

Kings were highly dependent on ministers. In **Arthashastra** also the king has been advised that he can succeed only if assisted by capable ministers. The Yajurveda samhitas and the **Brahmana** literature mention in several places some functionaries known as ratnins, who possibly formed the king's council. The ratnins consisted of royal relatives, departmental heads and courtiers. The crowned and the favourite queen belonged to the royal relatives. There was an apparent heir who may have been included in the King's council. However he does not figure among the ratnins as during the coronation king's eldest son is not likely to be old enough to take active part in the administration.

Priest figures in ratnins. The departmental heads included in the list of the ratnins are senani, suta, gramani, sangrahita and bhagadhuk. Senani is the commander-in-chief. Suta was the commander of the chariot corps of the royal army. There is also a probability that he might also have acted as the honorary charioteer to the king. Gramani in a small state may have been the prominent among the village headmen of the kingdom. Bhagadhuk was the tax-collector and sangrahita was the treasurer.

Kshatta, akshavapa and paldgala were also part of the ratnins who belonged to the class of courtiers. Kshatta was the Royal Chamberlain. Akshavapa was the companion of the king at the game table. Paldgala was the king's bosom companion. It is probable that he was the ambassador of the neighbouring state. Wealth in the Vedic age consisted of cows, and govikartana was an officer of higher rank who is connected with the royal herd of cattle. Taksha was the carpenter and rathakdra was the chariot-maker.

The status of the ratnins was high; at the time of the Vajpeya sacrifice, the king had to repair their houses. Samiti was a powerful body in the Vedic age. Ratnins were popular in the Vedic age. They left a more effective body to execute their functions which was the council of ministers. Mauryas and the Sungas had a habitual council of ministers known as Mantri-parishad. The Saka rulers ruled with the assistance of a council of mati sachivas and karma-sachivas. The ministers under the Maukharis exercised great power.

Medieval Hindu dynasties considered ministers as a vital part of the kingdom. Mahapradhana (prime minister), Mahamatyas (chief ministers) figure many inscription of later period. Mahamatya heads the list of the officers. The viceroys under the Mauryas had their own ministers.

Ministry consisted of seven or eight members according to **Manu**. The actual number of ministers depends on the needs of the situation in the state concerned. In big empires

there were several ministers. The foreign office itself had several ministers. A small cabinet was employed in order to ensure secrecy. There used to be a smaller cabinet of important ministers consisting of three or four members. In addition to this ministry there was also a large body of advisers.

Ministry enunciated new policies, ensured successful working, to remove any difficulties, to supervise and direct the state policy regarding taxation and expenditure, to take measures for the proper education and training of the princes, to participate in their coronation, and to direct the foreign policy.

The status and pay of each succeeding minister were lower than that of the preceding minister. The priest stood in the relation of a spiritual preceptor to the king. He was to protect the nation by countering the magical charms of the enemy and ensuring its prosperity by performing the rituals. It was expected that he will be well versed in military art and religious rituals. The priest alone enjoys the distinction of having a ritual prescribed for his installation known as Brihaspatisava.

It was the duty of the Pratinidhi to represent for the king when he was ill on an expedition. This duty must have delegated upon the Crown-prince, when he had become old enough to presume the duties of his office.

The Foreign Minister's work was divided state wise. He was expected to be well versed in the fourfold policy of conciliation, appeasement, war and causing dissensions in the enemy's camp. As per inscriptions he was also in charge of drafting the copper plate charters, granting lands and villages to Brahmanas, temples and monasteries.

Pradvivaka was in charge of the judicial department. He was also considered as the chief-justice. He was expected to be well versed in the traditional and Smriti laws. He was also expert in evaluating evidence. He presided over the highest court of appeal in the absence of a king.

Pandita was in charge of religion and morality. He was expected to be well-versed in Dharmasastra as well as to find out which religious views and practices were current and popular which were prescribed in Sastras. It was his duty to take a comprehensive view in the matter and advise the government upon its socio-religious policy. Treasurer is also known as sumantra. He is the officer who is in charge of treasury and stores. It was his duty to find out what were the total collections and disbursements for the year and the balance at its end.

The Revenue Minister was also known as amatya. It was his duty to have an accurate inventory of villages, towns, mines and forests in the country. His office also had an accurate account of the land under cultivation.

