

O. P. BHARADWAJ

### THE ṚGVEDIC RIVER RASĀ

Rasā is the most commonly mentioned river in the *Ṛgveda* after the Sarasvatī and the Sindhu. Like the former it has been invoked as the “Great Mother”.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally considered a stream in the extreme north-west of the Ṛgvedic territory called the Sapta-Sindhus and often equated with the Avestan Raṇhā (Rangha), supposed to be identical with the Araxes or Jaxartes.<sup>2</sup> One scholar<sup>3</sup> associates the name with two rivers, one being the Taṅgir which joins the Indus from the north-west between the rivers Gilgit and Kabul and the other called Sahbi which runs in the Rewari-Rohtak region of Haryana. It has also been identified with rivers as far apart as Tigris<sup>4</sup> in Iraq and the Narmadā<sup>5</sup> in Central India. It is, sometimes, supposed to represent a mythical stream and construed even as a generic term for river on the specious ground that the word ‘Rasā’ originally meant ‘sap’ or ‘flavour of waters’.<sup>6</sup>

In the absence of cogent evidence all these views have remained mere conjectures and the problem of Rasā’s identification still awaits solution.

---

1. RV 5.41,15.

2. V.I., vol.ii, p. 209.

3. M.L. Bhargava, *The Geography of Ṛgvedic India*, Lucknow, 1964, pp. 44, 47.

4. Narendranath Ghose, *The Aryan Trail in Iran and India*, Calcutta, 1937, p. 194.

5. David Frawley, *Gods, Sages and Kings*, Delhi, 1993, p. 857.

6. V.I., vol.ii, p. 209.

In our view the Ṛgvedic Rasā is represented by the River Rakshān of Balochistan which rises near Shirza, close to the eastern junction of the Central Makran Siahan ranges, traverses Panjgur, turns northward to join the Mashkel river from Persia at Grawak, bursts through the Siahan range and runs along the western side of Khārān to the Hamuni-Mashkel, covering a total length of 258 miles.<sup>7</sup> The Rakshān valley, through which the main road passes after leaving Panjgur, form the northern most part of Makran.<sup>8</sup>

As we shall see all available evidence points in this direction.

The key to the identification of the Rasā lies in the account of the final conflict between the Paṇis and the Aṅgirasas as given in the *RV*<sup>9</sup>, the *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>10</sup> and the *Bṛhaddevatā*.<sup>11</sup> Although the last two versions slightly differ from the first and from each other all the three agree that the battle took place on the Rasā.

To note briefly the events as described in the *RV*, the Paṇis, who dwelt across the Rasā, stole the cows of the Aṅgirasas and hid them in a cave in the river. Saramā, the bitch, as messenger of Indra, followed their trail all the way to the ends of heavens, crossing the Rasā which, first denying her a passage, soon became fordable. The Paṇis tried in vain to win her over with an offer of making her their sister and sharing the booty with her. Then they cautioned her saying that while their treasure-chamber was full of kine and horses and riches it was paved with a rock; that they would not part with it without a fight and their weapons were sharp-pointed. Saramā, however, warned them of reprisal from the Aṅgirasas and Navagvas<sup>12</sup> led by Indra and Bṛhaspati and threatened them to go far away from that place. She returned and passed on the information to Indra leading to the defeat of the Paṇis and recovery of the cows.

To begin with, although the Rasā is undoubtedly a river of the

7. Buller, p. 99.

8. Sir Aurel Stein, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 43, Calcutta, 1931, p. 19.

9. *RV* 10.108; also mentioned in 1.62,3; 1.24,6 etc.

10. ii, 440-442. For English translation see Wendy Doniger o' Flaharty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 97-99.

11. Ed. A. A. Macdonell, Two parts with English translation and notes, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1965, viii. 24- 36.

12. A section of the Aṅgirasas. See Seers, p. 236.

west there is nothing to suggest that it could be a tributary of the Indus.<sup>13</sup> It is mentioned with known rivers of the west like the Krumu, Kubhā, Sindhu, Gomati, Anitabhā, Sarayu, Triṣṭāmā, Susartu, Śvetyā and Mehatnu.<sup>14</sup> First four of these are known to represent respectively the Kurram,<sup>15</sup> Kabul,<sup>16</sup> Indus<sup>17</sup> and Gomal<sup>18</sup> but the rest have not been identified beyond doubt. All that can be said is that some of them may be tributaries of the Indus.

Secondly the region of the Rasā was rocky and full of caves where the Paṇis were able to hide the stolen cows. The valley of Rakshān agrees with this situation.

Again the Rasā appears to be subject to sudden and short-lived floods<sup>19</sup> since Saramā had to wait for a short while till it became fordable. This is true of the Rakshān also. Although dry throughout the greater part of the year, like most hill torrents, it carries heavy floods and one of its features is the frequent pools from which water is drawn off for purposes of irrigation.<sup>20</sup>

Further, the country of the Rasā abounds in horses which constituted a good part of the wealth of the Paṇis.<sup>21</sup> Balochistan too, for long has been noted for its breed of horses. In the seventh century Rai Chach of Sind is said to have taken tribute in horses from Gandāva and in pre-British days the Haramzai Saiyids of Pishin and many of the Brahui tribesmen were in the habit of taking horses for sale so far afield as Mysore. Pedigree Baloch mares are still much prized. The animals were indeed considered so good that the Horse-breeding Commission in 1901 pronounced one of the classes of brood mares at the Sibi fare “as good as anything to be seen in England.”<sup>22</sup>

The Rakshān and its valley thus satisfies all geographical aspects of the Ṛgvedic description of the Rasā and its surroundings.

---

13. Seers, p. 273, n. 159.

14. *RV* 5. 53, 9 and 10. 75, 6.

15. *V. I.*, vol. i, p. 199.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

17. *V. I.*, vol. ii, p. 450.

18. *V. I.*, vol. i, p. 238.

19. *Cf. RV*, 1.112, 12(a).

20. *IGI*, vol. xvii, p. 45.

21. *RV*, 10.108, 7.

22. Buller, p. 39; and *IGI*, vol. vi, p. 298.

The most important point however, relates to the location of the parties involved in the conflict and it demands a detailed examination.

In the scenario emerging from the brief facts of the great encounter the Paṇis and their group of tribes occupied the country on the west of the Rasā while the Aṅgirasas and their associates confronted them on the east of the river. As such some vestiges of the presence of these parties on the Rakshān and generally in Balochistan and its contiguous areas should be expected to exist even after the lapse of several millennia.

Some scholars<sup>23</sup> have doubted the historicity of the Paṇis and labelled the conflict narrated in the *RV* X.108 and elsewhere as a myth. Facts clearly point to the contrary.

It appears that the Paṇis and their confederates like the Dāsas, Dasyus and Pārāvatas, at one time, occupied the region to the west of the Sarasvatī beyond Vinaśana<sup>24</sup> or Kalibangan, including areas of Rajasthan and Bahawalpur<sup>25</sup> from where they were routed and driven away. The Sarasvatī has been described as the “devourer of the Paṇi”<sup>26</sup> and “destroyer of the Pārāvata”<sup>27</sup>. Expulsion of the Dasyus<sup>28</sup> and the Dāsas<sup>29</sup> is also mentioned in the *RV*. From the vicinity of the Sarasvatī these tribes moved into Sind pursued by their enemies. This is confirmed by the presence in Sind of tribal names like the Parbatiya of the Paṇi group and the Rind, Āgaria, Gadhai and Sarangi of the Aṅgirasa

---

23. Cf. Abel Bergaigne, vol. ii, p. 239 cited by Hillebrandt, vol. i, p. 233; Jan Gonda, *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. i, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 97; and Doris Srinivasan, *The Myth of the Paṇis in the Ṛigveda*, in *JAOS*, vpl. 93, No. 1, Jan.-Mar., 1973, pp.44-58.

24. For identification of Vinaśana, See O. P. Bharadwaj, *Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 20-43.

25. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Gita Press ed.v. 9, 13-20 & v. 10) relates the story of Bharata son of a prominent Aṅgirasa brahmaṇa being caught by the Paṇis, on the Ikṣumatī-Sarasvatī near Sindhu-Sauvīra, for sacrifice to goddess Bhadrakālī for male issue to their chief Vṛṣalapati. Here Paṇis are called Vṛṣalas or Sūdras. Again King Rāhugaṇa of Sindhu- Sauvīra meets him while on his way to meet sage Kapila. The scene was, on both the occasions, somewhere in Rajasthan- Bahawalpur on the Sarasvatī. King Rāhugaṇa too was an Aṅgirasa. See F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Reprint, Delhi, 1962, p. 224.

26. *RV*, 6. 61, 1.

27. *Ibid.*, 6. 61, 2

28. *Ibid.*, 7. 6, 3.

29. *Khila*, 3. 16, 5. *Parān kṛṇuṣva dāsān*.

group.<sup>30</sup> From Sind too the Paṇis were forced out by the Aṅgirasas led by Bṛhaspati, the son of Aṅgirā, who is invoked in the *Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya Pariśiṣṭa*,<sup>31</sup> as the lord of Sindhudeśa, to appear with Indra and Brahmā, circumambulating the Maru or desert. Chased relentlessly by the Aṅgirasas who strongly resented their cattle-raids and unethical and irreligious activities, the Paṇis moved westward,<sup>32</sup> pushing deeper and deeper into Balochistan, where they still exist in large numbers as members of numerous septs and clans of various Pathan tribes.

The origin of the Pathans is lost in antiquity<sup>33</sup> and their own traditions are heavily mythologised and unreliable.<sup>34</sup> The true Pathans are however, believed to be of Indian origin.<sup>35</sup> According to recent genealogies, based on beliefs barely four-five hundred years old, the Pathan Pani is descended from Abdul Rashid Kais through Ghurghusht and Damai.<sup>36</sup> These Panis include the Musa Khels of Zhob, Kakar Panis,<sup>37</sup> Panis of Sibi, Musa Khel Isot, Zmarai, Dephal<sup>38</sup> and others. The Kakar Panis are said to have come over to Balochistan with the Uttamzai from across the Indus<sup>39</sup> while the Mihranis of Dera

---

30. For details see *infra*.

31. ii, 5. Quoted by J. R. Joshi, *Minor Vedic Deities*, Poona, 1978, p. 40. *Meru* appears to be scribal error for *Maru*; Also *Jaiminīya Gr̥hya Sūtra*, ii, 9.

