

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

## HISTORY

The word 'history' is derived from a Greek word 'historia'. It means enquiry or research. Learning by enquiry about the past of mankind was later developed into a discipline by the ancient Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides.

Herodotus is popularly known as the Father of History.

## DEFINITIONS OF HISTORY BY HISTORIANS

1. **Thomas Carlyle:** Describes history as "Biography of great men".
2. **E. H. Carr:** Defines history as an 'Unending dialogue between the present and the past'.
3. **Prof. Renier:** Defined history as "The memories of societies".
4. **Will Durant:** Defines history as "A narrative of what civilized men have thought or done in past time"

Thus, History can be defined as "A narrative of past events which have moulded the destiny of mankind".

## CULTURE

The word 'culture' simply means a way of living of a human group. It includes daily needs of man such as food, clothing and shelter; and also his customs, habits, manners, attitudes, ideas and perceptions. In other words, a man's entire range of activities in a society to better his lot in many fields comes under the preview of culture. This interest in art, architecture, literature, learning, music, philosophy and all other things he does to make his life happy are included in culture.

## CIVILIZATION

Civilization denotes an advanced state of culture. A large community acquires this status by revolutions in each sphere or aspect of culture. It is said that when a society invented tools, writing and a calendar, it took a great step in its march towards civilization.

## INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION OR HARRAPAN CULTURE OR HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

Harappan culture belongs to the Bronze Age. It is the first civilization that arose in India. It was found on the banks of the river Indus. Thus, civilization was discovered by a number of archaeologists from 1922 to 1928. (R. D. Bangerjee, Sir John Marshall and Mohenjo-daro).

## EXTENT OF THE CIVILIZATION

The Indus valley civilization prospers over vast area of 1200x700 miles. The civilization was spread in the modern states of Sindh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kathiawar and North-Western U.P. Of the 140 sites discovered, three are of great

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

importance, these are Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Lothal. Mohenjodara and Harappa are situated at a distance of about 640km.

## DATE OF HARAPPAN CULTURE

The archeologists have placed the period of the civilization between 3500 and 2000 B.C. The radio – carbon dating test conducted at the Tata institute on Harappan culture revealed that the civilization flourished around 3000 B.C.

## MAIN FEATURES OF HARAPPAN CULTURE

- (a) **Urban Civilization:** Excavations have shown that the city of Mohenjodaro was laid out on a well defined plan. Streets were wide and straight and cut each other at right angles. The main street was 33 feet wide. The roads were paved. The houses are of varying sizes and built of burnt bricks. Each house had many rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. Each house had a courtyard windows were provided only in the inner wall. Most of the houses had an upper story. Each house was well supplied with water from a brick lined well. The houses had sanitary arrangements.
- (b) **Drainage System:** The city of Mohenjodaro was provided with a good drainage system. Drains were laid under-ground and the waste water of the city flushed into the Indus river. Manholes were also laid to clean up the drains.
- (c) **The Great Bath:** Great bath is one of the most prominent buildings of Mohenjodara. It is a great tank (180' x 23') with broad flights of steps leading to water. It contains a swimming pool (39' x 23' x 8'). This swimming pool is surrounded by thick walls, wide Varedahs and small bathrooms.
- (d) **Food:** Their daily food consisted of beef, mutton, pork, fish, corn-products, vegetables, fruits and milk. Thus, they were both vegetarians and non-vegetarians.
- (e) **Cloths:** The discovery of a large number of spindles testifies that they generally wore stitched garments. Men used a shawl, which was drawn over the left shoulder, and a dohti to cover their lower part of the body. There was not much difference in the cloth worn by women.
- (f) **Ornaments and cosmetics:** Women were fond of fashions. They kept them-selves beautiful by using a wide variety of toilet and cosmetic articles. Their toilet table contained bronze-mirrors, ivory combs, lipsticks, face-paint, hair-wash. They were familiar with many hair-styles.

The women adorned themselves with a wide variety of ornaments. Wealthy women wore ornaments of gold, silver, ivory and precious stones. The poor wore ornaments made of shell, bone, copper a terra cotta. The men also wore ornaments.