INTRODUCTION

It is true that all the civilizations of the world have originated and developed in the valleys of rivers. A common feature of all civilizations is the river, which provided fertile soil for the civilizations to develop in its valley. When rivers flooded the banks, the water left deposits of fine silt, which made it possible for farmers to produce abundant crops. Floodwater was used to irrigate fields in the dry season. Rivers provided humans with an additional source of food in the form of fish. Rivers also served as waterways for the transport of people and goods from one place to another. The Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations developed on the banks of the Tigris-Euphrates, the Egyptian civilization on the banks of the river Nile and the Harappan civilization on the banks of the Indus.

The Aryans, who settled down in *janas* or tribes, led a semi-nomadic life and fought among themselves and with other non-Aryan tribes for cows, sheep and

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green pastures. By the later Vedic Age, they had moved further into the Ganga Valley, a process facilitated by use of iron implements, which helped them to clear the thick forests with greater ease. In time, some of these *janas* grew in size and power and came to be known as janapadas (literally meaning foothold of tribe). Gradually, many of these janapadas further evolved into larger political entities by capturing more and more land. These came to be known as mahajanapadas (from Sanskrit *maha* = great). By the 600 BC, there were sixteen mahajanapadas. The kings or groups of Kshatriyas, the chiefs of which called themselves rajas ruled over the janapadas or the mahajanapadas.

The ancient Indian political ideas were much influenced by the general conditions prevailing in the country. Multiplicity of states and existence of despotic monarchy and republican systems in different states, offered a wide and rich field for investigation into different institutions, laws and customs prevalent in various parts of the country. All these factors sowed the seeds of political speculation in the ancient Indian political thoughts and institutions, which had certain distinct features. In this unit, you will be acquainted with the geo-political background of ancient Indian political thought and the salient features of ancient Indian political thought.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the geo-political background of ancient Indian political thought
- Explain the origin, features and settlement patterns of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Describe the origin, political system and political relations of the Aryan Civilization
- Discuss the later Vedic polity
- Assess the rise of mahajanapadas and the Magadha state
- Analyze the salient features of ancient Indian political thought

SURVEY OF THE GEO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Up till 1920, nothing was known about the Indus Valley Civilization. Construction workers at a railway track near Harappa were using bricks from a nearby ruin, when they realized that the bricks probably belonged to a very old civilization. The railway authorities informed the Archaeological Survey of India. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhaldas Banerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the Europeans had flourished in India. This generated great enthusiasm, not only in India but in other countries as well. Further excavations at Lothal, Ropar and Kalibangan revealed that the Indus Valley

Civilization flourished beyond the river Indus. The area that it covered at that time was approximately 1.3 million square kilometres.

Figure 1.1 shows some of the important sites of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is estimated that the Indus Valley Civilization existed between 2500 and 1500 BC almost at the same time as the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese civilizations.

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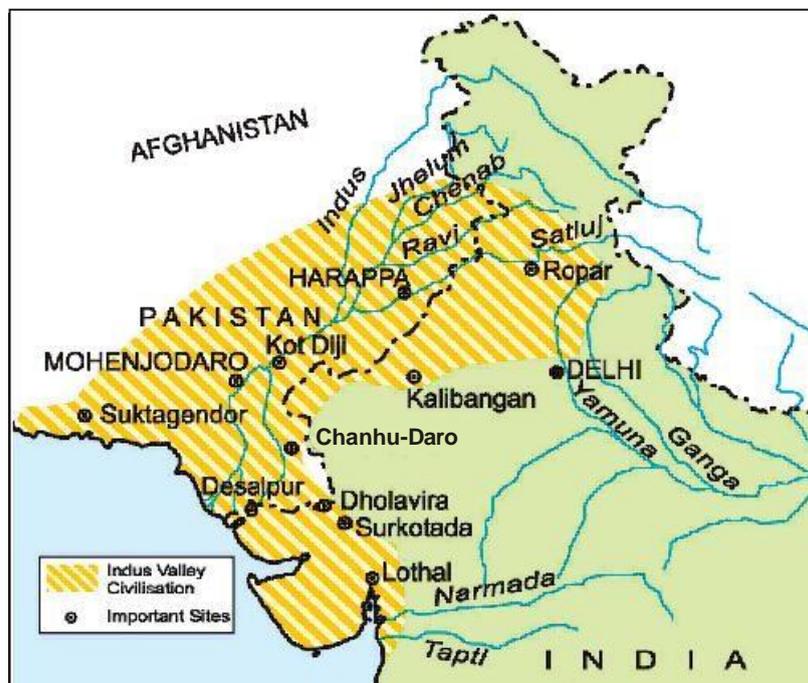


Fig.1.1 Important Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

The civilization has been credited for excellent town planning, architecture, art and craft. Various idols, seals, pottery, and jewelry pieces found from excavations sites support this claim. This highly developed civilization, however, collapsed mysteriously.