32. *RV* 7. 6, 3 (d). Some scholars identify the Paṇis with the Indus Valley people; e.g. P. L. Bhargava, Rajasthan, The Cradle of Indo-Aryan Civilisation, in *Cultural Contours of India, Dr. Satya Prakash Fel. Vol.*, Ed. Dr. M. L. Sharma et. al., New Delhi, 1980, p. 40; S. Prakash, *Ṛgveda and the Indus Valley Civilization*, Hoshiarpur, 1966, p. 92. According to Rafique Mughal, “the maximum expansion of Harappan civilisation outside the primary Indus River Valley occurred in mature times (mid and late 3rd millennium B. C.). After reaching a fully urbanised stage at its core which may have been the central part of the Indus Valley, it spreads towards the Baluch hills and along the Arabian Sea coast. This corresponds in time to intense Harappan long distance sea trade or exchange”. See *Recent Archaeological Research in the Cholistan Desert*, App. I in *An Archaeological Tour Along the Ghaggar-Hakra river*, Marc Aurel Stein, Meerut, 1989, pp. 107-124; for date p. 108.

33. Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, *India*, Reprint, New Delhi, 1975, p. 54.

34. Caroe, p. 25: They are little more than *fairy-tales*.

35. *Punjab Castes*, p. 62; Bellew considers the tribes of Sulaiman Range to be aboriginal Indians; See S. S. Misra, *A Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Greek and Hittite*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 217.

36. *Glossary*, pp. 222-23.

37. *IGI*, vol. vi, p. 289; *Punjab Castes*, p. 92.

38. *Glossary*, Genealogical tables, p. 223.

39. *Punjab Castes*, p. 92; Bellew (p. 122) connects them with Parmar Rajputs.

Ismail Khan and Muzzafargarh,<sup>40</sup> as the name suggests, were originally associated with the valley of the Mihran which is the later name of the Vedic Sarasvatī in Sind, also called Hakra and Wahinda in Rajasthan and Bahawalpur and Ghaggar in Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. As a matter of fact all sections of Pathans are inter-related and original location of their tribes is no more certain.<sup>41</sup>

The Baloch Pathans, with the Panis as one of their largest section, share with the Ṛgvedic Panis not only their name but also many distinct traits of character<sup>42</sup> peculiar enough to establish their common identity.

The Panis were foolish and faithless, having no belief in worship and sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> The Pathans, although, normally Musalmans, are said to be singularly ignorant of their religion and neglectful of its rites and observances.<sup>44</sup> They have been described as rude people, just emerging from barbarism.<sup>45</sup>

The Panis, hankering after wordly pleasures, earned the dubious adjective of “userers”.<sup>46</sup> The Paṇi-Vaṇika equation<sup>47</sup> suggests that they were traders. The Pathans, particularly Bitanni Sheikhs amongst them, are also energetic and desirous of making money.<sup>48</sup> They constituted an important commercial and money-lending class.<sup>49</sup> In prepartition India, the Pathans engaged in money-lending at a very high rate of interest, which was proverbially known as *Pathani sud* (interest).

---

40. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

41. *Ibid.* p. 56; Even Ibbetson confesses his ignorance on this point.

42. On this point, apart from the works cited below also see H. W. Bellew, *The Races of Afghanistan*, Calcutta, 1880, pp. 24, 26, 82, etc. & passim.

43. *RV*, 7.6, 3.

44. *Punjab Castes*, p. 43.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

46. *RV* 8,66,10. The word is *Bekāṇāta*. Explained by Sāyaṇa as: *Anena kusidino vṛddhijivino vārdhuṣikā ucyante / katham tad vyutpattiḥ / Be iti apabhraṃso dviśabdārthe / Ekam kārṣāpaṇam ṛṣikāya prayacchan dvau mahyam dātavyau ityana darśayanti / Tao dvi śabdenaikāśabdena nāṭayanti iti bekaṇāṭāḥ /*

47. *Nirukta* 11,17. *Paṇirvaṇiḡ bhavati*; and Sāyaṇa on *RV* 1.180,7: *Paṇirvaṇiḡ lubdhako ayaṣṭā*.

48. *Gazetteer of Bannu District*, Calcutta, 1883-84, p. 70

49. Oliver, p. 24; Also *IGI Provincial Series, North-West Frontier Province*, p. 199.

The Paṇis possessed cows and horses<sup>50</sup> and were habitual cattle thieves. The adjectives “*stena*” (thief or robber) and “*aghaśaṃsa*” (wicked reviler) seem to refer to them<sup>51</sup> Balochistan was known for its breed of horses and the Pathans were expert riders.<sup>52</sup> They too have been called “inveterate thieves and abettors of thieves; thieves by descent and tradition”<sup>53</sup> as well as great raiders and cattle lifters.<sup>54</sup> According to an adage “God will not favour a Baloch who does not steal and rob”.<sup>55</sup> This was the position till the advent of the British in India. “Every now and then” says Holdich,<sup>56</sup> “there would be a descent of the Baloch clansmen into Sind, or the Pathans of the Sulaimani hills into the nearest plains, and a general lifting of cattle and goods ensued which called for reprisal and vengeance.”

