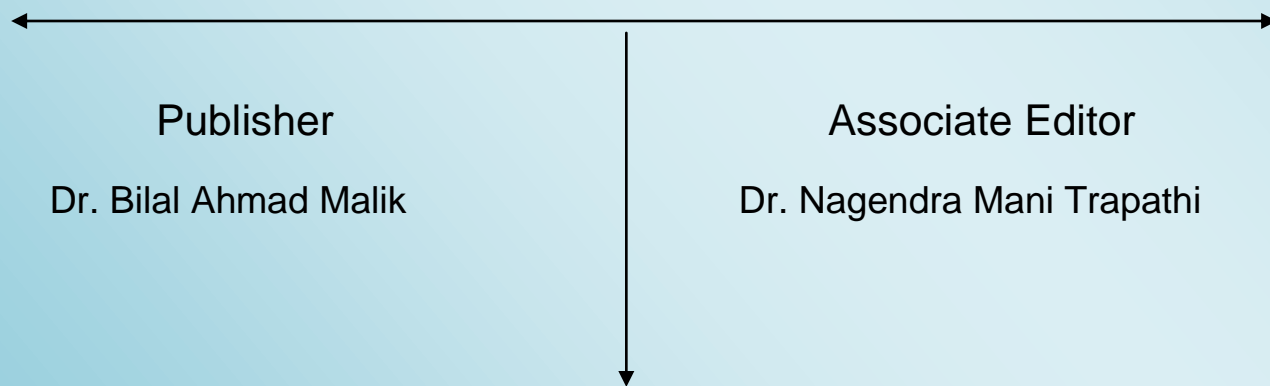


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BIODIVERSITY IN VEDIC SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

During Vedic period, Vedic society followed a specimen geographical environment; where physical to socio-cultural environment have been dealt very promptly. Each of the four Vedas consists of the metrical Mantra or Samhita and the prose Brahmana gives direction of these ceremonies at which the Mantras were to be enchanted and explain of the legends connected with these Mantras and rituals. Both these portions are termed shruti (which was passed on to consecutive generations orally instead of any hand written documentation). Each of the four Vedas seems to have passed to numerous Shakhas or schools, giving rise to various recessions of the text. Within Vedic literature, the biodiversity have been reflected and through the proper analysis of different mantra (hymns or chants) we can find out the geographical biodiversity of Vedic-time.

Key words: Samhita, shruti.

INTRODUCTION:

Geography is fossilized within the shade of History. Historical events, historical societies, and even paleo-ritual realms bear the thought of Geography, the culture of folk-geography and the film of geo-society. From mid 2nd to mid 1st millennium BCE (or the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age), The Vedic society belonged to Hindus of Northern and North-western part of Indian subcontinent. Though this time period is controversial yet a chronological transition could be traced from the Late Harappa period to the rising of Mahajanapadas (early Indo-Aryan Kingdoms in India); the Vedic age (when Veda was composed). To deal or to evaluate the Vedic-Geography, the analysis of Vedic literature is a must. In Vedic literature (Rik-Sama-Yajur and Atharva), an

important hidden geographical scenario could be demarcated with respect to its; physical, social, culture, economic, tradition, folk, medical, behavioral, ritual, religious believes.

OBJECTIVE:

To find out the contemporary biodiversity of Vedic society through the study of Vedas.

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY:

Stage I: At the initial or pre-writing stage of this book I studied Rig Veda; edited by Abdul Aziz Al Aman, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda; translated and edited by Sri Bijan Bihari Goswami in detail to know all the *mantras, sukta* etc. And from the Vedic *Mantra* I searched different aspects of geography in point. To fulfill the whole knowledge and to search the geographical aspect I cultivated different journals, books, and online available articles like: *The Practical Sanskrit Dictionary* of V.S. Apte (Ed.) , *India: The Ancient Past* of B.Avari (2007), *Hymns of Atharva-Veda: The Sacred Book of the East part Forty-two* of M.Bloom and F.M. Muller (1897), *The Geography of Rig Vedic India*. M. L. Bhargava (1964), *The Yajur Veda* of D. Chand, (1992), *Exploration in Applied Geography* of M. Chatterjee, H.M.Misra and A.K. Dutta (Eds.), *Prachin Bharote Nari* of R. Chottopadhyay and P. Bhattacharya, *The-Aryans of Ancient South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity* of G.Erdosy, *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* of G. Flood (Ed.), *An Introduction to Hinduism* of G. Flood, *Sama Veda, A History of Indian literature: Veda and Upanishads* of J.Gonda(Ed.), *The Rig Veda : Complete* of R.T.H. Griffith and etc. During the prefatory stage of literature survey author surveyed more information from the e-books, E-Vedas, different maps of Vedic society. Stage II: After reading all possible the theoretical explanations I prepared different relevant tables, maps, and structured the point-wise explanations. During preparation I took the scientific help from the different experts in this field. During framing I used photoshop to prepare the map. Actually this book is mainly based on theoretical survey.

