According to the earliest geographical conception of the Purasas, the earth was taken to consist of four continental regions, viz. Jambudvipa, Ketumala, Bhadravarsasa and Uttarakuru. Jambudvipa stood for India proper. Ketumala represented the Oxus region, as the river Svarakus (Vaksa) flowed through it. Bhadravarsasa signified the Jaxartes region, as the river Sita watered it, and Uttarakuru denoted the country beyond it. In Buddhist texts these continental regions are differently named as Jambudvipa, to the south of mount Sumeru (Sineru). Aparagodena (Aparagayana) to its west Puruvaddena to its east, and Uttarakuru to its north. Both these traditions agree on the fact that Uttarakuru was the name of the region to the north of India.

The name Uttarakuru or northern Kuru is used in contradistinction to Dakinakuru or southern Kuru. In the Mahabharata the Uttarakurus are juxtaposed with the Dakinakurus. The distance between their countries can be measured by the marches of Arjuna described in the Sabha-parvan. After crossing the White Mountain (Svaparnata), he marched through Kimpuravarsa and reached the Maniseravara Lake in the country of the Hatakas, dominated by the Gandharvas. From there he entered into the region called Harivarsa, beyond which lay the land of the Uttarakurus. Elsewhere in the epic the region to the north of India, corresponding to Svetaparvata and Kimpuravarsa is called Halmavata, and the site of the Maniseravara Lake is indicated by the mountain Hemakuta, beyond which is said to lie Harivarsa. The Kailasa Range, running parallel to the Ladakh Range, 50 miles behind it, is, thus, the dividing line between Halmavata and Harivarsa. According to Bana, Arjuna reached the Hemakuta mountain, whose caves were echoing with the swangs of the bows of the initiated Gandharvas, after traversing the territory of China. Here the use of the word China seems to be intended to denote the Mongoloid people of the Himalayan regions, also called Kirato, a word derived from Kiranti or Kirati the name of a group of people in eastern Nepal. Beyond Harivarsa, including the territories of Tibet, lay the idyllic and utopian land of the Kurus, called Uttarakuru. This was the land of mystery and solitude, where nothing familiar could be seen, and it was useless to wage war. According to a tradition, the head of the demon Mahisa, severed by Skanda, formed a huge mountain, that blocked the entry into the Uttarakuru
country. Yet Arjuna is said to have reached its frontier and conquered the northern Kurus living there. The result of this campaign was that the people of the mountainous regions presented themselves with the offering of garlands of jade, characteristic of Uttarakuru, and the powerful herbs of the Trans-Kailasa territory at the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhishthira.

It is clear from the above account of the location of Uttarakuru that it lay to the north of the Himalayas, possibly, beyond Tibet, in the vicinity of the mountain Meru, which seems to represent the Parnas, as shown by Sylvain Levi. According to the Great Epic, this land was marked by idyllic pleasure, bucolic beauty and sylvan silence. The trees produced elegant fruits and flowers; the earth yielded gold and rubies; the seasons were agreeable: the people were healthy and cheerful and had a life-span of 11,000 years; they passed their time in song, dance and merry-making and among them sexual relations were promiscuous and unbridled. It was a veritable land of gods (devaloka). There the righteous people were born to enjoy the fruits of their meritorious deeds. In particular, the warriors, losing their life on the battle field, were transferred to that region. Even those, who made gifts of houses to Brahmanas were entitled to be born in that country. These data show that Uttarakuru cannot be the bleak mountainous country of the Himalayas, but the region to the north of it, watered by the Tarim and its tributaries, where the oases-states of Bursa, Kucha, Karasahr and Turfan, on the northern route, and Khotan, Niya, Endere, Calmedena, Koraia, Charklik and Mian, on the southern route, flourished in ancient times Chinese travellers and pilgrims have testified to the prosperity and richness of these regions and the religiosity and righteousness of their people and Indian writers have described their luxury, affluence, wealth and bliss by the terms Manikancanavasa, Bhdraavavasa, Gandharvaloka and Aparagodana.

The names Kuru and Uttarakuru came into fashion in the Brahmana period. It is significant that the word "Kuru" is conspicuous by absence in the earliest strata of the Rigveda. Only once in the tenth mandala there is a reference to Kurusvavana Trasadasyavas, but he is called the king of the kurus. Even in the territory of the Dvadravati, Sarasvati and Ayas, later known as Kuruksetra on account of the association of the Kurus the Bharata kings are said to have kindled the sacred fires. In the Apri hymns Sarasvati is mentioned with Bhastri, the glory of the Bharatas. In the Vajasaneyi Samhita the Bharata becomes the Kurus-Pancalas. But in the Brahmana texts the Kurus become very prominent

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and are usually associated with the Pancalas. They are also said to be in occupation of the territory, through which the rivers Dravadvati, Sarasvatī, and Apaya flowed, and which, consequently, came to be known as Kuruksetra. It was the home of later Vedic culture, its speech was best and purest and its mode of sacrifice was ideal and perfect.

Besides the Kuru, there are references to the Uttarakuru in Brahman literature. In the Atharva Brahmana (VIII, 14), it is said that the people, living beyond the snow region, live in the Uttarakuru, and their kings are Vasisya, who, as a result, are called Vasisa. At another place in the same text (VIII, 23), Vasistha Satyasay Dollar is said to have enjoined the king of the Ayodhya. According to the ritual of Ayodhya, who, in consequence, went over the entire earth and conquered it up to the oceans. Thereupon, Vasisth Satyasay demanded his fees. Ayodhya replied that when he would conquer the Uttarakuru, he would confer the whole empire on him and himself become the commander of his army. Satyasay said that the country of the Uttarakuru was the land of gods, whom no body could conquer, and as he had deceived him, he would snatch everything from him. As a result, Ayodhya lost his prowess and Sushin son of Sushy, killed him.

It is clear from the above data that the Kuru came into the limelight in the later Vedic period. They migrated from their homeland to the north of the Himalayas and entered into India, driving away the Shyastas and occupying their habitat between the Dravadvati and the Sarasvatī. Gradually, the Purus and the Shyastas mixed with them and became one people, as it is clear from the exposition of Kurva Nama Bharat in the Mahabharata (XII, 349, 64). In the beginning, their relations with the Pancalas were good, but, in course of time, differences appeared among them and culminated in the famous Mahabharata war. Though settled in the fertile and prosperous country of the Sarasvatī and the Yamuna, they preserved the memories of their idyllic home in the northern regions and treated it as the abode of gods. Another section of the Kuru reached Iran and Western Asia and penetrated into Anatolia Traces of the vorhundung of the Kuru in these regions are found in a series of place-names and personal names current there. A town in Sogdiana still bears the name Kuraksh; two kings of the Parthians Anan branch of the Achaemenian family of Iran were named Kur: a river in Transcaucasia, to the north-west of Persia, is called Kur (Cyris of Herodian geographers); the region round the confluence between the river Hermus and its right bank tributary, the Phrygus, just to the north of the city of Magnesia-under-
Sipyus" is known as Koroupedioe, meaning the Kuru Plain or Kuruksetra which, like its Indian namesake, was the scene of memorable wars, like those between Seleucus Nicator and Lysimachus in 281 B.C., and the Romans and Antiocbus III in 190 B.C., which decided the fate of empires in that region. Thus, it appears that a wing of the Kurus left their homeland for the west, swept through the corridor between the southern foot of the Elburz Range and the northern edge of the Central Desert of Iran and reached the pasture-lands in the basin of Lake Urmiah and beyond that, in the steppe country in the lower basin of the rivers Aras and Kur, adjoining the west coast of the Caspian Sea. From there they travelled on still farther westward over the watershed between the basins of the Aras and the Ozyyl Irman (Halys) and debouched into the Anatolian Peninsula to settle in the region called the Kuru Plain after their name. Another detachment of the Kurus found its way to Luristan and joined the Early Achaemenids; whilst a third one swung to the southeast and through Bactriana and the Hindu-Kush moved into the Punjab and occupied the Sarasvati-Yamuna region. It is significant that one section of the Kurus, called Pratipya, are known as Balhikas, since one of the sons of Pratipa was called Balhika. According to the Ramayana, Pulraavas Aila, the progenitor of the Ailas, with whom the Kurus were associated, migrated to the middle country Salih or Bactriana. Thus, we observe that, starting from their northern homeland (Uttarakurus), the Kurus moved to the west, and, breaking into several branches, migrated into Anatolia, Luristan and the Punjab. As I have shown elsewhere, the painted grey ware, which succeeded the ochre-coloured ware, at more than fifty sites in U.P. and the Punjab and may be dated 1200-1100 B.C., was associated with the Kurus. We may, thus, date the wandering of the Kurus about the middle of the second millennium B.C. or a bit later.