The Paṇis were lazy.<sup>57</sup> The Pathans are said to suffer from an aversion to industry and a morbid sense of pride which looks upon manual labour as degrading.<sup>58</sup>

The Paṇis have been called “rudely speaking niggards” and “babblers of indistinct, incoherent speech”.<sup>59</sup> Likewise the Bitanni Pathans are described as rude barbarians subject to a curious trick of misplacing aspirants which the Pushto speakers are unable to pronounce although they are generally correctly sounded by their neighbours.<sup>60</sup>

The *RV* refers to the typical cleverness of the Paṇi<sup>61</sup> and the Bitannis of Marwat are also known to be keen-witted.<sup>62</sup> The Paṇis are compared with a wolf<sup>63</sup> who is by nature malicious, rapacious, greedy and known for pretending friendship. The Bitannis have been called

---

50. *RV*, 10. 108, 7.

51. *RV*, 6. 28, 7; Seers, p. 105, n. 113.

52. *IGI*, vol. vi, p. 298; and *Punjab Castes*, p. 42.

53. *Punjab Castes*, pp. 42 & 78.

54. *Bannu Gazetteer*, p. 70.

55. *IGI, PS, NWFP*, p. 42.

56. *India*, Reprint, New Delhi, 1975, p. 33.

57. *RV*, 7. 6, 3; Sāyaṇa: *vṛthā kālasya netāraḥ*.

58. *Punjab Castes*, p. 42.

59. *RV*, 7. 6, 3 : *mṛdhravācaḥ*.

60. *Glossary*, vol. iii, p. 205; and *IGI, PS, NWFP*, p. 256.

61. 3. 58, 2 : *Paṇermanīṣā*.

62. *Punjab Castes*, p. 78; *Bannu Gazetteer*, p. 70.

63. *RV*, 6. 51, 14 (d).

the “jackal of Waziri”<sup>64</sup>, sharing the same nature and providing again, a close resemblance.

The Paṇis were efficient watchmen and good protectors of their cows. They kept the stolen cows in caves covered with rocks<sup>65</sup>. So are the Pathans. Hilly areas of Balochistan abound in caves and the Pathans live in fortified villages having attached stone-towers with commanding position which serve as watch-towers and places of refuge<sup>66</sup>.

In the *RV* the Paṇis are overly considerate to Saramā. They do not maltreat her but invite her to become their sister<sup>67</sup>. Their harsh words are directed to Indra<sup>68</sup>. A true Baloch Pathan, being a nomad in his habits, does not seclude his women but he is extremely jealous of female honour<sup>69</sup>.

The Paṇis are not afraid of Indra and refuse to part with the cows without a fight<sup>70</sup>. They remind Saramā that their war-like weapons are sharp pointed<sup>71</sup>. Similarly there is no lack of courage about the Pathan and his own right hand, usually equipped with a sword, knife and shield, is his defence<sup>72</sup>.

This strikingly close resemblance in name and traits of character projects the Pathans as the descendants of the Ṛgvedic Paṇis whom we first saw occupying the valley of the Sarasvatī. This position is further strengthened by the fact that Pashto or Pakhto or Balochi, the principal indigenous language of the Pathans, belongs to the Indo-Aryan family<sup>73</sup> and has been described as a dialect of Sanskrit, both in its vocabulary and grammatical structure<sup>74</sup>. In spite of influence of

---

64. *Punjab Castes*, p. 78; Bellew, p. 177.

65. *RV*, 10.108, 7.

66. *Punjab Castes*, p. 59.

67. 10. 108, 9.

68. 10. 108, 3.

69. *Punjab Castes*, p. 42.

70. *RV*, 10. 108, 5.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Punjab Castes*, p. 42.

73. Buller, p. 27; *IGI*, vol. vi, p. 288.

74. A. D. Pusalkar in S. K. Chaaterji et. al. ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. I, Reprint, Calcutta, 1970, p. 147.



Avesta, Arabic and Persian numerous Pashto forms can be easily traced to their originals in Sanskrit and Prakrits <sup>75</sup>.

Furthermore Vala, Bṛsaya and Bṛbu are known to be representing the Paṇis <sup>76</sup>. Vala's conflict with Bṛhaspati and Indra is noted at many places in the *RV*. He is said to dwell afar on the banks of the Gomatī <sup>77</sup> which is identified with the Gomal flowing on the northern boundary of Balochistan <sup>78</sup>. In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* <sup>79</sup> he appears as a Paṇi or chief of Paṇis and conceals the cows in the Rasā <sup>80</sup>. His citadels of mountains are smashed by Indra and he is slaughtered at the instance of the Aṅgirasas <sup>81</sup>. In the *Brāhmaṇas* <sup>82</sup> he is represented as an Asura. Agni is called *Valabhid* or "breaker of Vala". Later in the *Mahābhārata* <sup>83</sup> Indra is named *Valahan*. Much later in the *Nītimañjarī* of Dyā Dviveda <sup>84</sup>, a work posterior to Sāyaṇa <sup>85</sup>, Vala is called an *asura* and is said to have stolen the cows of gods and hidden them in a mountain cave from where they were freed by Indra and his army along with Bṛhaspati. Bṛbu is described here as a carpenter of the Paṇis, a *Cāṇḍāla*. Ptolemy mentions Boledi as a race whose real name, according to Bellew, was Bola from the Assyrian Bael, Bel or Bal which they gave to Balochistan <sup>86</sup>. The Buledhis retained, till the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an important position as the ruling race in Makran <sup>87</sup>. The Amirs of Sind who belonged to the Tālpur- Tālbur tribe connected themselves with the Leghārī clan of Tālbur as well as to an eponymic Tālbur, grandson of Bulō <sup>88</sup>. The name occurs as Bāloksh in

---

75. *Glossary*, p. 205; also gives views of Trumpp and Geiger; Also Edward Balfour, *Encyclopaedia Asiatica*, 1962 ed., vol. xviii, p. 783.