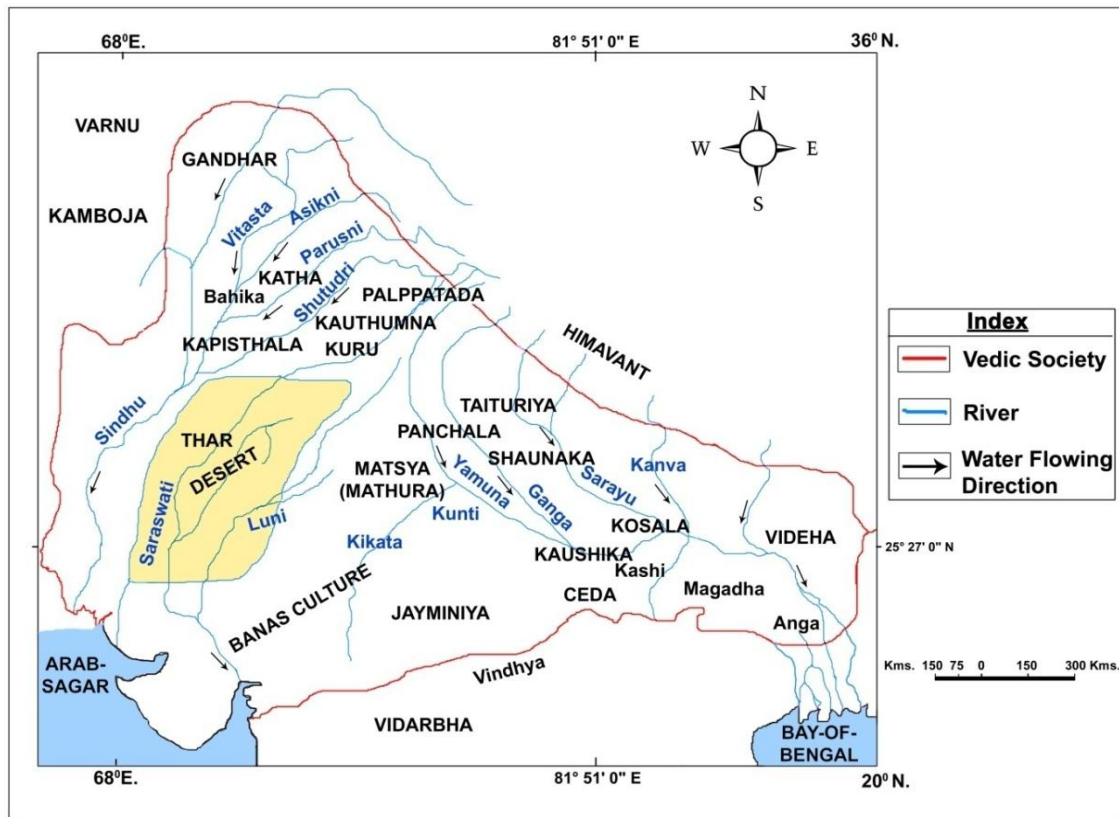
RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The Vedas is considered to be the earliest literary record of Indo-Aryan civilization, and the most sacred books of India. They are the original scriptures of Hindu teaching, and contain spiritual knowledge, encompassing aspects of our life. The ancient texts of the Veda reflect a symbolic world in which ritual, notably sacrifice performed by priest for patron, was at the central of the thriving of a community (Flood, 2003) Vedic literature with its philosophical maxims stood the test of time and is the highest religious authority for all sections of Hindus in