The Mahabharata connects Indus with the land of Uttarakuru through Himalayan regions rather than the north-western passes. As shown above, Asjina is said to have gone there via Krimunavarasa, Gandharavalo, Hainavata, Henmakuta and Hainavara, corresponding to different Himalayan regions. From early times the people of the Indian plains have been in contact with the Kailas region through many routes. Some of them are: (1) from Almora via Askot, Khela, Garbyang, Lipu Lakh Pass (16.750 ft.) & Takiskat to Kailas (Termchen) 235 miles, (2) from Almora via Askot, Khela, Darma Pass (18.510) and Gyanina Mandi 277 miles, (3) from Almora via Bageshwar, Milam, Utra-Dhura
Pass (17,550), Jyantil Pass (18,500), Kungri-Bingri Pass (18,300) and Gyanima Mandi-110 miles. (4) from Joshimatha via Gauria-Niti Pass (16,600), Naroa Mandi, Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-200 miles. (5) from Joshimatha via Damjan Niti Pass (16,200), Tungjet. La (16,350) Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-160 miles. (6) from Joshimatha via Hong-Niti Pass (16,390), Sibchilim, Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-158 miles. (7) from Badrinath via Mana Pass (18,400) Thuling Math, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-238 miles. (8) from Mushiava-Gangoti via Nitang, Jelokhanga Pass (17,400), Puling Mandi, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-264 miles. (9) from Simla via Rampur, Shipki Pass (15,400), Shiring La (18,400), Loacha La (16,510), Gartok (15,100), Chagot La (16,200), and Tirshapuri-445 miles. (10) from Simla via Rampur, Shipki Pass, Shiring La, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim, and Gyanima Mandi-472 miles. (11) from Srinagar (Kashmir) via Zojila (11,578), Namnik (13,000), Fotu Le (13,446), Len (Laothak), Taglang La (17,500), Damcho, Garguna, Gartok, Chagot La (16,200) and Tirshapuri-605 miles. (12) from Kathmandu (Nepal, Pasupatinath) via Mukhinath, Khocharwath and Talakot-525 miles. (13) from Kullu in Kangra District through Rampur Basha on via Thuling in the east there were routes connecting Assam with Tibet and China. One route passed through Yung-toh'ang and Wanting and corresponds to the Burma Road. Another route led from Szechuan to Lhasa and Assam. Often pilgrims used to bypass Tibet in the south by following the Tang-Po route. The twenty Chinese monks, who according to I-Tsung, arrived in India during the reign of Sruguta, who constructed for them a temple called Chinese Temple 'Chih-na-ssu', 40 Yojanas to the east of the famous Mahabodhi Temple at Nalanda came by one of these routes. Chinese bamboo and silk reached India along these routes, whence they were carried on the route of Ch'ing-k'ai in the second century B.C. Later, the Chinese adventurer Wang huaen-Tsche advanced along one of these routes to capture Kanauj after the death of Harsha and the usurpation of Arjuna or Arvanshe in the seventh century. According to the Melukhatura (91, 177, 11-13) the Pandava brothers advanced north of Badri and, scaling the Himalayas, probably via Mana Pass, Thuling Math, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi, and passing through the lands of the Chinas, Tussar, Deradas, Kulindas etc. reached the kingdom of the Kirata king Subahu. It is noteworthy that in subsequent Indian traditions embodied in the Great Epic, the routes leading to Uttarakuruvu are said to pass through the Himalayas rather than the passes of the Hindu-Kush and the Pamirs. It
appears that either there was an infiltration of people from Uttarakuru to Kurukshtera along the Himalayan routes, besides the immigration of these peoples from Bactrian quarters along the north-western passes, or, after the settlement of the Kuras in India, the tradition of their coming from the north-west was forgotten and a connection between their Indian abode and their home beyond the Himalayas was established through Himalayan routes, that were regularly in use.

NOTES

1. Mahabharata VI, 7, 11.
2. Papancazudani, I p. 434; Dhammapada-satthakhata, p. 482;
3. Mahabharata, I, 102, 10.
5. Ibid VI, 7, 6
6. Bana, Harshacarita, ed P. V. Kane, p. 59
7. Sunil Kumar Chatterji ‘Krisna-Jana-Krs’ Journal of the Royal Asiatic
   Society of Bengal (Letters), Vol. XVI (1903) p. 159.
8. Mahabharata II, 25, 12.
10. Ibid III, 231, 14612.
31
11. Ibid V, 22, 8.
12. Ibid II 48, 6.
13. Ibid VI, 8, 23.
15. Mahabharata XI, 26: 17.
17. Rama X, 33, 4.
18. Rama III, 23.
20. Anumitra Upanisad Brahmana II, VII, 6, VII, 7; Koudayi Upanisad IV, 5; Gopastri Brahmana I, 2, 8; Kashika Samhita 3, 6.
22. Sutaspatha Brahmana III, 2, 3, 15; Sankhaanaa Sutasutra XV; 3, 15; Laryavesa Sutasutra VIII, 11, 18.
25. Mahabharata II, 63, 2112.
27. Buddha Prakash, Political and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab, p. 23.