised as black witch-craft and therefore never openly carried out with due sanction of society. Also such a victim was not offered in sacrifice to fire with due ceremony. While concluding her article, Atre states that 'addition of ploughshare and domestic fire which was regarded holy is sufficient to demonstrate the enhanced position of the primitive goddess. This position of modification and alteration at Kalibangan resulted in 'vestal fire' attaining the supreme importance as indicated by the presence of public as well as residential fire altars' (Atre 1986).

Thapar reports that at Kalibangan, no female figurines, neither cult objects depicting deity were found. Under these conditions, calling the fire altars at Kalibangan as 'vestal fire' and the proposition concluding the female-virgin sacrifice needs further re-examination. And it will also have to be explained as to how the tradition of female sacrifice in vestal fire suddenly disappeared from India and took root in the Greek tradition after the lapse of nearly 1000 years or more.

### *Paśupati Seals*

Terminology of Paśupati seal is applied to those Indus seals in which the central figure is sitting in folded legs position with both the hands stretched and wrists resting on the knees.

There are seven such seals reported so far.

Seal No. 1: Marshall Vol II PL XCIV - 420

Seal No. 2: Macay Vol II PL LXXVII - 222

Seal No. 3: Macay Vol II PL LXXVII-235

Seal No. 4: Marshall Vol III, PLC XVIII - VS 210

Seal No. 5: Marshall Vol III PLCXVI -29.

Seal NO. 6: Vats (1940) Vol II PLXCIII - 303.

Seal No. 7: Parpola (1979) has given a figure and reports it to be with the Ashmolean museum, Oxford.

In all these seals the central deity is seated in identical posture. Seal No. 5 is identical with seal No. 4 but engraving is much worn out. Excepting in seal No. 2 and 3, the central deity is surrounded by

animals. Seal graffitti is clearly visible on seals Nos. 1,2,3 and partially visible on seals, No. 4 and 6. All these Paśupati seals do not in any respect closely resemble the priest king statue as stated by Parpola (1981). The sitting posture of Paśupati is totally different from that of the preist king.

#### Western counterpart of Paśupati.

In the Celtic mythology there is a deity identical with Indian Paśupati. The picture of the diety is engraved on the famous bowl from Gundenstrupp, Jutland. It is the picture of the male god Cernunnos or Lord of the beasts sitting in folded legs position similar to Paśupati but not identical. He is shown to be holding a serpent in the left hand and circular ring in right hand. He is shown to be surrounded by both domestic and fierce animals.

#### Description of Paśupati seal no. 1

On the seal is depicted the central figure sitting in folded legs position surrounded by animals, starting anticlockwise from the bottom, the first figure is that of a goat (*Apra hircus*) with long curved horns. It is a common species of goat found in the Sind province. It is shown to have turned its head upwards as if it is looking at the central figure. The next figure is that of a common Indian buffalo (*Babalus bubalis*). Above this figure is a figure of the single horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) which is obvious because of the single horn projecting from its nose. In the right hand top corner is a human figure but it constitutes a part of graffitti as shown below. In the left top corner is a figure of an Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus linnaeus*) with its trunk directed downwards. Then follows the human figure and the last being the tiger (*Panthera tigris*). The bottom left corner is broken. However, in the bottom centre mirror image of the goat horns is clearly visible.

The central figure is highly decorated with ornaments on chest. The protruding breasts and large belly portion, both the convincing signs of mother goddess are absent.

#### AV II 34 and the Paśupati seal

The deity Paśupati is absent in the RV lore. It occurs several times in VS text and the AV text. There is no separate deity Paśupati in VS but it is one of the epithets of the Rudra who is again a Ṛgvedic deity. He is referred to as god of the beasts and Mahādeva as well. In AV also the term Paśupati

is an epithet of Rudra. However the hymn II. 34 is devoted to Paśupati as separate entity. The seal describes the total theme of the hymn. The hymn is ascribed to the seer Atharvā. Whitney points out that it was recited during sacrifice of an animal. All the five stanzas of the hymns throw light on the seal. They are given below with explanatory comments. (Whitney 1905).

(Translation by Whitney)

ya iše paśupatiḥ paśūnām  
catuspādāmuta yo dvipadam  
niṣkritaḥ sa yajñiyam bhāgametu rāyaspoṣā  
yajamānam śacantām | | AV II. 34.

Tr: "The lord of the cattle, who rules over (iṣ) the cattle, the four footed and who also rules over the two footed - let him, bought off, go to (his) sacrificial portion, let abundance of wealth attach themselves to (sa) the sacrificer".

As described in the stanza, the Paśupati, lord of the beasts is lord of both the quadruped and the biped living beings, confirming the figures inscribed on the seal.

The theme would have been incomplete without a separate human figure, a biped, as shown below the elephant. Thus the human figure inscribed in the right hand top corner should be part of the graffitti and not the pictorial representation.

pramuñcato bhuvanasya reto gātum  
dhatta yagamānāya devāḥ  
upākṛtam śaśamānam yadastātpriyam  
devānāmapyetu pāthaḥ AV II. 34.2.

Tr: "Do ye, releasing (pra-muc) the seed of being, assign progress (gatu) to the sacrificer, O Gods, what hath stood brought hither (upākṛta) strenuous (śaśamāna); let it go upon the dear path of the Gods".