- (g) **Amusements:** The people of this culture enjoyed high degree of comfort and luxury. They played chess-like game. The children played with a number of toys and playthings. Other forms of pastime of the elders were the bull-fighting and hunting of wild animals. They also enjoyed painting, music and dancing.

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

(h) **Economic Conditions:** Indus Valley culture was essentially an urban culture but their chief occupation was agriculture. The principal crops were wheat and Barley. Domestic animals like cattle, elephants, dogs and camels were used. They also raised poultry and looked after dairy. Many cottage industries flourished in those times. Weaving of wool and cotton were known. Textile goods were dyed in many colours. There were skilled carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, weavers and dyers. The ceramic and metal industries flourished.

## TRADE AND COMMERCE

There is evidence of trade with Sumerians, west-Asia, Crete and Egypt. Lothal must have served as the most important port. Bullock-driven carts as a means of transport were used to carry goods from one city to another.

## SEALS

Nearly 2000 seals have been excavated from the sites. The seals are square in shape and made of steatite. They must have been used by the consignors to seal the packed goods before sending them to the proper destination. They must have been used by the custom authorities also. The carvings on the seals include human beings, divinities, animals, composite figures, and mythological figures.

## RELIGION

Much is not known about the religion of the people. The seals throw some light on their religion. They worshipped mother goddess. Scholars also believe that Lord Shiva was also worshipped. The worship of a number of mythical animals, snakes, and sacred trees like the peepal and neem was in vogue. The people offered animal sacrifices.

## FUNERAL CUSTOMS

The disposal of their dead was done in three forms- complete burial, fractional burial and post-cremation burial. The first involved the burial of the whole body. The second involved the burial of the bones and skull of the dead. The third involved the collection of the ashes and bones of the dead and burying them.

**Q5. "Terracotta figurines and seals throw a light on the religious beliefs followed by the Harappan people." Discuss.**

**Religious Practices:** Numerous terracotta figurines have been unearthed from the Harappan sites. In one figurine, a plant is shown growing out of the embryo of a woman. Probably it represents the goddesses of earth and was intimately connected with the origin and growth of plants. It suggests that the Harappan looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess.

**The Male Deity in the Indus Valley:** A seal has been found with a male deity represented on it. This god had three horned heads. He is represented in the sitting posture of a yogi. This god is surrounded by an elephant, a tiger and a rhinoceros. It has a buffalo below his throne and two deer at his feet. It seems that it is the image of Pashupati Mahadeva. Numerous symbols of the phallus and

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

female sex organs made of stone have been found in Harrappa. It suggests that the phallus worship was started in the days of Harrappa.'

**Tree and Animal Worship:** A seal has been found with the picture of a diety represented on it in the midst of the branches of the plant. It suggests that the people of the Indus region also worshipped trees. Animals were also worshipped in Harappan times, and many of them are represented on seals. The most important of them is the humped bull. In short, we can say that the inhabitants of the Indus region worshipped gods in the form of trees, animals and human beings.

## **Q2. Write a note on the historical significance of the Harappan Culture.**

The Harappan culture is of great historical significance. Its discovery added a new chapter in the history of India. Earlier the historians generally tend to start the study of Indian history with the Aryans. But in the 1922, the excavation at Harappa and Mohendo-daro brought to light the great civilization known as Harappan culture. It revealed that there flourished a highly developed civilization in India long before the advent of the Aryans. These people had a religion, which had similar features as we see in Hinduism today. They have unique town-planning and drainage system. Their food was balanced. They had trade links with the foreign countries. Such was the great civilization of India-that remained embedded under the layers of earth for enormous length of time. And, today this great civilization constitutes the first chapter of our history.

## **DECLINE OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

The Harappan culture came to an end by 1500 B. C. There is no definite answer to the reason for its decline. Among the various causes ascribed to the end of the Harappan cultures are:

1. The river Indus changed its course frequently. Hence, the floods in the Indus River might have ruined the civilization. Fierce floods could have swept away the cities.
2. Civilization might have met its decay because of the earthquakes.
3. It has also been said that innumerable people died due to some epidemic or famine and this civilization came to an end.
4. Some people put forth the view that the Aryans defeated the Indus valley people, put an end to their civilization.

\*\*\*\*\*