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Examine the different aspects and uniqueness of Indus Valley Civilisation in relation to its religion and social practices, along with suitable examples. (250 words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Approach

- Briefly introduce the Indus Valley Civilization.
- Give details of religious scriptures discovered in the regions of Indus Valley Civilization and their significance.
- Conclude the relevance of the religious and social practices of Harappan civilization.

Introduction

The Indus Valley Civilization flourished between 2700 BC and 1900 BC. The study of its town planning, socio-economic life, arts, script, religion, etc is of great academic interest. The archeological remains of Harappa continue to be a great source of evidence for the study of early human history.

Body

It is difficult to name the Harappan religion as its script has not yet been deciphered. The material evidence help us in interpreting the religious practices of Harappan Civilization. Some of them are:

- Pictorial motifs on seals, and copper tablets:
 - The chief male deity was **Pashupati (proto-Shiva)** represented in seals as sitting in a yogic posture with three faces and two horns. He is surrounded by four animals (elephant, tiger, rhino, and buffalo each facing a different direction). It is also an early form of one of the major deities of Hinduism.
 - The chief female deity was the **Mother Goddess** represented in terracotta figurines.
- Conical stone objects have been classified as **lingas** indicating **phallus worship**.
- They believed in ghosts and evil forces and used **amulets** as protection against them.

Some other unique features of Indus Valley Civilization in religious context are:

- **Absence of any temple** among the remains of the Indus Valley unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- **Structures** have been assigned **ritual significance**. These include the Great Bath and fire altars found at Kalibangan and Lothal.
- Practice of **pot burials** found at Lothal sometimes with pairs of skeleton.

Conclusion

Thus, Indus Valley civilization indicates a predominantly **secular civilization** and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the socio-economic conditions prevalent then. It is believed that the Harappan religious practices influenced the later religions that developed in the Indian subcontinent- Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism.