



Indus Valley Civilization

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Introduction

- The **history of India begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, also known as Harappan Civilization.
- It flourished around **2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia**, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.
- The Indus Valley was home to the **largest of the four ancient urban civilizations** of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China.
- In 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. **Mohenjodaro and Harappa** were unearthed.
- In 1924, **John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery** of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.

Important Sites of IVC

| Site | Excavated by | Location | Important Findings |
|---------|-------------------------|---|--|
| Harappa | Daya Ram Sahini in 1921 | Situated on the bank of river Ravi in Montgomery district of Punjab (Pakistan). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sandstone statues of Human anatomy• Granaries• Bullock carts |

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| Mohenjodaro (Mound of Dead) | R.D Banerjee in 1922 | Situated on the Bank of river Indus in Larkana district of Punjab (Pakistan). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great bath • Granary • Bronze dancing girl • Seal of Pasupathi Mahadeva • Steatite statue of beard man • A piece of woven cotton |
| Sutkagendor | Stein in 1929 | In southwestern Balochistan province, Pakistan on Dast river | A trade point between Harappa and Babylon |
| Chanhudaro | N.G Majumdar in 1931 | Sindh on the Indus river | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bead makers shop • Footprint of a dog chasing a cat |
| Amri | N.G Majumdar in 1935 | On the bank of Indus river | Antelope evidence |
| Kalibangan | Ghose in 1953 | Rajasthan on the bank of Ghaggar river | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire altar • Camel bones • Wooden plough |
| Lothal | R.Rao in 1953 | Gujarat on Bhogva river near Gulf of Cambay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First manmade port • Dockyard • Rice husk • Fire altars • Chess playing |

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|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Surkotada | J.P Joshi in 1964 | Gujarat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bones of horses • Beads |
| Banawali | R.S Bisht in 1974 | Hisar district of Haryana | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beads • Barley • Evidence of both pre-Harappan and Harappan culture |
| Dholavira | R.S Bisht in 1985 | Gujarat in Rann of Kachchh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water harnessing system • Water reservoir |

Phases of IVC

- Three phases of IVC are:
 - the **Early Harappan Phase** from 3300 to 2600 BCE,
 - the **Mature Harappan Phase** from 2600 to 1900 BCE, and
 - the **Late Harappan Phase** from 1900 to 1300 BCE.
- The Early Harappan Phase is related to the **Hakra Phase**, identified in the Ghaggar-Hakra River Valley.
- The earliest examples of the **Indus script** date back to 3000 BC.
- This phase stands characterized by **centralized authority** and an increasingly urban quality of life.
- **Trade networks** had been established and there are also evidences of the **cultivation of crops**. Peas, sesame seeds, dates, cotton, etc, were grown during that time.
- **Kot Diji** represents the phase leading up to Mature Harappan Phase.
- By 2600 BC, the Indus Valley Civilization had entered into a **mature stage**.
- The early Harappan communities were turning into large urban centers, like **Harappa and Mohenjodaro in Pakistan and Lothal in India**.

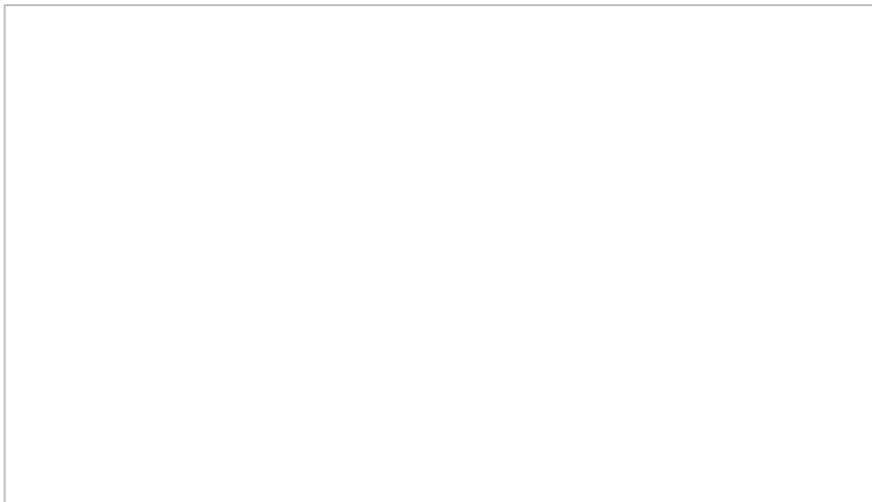
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- The signs of a **gradual decline** of the Indus River Valley Civilization are believed to have started around 1800 BC and by 1700 BC, most of the cities were abandoned.
- However, one can see the various elements of the Ancient Indus Valley Civilization in later cultures.

- Archaeological data indicates the persistence of the Late Harappan culture till 1000-900 BC.