76. *Sarmah*, p. 204.

77. *RV*, 8. 24, 30.

78. *V. I.*, vol. I, p. 238.

79. 19. 7, 1.

80. *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii, 440.

81. *Maitrayaṇi Saṃhitā*, iv. 12, 5, 125.

82. *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, 19. 7, 1.

83. G. K. Bhat, *Vedic Themes*, Delhi, 1979, p. 65.

84. Ed. Sita Ram Jayaram Joshi, Banaras, 1933.

85. See F. Kielhorn, *The Nītimañjarī* of Dyā Dviveda, *I.A.*, April 1876, pp. 116-119.

86. Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

87. Dames, p. 51.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Avadānakalpalatā and Balokshi in Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā<sup>89</sup>. The connection of Boledi with Ṛgvedic Vala should not therefore, appear to be impossible.

Br̥saya's people too, are said to have been washed away by the Sarasvatī<sup>90</sup> and they shared the fate of the Paṇis, the Dāsas and the Pārāvatas. Hillebrandt<sup>91</sup> identifies all these names in the north-west; Paṇis with the Parnians of Strabo, Dāsas with the Dahae, Pārāvatas with the Paroyatai of Ptolemy and the Br̥sayas with the people of Barsaentes, the Satrap of Arachosia; and places them along with Dīvodāsa in Arachosia on the Haraxvaiti which he considers the original Sarasvatī. His view is not shared by Keith and Macdonell<sup>92</sup> and his identification of the Sarasvatī with the Haraxvaiti is certainly untenable<sup>93</sup> but there is enough evidence to support the movement of these tribes from Balochistan to north-west after the Paṇis were expelled from the valley of the Rasā- Rakshān<sup>94</sup>. It may be noted that the Paṇis of the Samgam valley were celebrated free-lances in Babar's time<sup>95</sup> and Daud Khan Pani, most famous of the Pani Afghan clan, was killed in battle on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1715<sup>96</sup>. Even in the late period of the Timui the Panis are said to have refused to provide troops to the Imperial army and, after looting Mirza Pir Muhammad, younger brother of Mohammad Khan who succeeded to the chieftdom of Peshawar in 1829, retreated into their mountains behind the Helmand<sup>97</sup>.

---

89. Nado Lal Dey, *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New Delhi, 1971, p. 20.

90. *RV*, 6. 61, 3.

91. P. 339 ff.; According to Bellew (pp. 36 & 44) some tribes of the Dahai or Dahi are named Aparnoi or Parnoi.

92. *V. I.*, vol. i, pp. 471-73.

93. For identification of the Vedic Sarasvatī see O. P. Bharadwaj, *Ancient Kurukṣetra*, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 22-44.

94. In *RV*, 10. 108, 10-11 Saramā threatens the Paṇis to move far away from the Rasā; Also *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, xxxv. 1.

95. Oliver, p. 59.

96. G. P. Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan - A Historical Sketch*, Reprint, Delhi, 1973, p. 30.

97. Hillebrandt, vol. i, p. 472 n. 20, quoting Darmesteter, *Chants Populaires des Afghans*, p. clxxi.

The vestiges of the Ṛgvedic Paṇis and the other tribes of their group are thus found all over Balochistan and Afghanistan and even beyond. Bellew<sup>98</sup> has rightly observed that the Indian element in the population of ancient Ariana is well represented in modern Afghanistan by the survival of the same tribal names with little or no orthographic change. This is true in the case of the Aṅgirasas and their allies too since they pursued the Paṇis till the end and must have intermingled with them during their long co-existence in these areas.

Rind is one of the three great branches of the whole Baloch tribe and according to Bellew<sup>99</sup> they originally came from India. The Rinds of Kachhi have a clan named Indra that reminds us of the Vedic Indra<sup>100</sup>, the leader of the Aṅgirasas, twice called ‘Aṅgirastama’ in the *RV*<sup>101</sup>. It is interesting to note that the Ṛgvedic Indra has been considered “originally a historical hero from among the Vedic Aryans, who was in course of time, transformed by the Vedic poets first into an institutionalised national hero and then into the national war-god of the Vedic Indians..... (and) who came to be finally regarded as the supreme god of the Vedic pantheon”<sup>102</sup>. If this view is accepted the existence of the tribal name Rind and the clan-name Indra becomes easily understandable. Indeed Rind itself may be a corrupt form of Indra through the process of metathesis. According to Pathan genealogies Rind is the name of the eldest son of Mir Jalal Khan supposed to be the progenitor of the Balochs<sup>103</sup>.

One of the tribes in the large province of Las in Balochistan is “Angariah” which Mason<sup>104</sup>, following Tacitus, wrongly takes for the

---

98. P. 188.

99. P. 180. Bellew believes that the Rinds are originally from “the Rin or the Ran of Kachh, the great salt-marsh formed by river Loni (salt) river of Rajwara, a name according to Tod (*Annals of Rajasthan*, vol. ii, p. 295) derived from the Sanskrit *araṇya* and preserved by the Greek writers in the form of Erinos.” Actually the word is *iriṇa* meaning ‘salt soil, barren soil, or desert’. *Iriṇya* will mean belonging to desert etc. of which Rin may be a corrupt form.