particular and for mankind in general. The word *Veda* means ‘knowledge’- the best of all knowledge in Hindu eyes (Avari, 2007) and it manifests the language of the gods in human speech. The laws of the Vedas regulate the social, legal, domestic and religious customs of the Hindus to the present day. The Veda is intimately connected with Vedic ritual and its primary function is one (Flood, 1996). All the obligatory duties of the Hindus at birth, marriage, death etc. owe their allegiance to the Vedic ritual. They draw forth the thought of successive generation of thinkers, and so contain within it the different strata of thought. Each Veda consists of four parts – the Samhitas (hymns), the Brahmanas (rituals), the Aranyakas (theologies) and the Upanishads (philosophies). The collection of mantras or hymns is called the Samhita. The Brahmanas are ritualistic texts and include precepts and religious duties. Each Veda has several Brahmanas attached to it. The Upanishads form the concluding portions of the Veda and therefore called the “Vedanta” or the end of the Veda and contains the essence of Vedic teachings. The Upanishads and the *Aranyakas* are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas, which discuss philosophical problems. The *Aryanyakas* (forest texts) intend to serve as objects of meditation for ascetics who live in forests and deal with mysticism and symbolism. Although the Vedas are seldom read or understood today, even by the devout, they no doubt form the bedrock of the universal religion or “Sanatana Dharma” that all Hindus follow. The Vedas have guided our religious direction for ages and will continue to do so for generations to come. And they will forever remain the most comprehensive and universal of all ancient scriptures. In post-Vedic times, Veda was extended to indicate to include the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (Mittal and Thursby, 2006). ‘The Mahabharata overflows with mythical and legendary detailing of Veda’ (Gonda, 1975). The Vedas are direct utterances of God revealed to some *rishi* arises from a confusion between the expression Veda meaning knowledge in general and “The Vedas” referring to the works discussed here (Ganapati, 1982). No doubt all the Knowledge arises from God, otherwise how could creation have taken place which involves a vast amount of concealed knowledge divulged in the manifestation processes themselves. Knowledge was there which arose as ideas of the creator. Then it is unbelievable that God reveals his ideas are to endow man with the faculty of speech and to inspire him with ideas through his brain and to induce him to the utterances. Such ideas, as from the content of the Vedas, are revealed only to profound thinkers who had gone through life’s experiences and gathered wisdom. The expression “Revelation” used to indicate the source of the Veda has been thoroughly misunderstood. What was meant to be conveyed by the word was that the knowledge which remained locked up in man’s brain, before language had developed to such an extent as to enable one’s thoughts and ideas to be translated cogently into speech was perfected. Thus man himself was the author of the revelations and not God direct. This truth is borne out by Rig Veda itself as stated in Mandala 10|71|1-2.

The Vedas, meaning the repository of knowledge, form the fundamentals of Vedic religion and Aryan society. “The available earliest literature of India has unanimously accepted the four Vedas as revealed to the *rishis* at the time of the universe” (Shrava, 1977). About the origin of Veda’s evidence should be noticed from R.V. 1|1|3, ‘the Brahma Sutras declare that Brahma was the sources of the Veda, and that, on this foundation, *Sankara* argues that Brahma must be omniscient’ (Muir, 1861). The Vedas are probably the earliest documents available of the human mind and is indeed difficult to trace the existence of the earliest scripts of Veda. As the ancient Hindus seldom kept any historical record of their religious, literary and political realization, it is difficult to determine the period of the Vedas with precision. Historians provide us many guesses but none of them is free from ambiguity. The Vedas are among the oldest sacred texts. The Samhitas dated roughly 1500–1000 BCE, and the "circum-Vedic" texts, as well as the redaction of the Samhitas, dated to c. 1000-500 BCE, resulting in a Vedic period, extending from the mid of 2nd to mid 1st millennium BCE, or the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. The Vedic period reached its peak only after the composition of the mantra, with the establishment of the various branches (shakhas) all over Northern India which annotated the mantra Samhitas with Brahmana discussing their meaning, and reaches its end in the age of Buddha and Panini and the rise of the Mahajanapadas (archaeologically, Northern Black Polished Ware). Michael Witzel gives a time span of c. 1500 BCE to c. 500-400 BCE. Witzel makes special reference to the Near Eastern Mitanni material of the 14th c. BCE the only epigraphic record of Indo-Aryan contemporary to the *Rig vedic* period. He gives 150 BCE (Patañjali) as a terminus antique for all Vedic Sanskrit literature, and 1200 BCE (the early Iron Age) for the Atharva Veda. Transmission of texts in the Vedic period was orally only, as per tradition with precision with the help of elaborate mnemonic techniques. A literary tradition set only in post-Vedic times, after the rise of Buddhism in the Maurya period, perhaps earliest in the Kanva recension of the YajurVeda about the 1st century BCE; however oral tradition predominated until c. 1000 CE.