The central deity is in the state of phallus erectum as if he is about to release semen - the seed of the universe. The sitting posture of the Paśupati is also significant. He is sitting in the Yonyāsana posture with slight variation. In this yoga posture, the performer folding his legs at knees arranges soles to face each other making an appearance of pudenda. It is evident from the Paśupati figure. Thus both the parts of the human body associated with the act of procreation are shown in the figure confirming the epithet of "bhuvanasya retāḥ", i.e. seed of the universe or creation.

ye badhyamāmanu didhyānā  
anvaikṣanta manasā cakṣuṣā ca  
agnistānagre pra mumoktu devo  
viśvakarmā prajayā samrarāṇaḥ | | AV II. 34.3

Tr: "They, who giving attention to (anudhi) the one being bound, looked after (him) with mind and eye-let the divine Agni at first (agre) release them, be the all working, in unison with (sam-rā) progeny".

All the animals except the elephant in the left top corner are shown to be gazing at the central figure. He too can be imagined to be looking at them with the mind and eyes. It is possible only while meditating in yogic trance. The Paśupati is looking at his own creation with compassionate look through omnispread vision and omnipresent mind in yogic trance. The animals too are in unison with him. However, variation in the pose of an elephant cannot be explained.

ye grāmyaḥ paśavo viśvartpā virūpāḥ  
santo bahudhaikartūpāḥ  
vāyuṣṭānagre pramumoktu devaḥ prajāpatiḥ  
prajāyā samrarāṇaḥ AV II. 34.4

Tr: "cattle that are of the village, all formed being of various forms, manifolding of one form - let the divine Vāyu at first release them, Prajāpati in unison with progeny.

This stanza points to the distinction between the domestic bovine -animals i.e. grāmyaḥ and the wild or forest animals. While commenting on this stanza Whitney points out that the black Yajus Text TS III. 1 is the same hymn except the change in the order of stanzas. It has only slight variation in the text, i.e. āraṇyāḥ - of the forest - being substituted for grāmyāḥ. This substitution perfectly matches with the animals engraved on the seal. Both the types of animals being progeny his other epithet being Prajāpati.

Prajānantaḥ pratim gr̥hantu pūrve  
prāṇamaṅgebhyaḥ paryācarantam  
divam gaccha prati tiṣṭhā śariraḥ  
svargam yāhi pathibhirdevayānāiḥ AV II. 34.5

Tr: "For knowing, let them first (pūrva) receive the breath (prāṇa) coming to them forth from limbs. Go to heaven, stand firm with thy bodies, go to paradise (svarga) by God travelled roads."

The last stanza ordains the sacrificial animals to travel along the path of gods. This also explains why the animals are gazing towards Paśupati.

#### Reference to rectangular seal

The deity on the seal being Paśupati, it was an epithet of Rudra as in VS and AV texts. VS describes Rudra as the one with blue neck (VS XVI. 8 and others). Similarly epithet Mahādeva is also used in connection with the Paśupati (VS XXIX. 8) Thus

Rudra - Śiva - Mahādeva - Paśupati represent the same deity in the AV and VS lore, that continued in the later times, while the AV hymn refers to only quadruped and biped animals, the reptiles like snake are absent. May be because it was not a sacrificial animal. However, all these animals are mentioned in AV XI. 2.24-25 where the plaits of Paśupati -Rudra are also referred in AV XI 2.31.

In the later day mythology, the deity Śiva-Mahādeva always had cobra around his neck. This association dates back to the Indus culture times as indicated by the rectangular seal legend in seal No. 4. Here the central deity is seated in Paśupati's pose and flanked on both the sides by a devotee sitting on either side and also a cobra in hood spread position. Thus the deity on the Paśupati seal is Rudra - Mahādeva deity in formative stage. As such, the VS points to his blue neck, around which the myth of drinking poison was woven. Or was it already in circulation during the Indus period as a part of tradition?

#### Positive animals in the left hand corner of seal no.1

This most important seal i.e. No. 1 is unfortunately broken. However, it is now possible to contemplate the possible animal types engraved in the broken corner. The biped animal belonging to the bird species and a quadruped animal like lizard or amphibian animal like crocodile might have been engraved on the broken portion of the seal. This is further confirmed by the seal No. 7 where the central deity is flanked by fish, crocodile and snakes.

#### Conclusions

The methodology of drawing parallels can be successfully applied to the Vedic and post Vedic culture in India to understand the Indus culture.

The mother goddess cult as practised in the West probably did not exist in the Indus culture.

The terracotta female figures from the Indus culture need not be the virgin goddesses but terracotta toys for the female kids.

Horned headgear was the prerogative of male deity or male human figures engraved on the Indus seals. However, long plaits or bun did not definitely point to the female sex. Both the male and female could be having plaits.

The cylindrical seal from Kalibangan does not depict the scene of virgin sacrifice and the fire altars at Kalibangan may not be the vestal fires as proposed by Atré.

The famous Paśupati seal can be better understood in the light of the Atharva Vedic hymn II. 34. He is the Lord of beasts and presides over all types of animals, namely domestic and fierce, wild,

cervix, amphibians and aquatic animals.

It is hoped that the R̥gvedic and the Atharva Vedic lore shall be explored further as this can help to understand the Indus culture and religion.

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