Town Planning and Structures

- The Harappan culture was **distinguished by its system of town planning**.
- Harappa and Mohenjodaro each had its **own citadel or acropolis**, which was possibly occupied by members of the ruling class.
- Below the citadel in each city lay a **lower town containing brick houses**, which were inhabited by the common people.
- The remarkable thing about the arrangement of the houses in the cities is that they followed the **grid system**.
- **Granaries** constituted an important part of the Harappan cities.
- The **use of burnt bricks** in the Harappan cities is remarkable, because in the contemporary buildings of Egypt mainly dried bricks were used.
- The **drainage system** of Mohenjodaro was very impressive.
- In almost all cities every big or small house had its own **courtyard and bathroom**.
- In Kalibangan many houses had their **wells**.
- At sites such as Dholavira and Lothal (Gujarat), the entire settlement was **fortified, and sections within the town were also separated by walls**.



Agriculture

- The Harappan villages, **mostly situated near the flood plains**, produced sufficient foodgrains.
- Wheat, barley, rai, peas, sesame, lentil, chickpea and mustard were produced. Millets are also found from sites in Gujarat. While rice uses were relatively rare.
- The Indus people were the **earliest people to produce cotton**.
- While the prevalence of agriculture is indicated by finds of grain, it is more **difficult to reconstruct actual agricultural practices**.

- Representations on seals and terracotta sculpture indicate that the **bull was known, and archaeologists extrapolate shows oxen were also used for ploughing.**
- Most Harappan sites are located in **semi-arid lands**, where irrigation was probably required for agriculture.
- **Traces of canals** have been found at the Harappan site of Shortughai in Afghanistan, but not in Punjab or Sindh.
- Although the Harappans practised agriculture, **animals were also reared on a large scale.**
- **Evidence of the horse comes from a superficial level of Mohenjodaro** and from a doubtful terracotta figurine from Lothal. In any case the Harappan culture was not horse centred.

Economy

- The importance of trade in the life of the Indus people is witnessed by the **presence of numerous seals, uniform script and regulated weights and measures** in a wide area.
- The Harappans carried on considerable **trade in stone, metal, shell**, etc.
- Metal money was not used and trade was carried by **barter system.**
- They practised navigation on the coast of the Arabian Sea.
- They had set up a **trading colony in northern Afghanistan** which evidently facilitated trade with Central Asia.
- They also carried commerce with those in the land of the **Tigris and the Euphrates.**
- The Harappans carried on long distance trade in **lapis lazuli**; which may have contributed to the social prestige of the ruling class.

Crafts

- The Harappans were very well acquainted with the **manufacturing and use of Bronze.**
- Copper was obtained from the **Khetri copper mines** of Rajasthan and **Tin was possibly brought from Afghanistan.**
- **Textile impressions** have also been found on several objects.
- Huge brick structure suggest that **brick-laying** was an important craft. This also attests the existence of **a class of masons.**
- The Harappans practised **boat-making, bead making and seal-making. Terracotta manufacture** was also an important craft.
- The goldsmiths made **jewellery** of silver, gold and precious stones.
- The potter's wheel was in full use, and the Harappans produced their **own characteristic pottery**, which was glossy and shining.

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Institutions

- **Very few written materials** have been discovered in the Indus valley and the scholars have not been able to decipher the Indus script so far.
- As a result, there is **difficulty in understanding** the nature of the state and institutions of the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **No temples** have been found at any Harappan sites. Therefore the possibility of priests ruling Harappa can be eliminated.
- Harappa was possibly **ruled by a class of merchants**.
- If we look for a centre of power or for depictions of people in power, **archaeological records provide no immediate answers**.
 - Some archaeologists are of the opinion that Harappan society had **no rulers**, and that everybody enjoyed equal status.
 - Another theory argues that there was no single ruler, but **a number of rulers** representing each of the urban centers.

Religion

- In Harappa **numerous terracotta figurines of women** have been found. In one figurine a plant is shown growing out of the embryo of a woman.

The Harappans, therefore, looked upon the earth as a **fertility goddess** and worshipped her in the same manner as the Egyptians worshipped the Nile goddess Isis.
- The **male deity is represented on a seal with three horned heads**, represented in the sitting posture of a yogi.

This god is surrounded by an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros, and has a buffalo below his throne. At his feet appear two deer. The depicted god is identified as **Pushupati Mahadeva**.
- Numerous symbols of the **phallus and female sex organs** made of stone have been found.
- The people of the Indus region **also worshipped trees and Animals**.
- The most important of them is the **one horned unicorn** which may be identified with the rhinoceros and the next important was the **humped bull**.
- **Amulets** have also been found in large numbers.

Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

- The IVC declined around 1800 BCE but the actual **reasons behind its demise are still debated**.

- One theory claims that Indo-European tribe i.e. **Aryans invaded** and conquered the IVC.

In later cultures various elements of the IVC are found which suggest that civilization did not disappear suddenly due to an invasion.

- On the other hand, many scholars believe **natural factors** are behind the decline of the IVC.
 - The natural factors could be **geological and climatic**.
 - It is believed that the Indus Valley region experienced several **tectonic disturbances** which causes earthquakes. Which also changed courses of rivers or dried them up.
 - Another natural reason might be **changes in patterns of rainfall**.
- There could be also **dramatic shifts in the river courses**, which might have brought floods to the food producing areas.
- Due to **combination** of these natural causes there was a slow but inevitable collapse of IVC.

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