100. Dames, p.,72.

101. I. 100, 4; and I. 130, 3.

102. R. N. Dandekar, *Vedic Mythological tracts*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 141-198, particularly p. 186.

103. Dames, p. 76, genealogical table I.

104. p. 298.

name of a German tribe. One of the sections of the Lumris or Numris of Las Bela <sup>105</sup> is also named 'Angarya' whom Bellew <sup>106</sup> considers a celebrated tribe of priests along the shores of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, considering at the same time the possibility of their being Angirā Brahmans or Aggar mercantile Rajputs. A Mohammedan tribe called Āgoriyā, supposed to be converts from Rathod Rajputs is found in Kachh, where the greater portion of inhabitants came from Sind <sup>107</sup>, which as already seen, was once the kingdom of Bṛhaspati, son of Aṅgirā. There is therefore, no scope for doubting that 'Angariah', 'Angarya' and 'Agariyā' are all corrupt forms of Aṅgīrasa and they originally belonged to India.

Bharadvāja, the most inspired seer among the Aṅgīrasas, is the son of Bṛhaspati and grandson of Aṅgirā <sup>108</sup>. The Bharadvajas were connected with the Paṇis as their foes or friends; more as foes than friends. In early Vedic times a continuous conflict raged between the two <sup>109</sup>. Bellew <sup>110</sup> mentions Bardeja as a section of the Jokya sub-division of Numris whom he traces to Bareja, mercantile Rajputs. However, Bardeja is easily recognised as a corrupt form of Bharadvāja which, as a surname, has infiltrated into many castes in course of time.

Bashkali figures as one of the descendants of Rind through Sahak in one of the Baloch genealogical tables given by Dames <sup>111</sup>. Bellew <sup>112</sup>

---

105. The Lumris or Numris and other Lassi tribes trace their origin to one Samar (wrongly) supposed to be the founder of Samarkand. They believe he had four sons named Narpat, Bhopat, Aspat and Gajpat from whom sprang respectively the Lumris of Las and Jokias, Numris of Sind, Bhattis of Jaisalmer and Chughtais. The Lumris speak a dialect scarcely varying from that current in Sind; Mason, p. 298. It is noteworthy that the four names are the corrupt forms of Narapati, Bhūpati, Aśvapati and Gajapati, all Sanskrit names suggesting Indian origin of the Lassi tribes.

106. P. 180 f.

107. *Dalpat Rān Prāñjivam Khakhar*, Castes and Tribes in Kachh, IA, June 1876, pp. 167-174; It would be wrong to associate the Āgariyās with Agra solely on the basis of similarity of name. The antiquity of Agra does not go back beyond the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was founded by Bahlol Lodi. See Nando Lal Dey, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

108. Sarmah, p. 51; Shende, *infra* n. 120.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 204; also Dandekar, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

111. Pp. 77-78, tables ii & iii.

112. Pp. 180-82.

notes Bashgali of Kafiristan as a section of a clan of the Brahvis who were scattered in Kalat and the mountainous areas extending southwards. The Bashgalis are equated with Pagh, Pazh and Phog of Baloch tribes and the Pash and Bash of the Kafir, who occur in the list of Numri and Jokya sections which also include Angarya and Bardeja as well as Pande, the last named also being considered Pande Brahmins by Bellew. In this context it would be more appropriate to identify this Bashkali with Bāṣkali Bhāradvāja, one of the three disciples of Satyaśvī, known to be five generations posterior to Bāṣkala, a junior contemporary of Paila. Bāṣkali Bhāradvāja is supposed to have lived about 2950 B. C. and founded three *sākhās* of the *RV*<sup>113</sup>.

Dames<sup>114</sup> notes Wāsuvāni as a clan and sept of the Kasrani tribe and Wāsūwāni as a sept of the Lāshārī clan of the Maghassi tribe. Apparently it is one and the same sept-name spelt slightly differently. The suffix *āni* in the name is the genitive plural termination used to form patronymics<sup>115</sup>. Wasu, the progenitor of the Wāsuvānis, would then be identical with Vasu Bhāradvāja, seer of three hymns of the *RV* and one hymn of the *Sāmaveda*<sup>116</sup>.

The Maghassi tribe has a clan named Gādhi which is probably connected with the Gadai clan of the Rind tribe<sup>117</sup>. A section of the Lund tribe is also called Gādī whom Bellew<sup>118</sup> considers both, a Khatri tribe and an Indian herdsman tribe. In view of what has been said above we are inclined to trace the clan-name Gādhi to the *gotra* Gādhi belonging to the Garga sub-clan (*Upagaṇa*) of the Bhāradvājas<sup>119</sup>.

An important Baloch tribe is named Sanjarāni. It occurs in various forms as Sanjāni, a sept of the Hotwāni clan of the Gurchāni tribe, Sārangāni, a sept of the Lohārāni clan of the Marri tribe, Sanjarāni, a sept of the Masidāni clan of the Syah-laf Mazāris, and Sarājāni, a sept

---

113. Sarmah, pp. 306-11 & n. 10.

114. Pp. 67 & 74-75.

115. Bellew, p. 183; & Dames, p. 18.

116. Sarmah, p. 141; *Atharvaveda* 2. 12, 4, refers to the Vasus, apparently descendants of Vasu, alongwith the Ādityas and the Āngirasas as protecting a person against his enemies.

117. Dames, pp. 72 & 74.

118. P. 165.

119. Sarmah, pp. 326-28.

of the Mugheri clan of the Maghassi tribe<sup>120</sup>. They may also be identical with Pliny's Sarangai from Seistan who are called Drangae and Zarangae too<sup>121</sup>. Brunhofer associates them with the country called Drangiana, old Persian Zaranka, whose inhabitants were known to the Greeks as Zaraggai, to Herodotus as Saraggai and Saraggees and to Strabo and Arrian as Daraggai<sup>122</sup>. All these names are evidently the corrupt forms of the Ṛgvedic tribal name Srñjaya. The Srñjayas again, are closely related to the Bhāradvājas. Divodāsa, the vanquisher of the Paṇis<sup>123</sup> was the most famous patron of the Bhāradvājas. As a matter of fact he happens to be a remote descendant of Vidathin Bhāradvāja said to have been adopted by Bharata Dauṣyanti<sup>124</sup>. In a *dānastuti* in the *RV* Divodāsa is lauded along with Prastoka Sārñjaya who was a patron of the Bhāradvājas<sup>125</sup>. Their close relationship is thus quite clear.

In the *RV* the Aṅgirasas appear as the great seers of ancient times<sup>126</sup>. The *Atharvaveda* raises the Aṅgirasas to the status of gods and along with the Ādityas, they are offered honey mixed with ghee. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* also places them at par with gods<sup>127</sup>. The Paṇis on the other hand are called demons<sup>128</sup>. The description of the Rasā as the river that separates the world of gods and men from the world of demons<sup>129</sup> is therefore, fully justified in case of the Rakshān. As it forms the limit of the world of the Aṅgirasas it can be said to flow around the world<sup>130</sup>. And in crossing the Rasā-Rakshān Saramā can be rightly said to be flying to the ends of heavens<sup>131</sup>.

---

120. Dames, pp. 52, 65, 70-71 & 75; The Sanjarāni are also called Toki which connects their origin with Punjab known as Ṭakkadeśa or Vāhika (Vāhikāṣṭakkanāmāno..... Hemacandra) cf. Alexander Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, ed. S. N. Majumdar, Calcutta, 1924, p. 171.

121. W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, Reprint, Cambridge, 1966, p. 285.

122. Hillebrandt, vol. i, p. 346-47.

123. The Pārāvatas and the Bṛṣayas were also his enemies. See *ibid.*, p. 341.

124. Sarmah, p. 137.

125. *V. I.*, vol. ii, p. 469.

126. Seers., p. 235.

127. N. J. Shande, Aṅgirasas in the Vedic Literature, *ABORI*, XXXI, pp. 108-131.

128. *Atharvaveda*, 4. 23, 5; *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii, 440; and Bṛhaddevatā, viii, 26.

129. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Rigveda - An Anthology*, Penguin, 1981, p. 156.

130. *RV*, 9. 41, 6.

131. *RV*, 10. 108, 5.

The Vendidad<sup>132</sup> states that the 16<sup>th</sup> of the good lands and countries, created by Ahur Mazda, was the land by the floods of the Ramghā, where people lived without a head. Obviously the expression “people without a head” has been used here figuratively and refers to “people who do not hold the chief for chief” and are, in other words, rebels against the law<sup>133</sup>. If the Avestan Ranghā stands for the Ṛgvedic Rasā, and therefore the Rakshān, its description as the “river of floods”, and of the people of its land as “headless” is most befitting. We have already seen that the Rakshān carries heavy floods and the Pathans of the region have no common chief and no respect for law and order and even for religious practices.

Even archaeology makes very positive contribution in what we have been trying to establish. The Aṅgirasas have a special relationship with Agni. Etymologically the name Aṅgirasa is derived from Aṅgāra<sup>134</sup>. Agni is often called Aṅgirasa because after being generated it was named after its generator<sup>135</sup>. The Aṅgirasas are said to have discovered Agni concealed in the trees of the forest and to have churned him out<sup>136</sup>. Hence fire is called Aṅgirasa<sup>137</sup>. The Aṅgirasas kindled the fire with their own hands and dropped it in the abode of the Paṅis<sup>138</sup>. They are said to have first offered oblations to Indra and then with their fires blazing forth, through their good deeds and sacrifices, secured all wealth of the Paṅis<sup>139</sup>. Bṛhaspati also destroys his enemy with fire<sup>140</sup>. At one place Agni and Soma are said to have recovered the cows from the Paṅis and destroyed the brood of Bṛsaya<sup>141</sup>. Elsewhere Agni is said to have chased the foolish, faithless, rudely speaking niggards without belief or sacrifice or worship, Dasyu Paṅis,

---

132. James Darmesteter, *The Zend Avesta*, Pt. i, The Vendidad, *SBE*, iv, p. 9; Fergard, I, 21 (76).

133. *Punjab Castes*, p. 78; Bellew, p. 82; Oliver, pp. 28-29 and Caroe, Intro., p. XV.

134. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, iii, 34; Seers, p. 235 n. 197.

135. Seers, p. 235.

136. *Ibid.*

137. *RV*, 5, 11, 6.

138. *RV*, 2, 24, 7.

139. *RV*, 1, 83, 4.

140. *RV*, 6, 73, 3 (d). *Bṛhaspatirhantyaimitramarkaiḥ*

141. *RV*, 1, 93, 4.

far-far away - westward from the east<sup>142</sup>. It should not be wrong to infer from all these statements that the Aṅgirasas resorted to the use of fire in their battle with the Paṇis and burnt down their fortifications and habitations.