MAP 1: THE AREA OF VEDIC SOCIETY.



FLORAL ENVIRONMENT: *Somlata* was found in the Territory of *Muzbana* Mountain (RV 2, 9|46|1). *Chandan* (Sandel) tree was presented on that time (SYV, 12|86). Another folk tree named *salmoli* tree, Palm tree (Tal) were found. The floral environment was destroyed during in summer (by forest fire) but during rainy season that was regenerated (KYV 1|5|9). One specimen type of tree that had been analyzed in Veda and when that was cutting red colour sap ejected. This may be the reason the tree got the name “teak” (*segun*) (KYV 2|5|1). So the characteristics of the tree have also been highlighted. *Palas* (a kind of red flower without fragrance) was the beautiful flower among Vedic aesthetic (KYV 2|5|3). Water is the cause of the plant’s birth and growth (KYV 3|3|6); this science was acknowledged here. Catechu tree was the famous tree of that time (KYV 3|5|7).

FAUNAL ENVIRONMENT: ‘*Plants bear life*’ -this scientific truth was first identified in Rig Veda (RV2 10|97|21). “*Jatpaksha*” bird, “*Shyan*” bird (SYV 18|53) was the identified species of Vedic era. The nature of animal was also explained here like the nature of Lion, Dog, horses eat grass and for this they move to grazing land (KYV 4|4|9). ‘...dangerous, dissimulating mountainous lion kills other animal...’(SYV 18|71). In Veda dog

was also marked as 'naughty dog' (SYV 19|36), Veda has also dealt with food items of animals like deer eats paddy (SYV 23|30). In Veda, total 609 different animal names had been indicated; among them 260 are wild animals (SYV 24|1). The name of the birds are *Bhuranya* (speedy moving birds), yellow beaked singing black bird (or *Sari*), woodpecker, *Srijoy*, *sarg*, *syandav*, *soka*, *supono*, *vas* (KYV 3|2|1), *bubhakhya*, *bartica*, *kinnor*, *globe* (water habitat or living bird), *sambit*, *stork* (*saros*), owl, *kulik*, *koulik*, *kamala*, *sichapi*, *maggu*, *jotu*, *pippka*, *bortica*, *suk*, *kopinjal*, *sparrow* (*chatak*), *chas*, *cuckoo* (*kokil*), *peacock*, *kroncho*, *tamrachur*, *gobadi*, *Garur-pakhi* (the bird look like as cow) (AV 1|5|3|1) and *bikkar*. The animals are tiger, rat, *sisumar* (water living animal), bear, mongoose (*nakul*), frog, *lopass* (wild), *monmal* named rat, camel, dog, lion, deer, elephant, monkey, wild sheep (SYV 24|38,24|36,24|33,24|34,24|35,24|13,24|20). Animal behavior has been dealt here like; before milking the cow, its calf is released to it to suck-in which helps the milk ooze out in a proper flow (KYV 1|7|1). Bees and their importance in environment have been dealt here. Bees made honey from nektion of flowers (KYV 2|4|9). The animal's habitat was identified in Veda like Snakes lived in holes in ground (KYV 4|2|8). *Vadra* (water cat), python, *buru* (deer type), *jahak* (cave fox), *kosh* (bird), *kutori* deer, horn less goat, lop (*burial sakuni*) etc. The destruction of crops by the rat was dealt in Veda (AV 6|5|5|1). So, animal behavior and societal relationship was also described. Owl and pigeon lived in Vedic houses (AV 6|3|4|1). The habitat of some birds were also highlighted here. It is obvious that the animals form a friendly part of the idiomatic lore and traditional descriptions of the Rig Veda: the spotted deer, for example, are the official steeds of the chariots of the *Maruts*; and the name of the buffalo (like that of the bull, boar and lion) serves as an epithet, practical to various Gods, suggestive of great strength and power. The Gods approaching the place of sacrifice to drink the libations evoke the image of thirsty bison converging on a watering place in the forest. The expand tails or manes of Indra's horses suggest the image of the outspread plumes of the peacock's tail. The elephant is referred to not only in its wild form, with the image of a wild elephant crashing through the forest, uprooting the trees and bushes in its path, but in its fully domesticated form as well: one verse (RV10|40|4) refers to wild elephants being tracked by hunters; another (RV 4|4|1) refers to a mighty king with his (retinue of) elephants; another (RV9|57|3) refers to an elephant (perhaps a temple elephant?) being decorated by the people; and yet another (RV 6|20|8) refers to *Tugra* with his (garrisons of) elephants in what is obviously a reference to a battle. (In RV6|4|1 and RV 6|20|8, Griffith mistranslates *ibha* as "attendants" or "servants".) Incidentally, when the tiger is mentioned in later texts (including the other Veda SaMhitAs), it has a purely "Aryan" name: *vyAghra*, which not only has a purely Indo-European etymology, but also has cognate forms in Iranian *babr* and Armenian *vagr*. And even in the Rig Veda while the word *vyAghra* does not occur even once in the text, it occurs in the name of one of the composers of RV 9|97: *VyAghrapAda VAsiSTha*. The word which occurs in the Rig Veda in the following references, stood for

