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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Examine how Indus Valley civilisation was distinct from the other civilisations that flourished during that period.

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Approach

- Briefly mention about the civilizations that existed during ancient times.
- Mention the differences between the Indus Valley Civilization and rest of the civilizations.
- Conclude by giving importance of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Introduction

The Indus Valley civilization flourished between 2600 and 1900 BCE, around the same time as civilizations in Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia. Presence of large rivers like the Indus, Nile, Huang He, Yangtze, Tigris, and the Euphrates created ideal conditions for survival, agriculture, and domestication. These civilizations traded with each other and had cultural exchanges.

Body

Though there are a number of similarities, but Indus Valley Civilisation was distinct from the other civilizations in the following ways:

Geographical Extent: The Harappa civilization was 20 times greater than Egypt and 12 times larger than combining area of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Burnt bricks usage: Burnt bricks were used remarkably in construction of buildings in Harappa, while Egypt used dried bricks for the same purpose. Burnt bricks were also used by Mesopotamia but Harappan cities used them largely.

Political organization: There is no clear idea about the political organisation of the Indus Valley people. Unlike the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians, there is no evidence of any inscription describing their system of administration. The steatite statue of the priest king indicates that the Indus valley people were more concerned with commerce and they were ruled by a class of merchants.

Temples: In contrast to Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, the Indus Valley Civilization seems to have lacked any temples or large palaces that would give clear evidence of religious rites or specific deities.

Societal norms: In Egypt, daughter inherits the throne or property but there is no evidence that suggests that Harappa's like Egyptians were matriarchal or not.

Domestication of animals: Harappans in Gujarat domesticated elephant which wasn't in Mesopotamian cities.

Conclusion

Due to distinct geographies and limited interconnectedness, these civilizations differ in socio-cultural practices and even the level of advancement as well. Indus Valley Civilization was not only the earliest urban centre but an advanced society as well.

The Indus script remains indecipherable without any comparable symbols, and is thought to have evolved independently of the writing in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. Once deciphered, it can reveal the hidden secrets about the distinctness of Indus Valley Civilization.