This is confirmed by the testimony of archaeological excavations in the region. G. F. Dale's study of fortified Harappan settlements in Makran, in 1960, has shown the unique military character of Suktagan Dor and Sokta Koh, surrounded by heavy stone works, each placed some twenty to thirty miles inland, cutting highly strategical communication lines between inland oases and sea-shores. These settlements are believed to be suggestive of a critical state of confrontation<sup>143</sup>. In north Balochistan Piggot has drawn attention to thick layers of burning which indicate violent destruction by fire, of whole settlements about the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B. C. at sites like Rana Ghundai and Dabarkot<sup>144</sup>. These discoveries support not only the fiery ending of the final Aṅgirasa-Paṇi conflict but also its occurrence on the Rakshān and therefore the validity of the Rasā-Rakshān equation as well.

It may be added that the linguistic change involved in the transition from Rasā to Rakshān does not pose any problem. Change of Sanskrit *ṣa* to old Persian *ksha* can be noticed in instances like *ṣaṣṭi* - *kshasti*, *ṣat* - *khshvas*, and *ṣaṣṭhas* - *khstvo*<sup>145</sup>. And the addition of the termination *ān* can be illustrated with examples like Paktha - Pakthān<sup>146</sup>, Dvyakṣa - Badakshān<sup>147</sup> and Valgu - Baghlān<sup>148</sup>. Pakthas<sup>149</sup> are the

---

142. RV, 7. 6, 3.

143. Serge Cleuzion & Maurizio Tosi, The South-Eastern Frontier of the Near East, in *Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Occasional Papers* 4, South Asian Archaeology, 1985, Copenhagen 1989, p. 42.

144. Briget & Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 231.

145. J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, vol. ii, Amsterdam, 1967, pp. 226, 235-36; *ṣa* represents all the sibilants as is the case with the change of *Śat sa* and *sa* to *ha* in *śvāsa* - *sāh*, *daśa* - *dah* and *Tauṣāyana* - *Tohana*.

146. *Punjab Castes*, p. 62.

147. Moti Chandra, *Geographical and Economic Studies in the Mahābhārata : Upāyana Parva*, Lucknow, 1945, p. 58.

148. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

149. P. L. Bhargava, *India in the Vedic Age*, Lucknow, 1956, p. 140, considers the Pakthas ancestors of the Pathans; Also Buddha Prakash, *Political and Social Movements in Ancient Punjab*, Delhi. 1964, p. 44.



well-known Ṛgvedic people, Badakshan the name of a province and river of Afghanistan and Baghlan a river name.

The process of linguistic change is not governed by any hard and fast rules but only by tendencies. A place name like Kārotī<sup>150</sup> may suffer no change over a long span of more than four thousand years, another like Āsandīvat<sup>151</sup> may drop only the suffix *vatup* to become Asandh while a third one like Plakṣa - Prāsraṇa<sup>152</sup> may change so drastically as to become unrecognisable in Lavāsā-Pachhāḍ although all the three belong almost to the same period of time, viz. the later Vedic age. The change of Rasā to Rakshān is less drastic than that in the last example.

We may now conclude that the Rakshān answers accurately to each aspect of the description of the Rasā and even Ranghā and the vestiges of all important tribal and personal names of the Paṇis and their group of the Dāsas, Pārāvatas and Bṛṣayas on one side and the Aṅgirasas and their associates including the Bhāradvājas, the Bāṣkalis, the Vasus, the Gadhis and the Sṛñjayas etc. on the other, still exist in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the adjoining areas. The use of fire in the final conflict stands supported by archaeological evidence and the linguistic soundness of the Rasā-Rakshān equation is demonstrated by similar instances.

The identification of the Rasā with the Rakshān should therefore provide a satisfactory answer to an age-old problem of Ṛgvedic geography.

### *Abbreviations Used*

|        |                                                                                               |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bellew | H. W. Bellew, <i>An Inquiry into the Ethnography of Afghanistan</i> , Reprint, Karachi, 1977. |
| Buller | R. Hughs Buller, <i>A Gazetteer of Baluchistan</i> , Reprint, Gurgaon, 1989.                  |

---

150. O. P. Bharadwaj, *Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 116-120.

151. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

152. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-19.

- Caroe Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B. C. A. D. 1957*, London, 1958.
- Dames Longworth Dames, *The Baloch Race*, London, 1904.
- Glossary Denzil Ibbetson, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, Vol. iii, L-Z, Reprint, Patiala, 1970.
- Hillebrandt Alferd Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, Two vols., English ed., Delhi, 1980.
- IGI *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Oxford, 1908.
- Mason Charles Mason, *Narrative of a Journey to Kalat*, London, 1843.
- Oliver Edward E. Oliver, *Across the Border or Pathan and Biloch*, London, 1890
- Punjab Castes Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, Reprint, Patiala, 1970.
- RV *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā (with the commentary of Sāyaṇa)*, Five volumes, Vedic Sanshodhan Mandal, Poona.
- Sarmah Thaneswar Sarmah, *The Bhāradvājas in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1991.
- Seers V. G. Rahurkar, *The Seers of the Ṛgveda*, Poona, 1964.
- V.I. A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index*, Two vols., Reprint, Delhi, 1967.