both the lion as well as the tiger (according to American archaeologist Mark Kenoyer, it probably stood for the tiger rather than for the lion).

Table: The floral environment in Rig Veda period.

Animals	Animals name during RgVead	Scientific name	Source of Verses
Elephant	<i>ibha,</i> <i>vAraNa,</i> <i>hastin, sRNi</i>	<i>Elaphus</i> <i>Maximus</i>	1 64 7; 1 84 7; 1 140 2; 4 4 1; 4 16 14; 6 4 5; 6 20 8; 8 33 8; 9 53 3; 10 40 4; 10 106 6.
Buffalo	<i>mahiSa</i>	<i>Bubalus</i> <i>Bibalus</i>	1 64 7; 1 95 9; 1 121 2; 1 141 3; 3 46 2; 4 18 11; 5 29 7,5 29 8; 6 8 4; 6 17 11; 7 44 5; 8 12 8; 8 35 7-9; 8 69 15; 8 77 10; 9 33 1; 9 69 3; 9 73 2; 9 86 40; 9 87 7; 9 92 6; 9 95 4; 9 96 6, 9 96 19; 9 97 41; 9 113 3; 10 8 1;10 28 10; 10 45 3; 10 60 3; 10 65 8; 10 66 10; 10 106 2; 10 124 4; 10 128 8; 10 140 6; 1 189 2.
Indian Bison	<i>Gaura</i>	<i>Bibos Gaurus</i>	1 16 5; 4 21 8; 7 58 2; 7 69 6; 7 98 1; 8 4 3;8 45 24; 10 51 6; 10 100 2.
Peacock	<i>mayUra</i>	<i>Pavo Cristatus</i>	1 191 14; 3 45 1; 8 1 25.
Chital or Spotted Deer	<i>pRSatI</i>	<i>Axis Axis</i>	1 37 2; 39 6; 64 8; 85 4, 5; 87 4; 89 7; 162 21; 186 8; 2 34 3,2 34 4; 2 36 2; 3 26 4, 5 42 15; 5 55 6.; 5 57 3; 5 58 6; 5 60 2; 7 40 3; 8 7 28.
Camel	<i>uSTra</i>		1 138 2; 8 4 7; 8 5 37; 8 46 22,
Lion/tiger	<i>siMha</i>		1 64 8; 1 95 5; 1 174 3; 3 2 11; 3 9 4; 3 26 5; 4 16 4; 5 15 3; 5 74 4; 5 83 3; 7 18 17; 9 89 3; 9 97 28; 10 28 4; 10 67 9.

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ABBREVIATIONS IN THE TEXT

In this whole article some abbreviations have been used. The means of that:

RV₁=Rig Veda part one,

RV₂= Rig Veda part two

SV= Sama Veda

SYV= Sukla Yajur Veda

KYV= Krishna Yajur Veda

AV= Atharva Veda

In RV₁ and RV₂, 4|77|8 where: 4 = 'Mandala' or Phase
77 = 'Sukti' or Incantation
8 = 'Mantra' or Hymns.

In SYV, 2|10 where: 2 = 'Addhaya'
10 = 'Mantra'

In KYV, 1|2|14 where: 1='Kanda'
2='Prapathak'
14= 'Mantra'

In AV, 1|2|3|7 where: 1 = 'Kanda'
2 = 'Anubak',
3 = 'Sukti'
7 = 'Mantra'.

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