Following this period emerged the Vedic Aryans. The period of the Aryans have been categorized into two sections—the early Vedic and later Vedic periods. The settlement of the Aryans caused a lot of changes in society and the various castes also came into being. The Aryans brought in immense technological and economic advancement with them which immensely affected life around them and in the ages that were about to come. Following the Vedic age, came the later Vedic Age that lasted between 1000 BC and 600 BC. It was during this age that the Aryans moved eastward from the land of these seven rivers into the Gangetic plain. Some even crossed the Vindhya mountains and moved to south India. During this period, the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were also composed. It is from these literary sources as well as the four Vedas and the archaeological findings at various sites, that historians have been able to tell us about the political, social, economic and religious life of the people. This period marked a transition for the Aryans from being nomadic hoarders to settlers. Simultaneously, the structure of polity changed, from tribal to state.

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Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization was an ancient civilization that had disappeared hundreds of years ago leaving its ruins. Maximum remains of the Indus Valley Civilization have been found in the valley of river Indus, from where the civilization derives its name. The city of Mohenjo-daro was 640 km away from Harappa. The term 'Mohenjo-daro' means 'the mound of the dead', which was a local name of a high mountain located on the fields of Larkana. In the context of the Indus Valley Civilization, author and historian Ramashankar Tripathi states, 'Till so far our way has been full of obstacles but now we can see the horizon of the Indian Civilization.' It has been established by the remains of the Indus Valley Civilization that hundreds of years before the coming of the Aryans, there was a pre-established civilization in India.

Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization

According to the Australian archaeologist and philologist Vere Gordon Childe, 'The geographical area of the Indus Civilization was much more expanded than the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Persian Civilizations.'

The remains of the expansion of this civilization have been found in north India from Ropar of Ambala district to Rangpur district in Kathiawad; from Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra (in South India) to Ghazipur, Varanasi, Buxar and Patna in the east. This proves that the Harappan Civilization was spread across Punjab and Sindh, in the valleys of north-western frontiers mainly Kathiawad, Rajasthan and Doab. Following are the chief towns of the Indus Valley Civilization:

- **Baluchistan:** This region was important from the perspective of trade and commerce. The main places that were extremely important include Sutkagan Dor (at the origin of river Dashak), Sokhta Koh (at the beginning of Shadi Kaur) and Balakot (in the east of Sonmiani at the origin of river Vindar).
- **North-western Border:** Significant artefacts have been discovered from this area in the Gomal valley.
- **Sindh:** Several remains have been found in the Sindh region but many sites have been destroyed on the banks of this river. Several remains have been found at the sites of Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, Judeirjo-daro, Amri.
- **Western Punjab:** This area has the most important Harappan site which is located on river Ravi.
- **Eastern Punjab:** An important site of this area is Ropar. In recent excavations remains have been found in Sanghol.
- **Haryana:** In Hisar and Banawali important remains of the Indus Civilization have been found.
- **Doab of Ganga and Yamuna:** The remains of Indus Valley Civilization are spread across from Meerut to Alamgir. Recently remains have also been found at Hulas in Saharanpur.

- **Gujarat:** There are several Indus Valley Civilization sites at the peninsula of Kutch and Kathiawad and the main lands of Gujarat. Important sites at these peninsula are Surkotada and Lothal, respectively.
- **Other sites:** Important remains have also been found at the sites of Bahawalpur, Jammu and Northern Afghanistan.

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Characteristic Features of Harappan Civilization

The principle characteristic of the Harappan civilization was its urban nature. That urbanization grew on the basis of agricultural surplus which arose out of an extremely favourable weather condition and river irrigation. It enabled the civilizational centres to trade with distant lands up to Egypt and Mesopotamia. The chief towns were Mohenjo-daro (the mound of the dead) and Harappa. But there appear to have been a large number of other towns far and near these cities down to Gujarat and Rajasthan in the south-west and Baluchistan and Afghanistan in the north. Some historians even imagined the existence of a loosely structured Harappan state with a capital, its satellite towns and rural hinterlands.

The cities belonging to Indus Valley Civilization were divided into lower town area and citadel. Historians believe that there was some kind of difference between people who lived in the lower town area and those who lived near the citadel. Occupational groups lived in the lower town area and the nobility comprising the king and his nobles lived in the citadel. Nevertheless, there must have been some controlling authority, otherwise the uniformity of the town plan, standardization of weights and measures, collection of taxes and grains would have been impossible. You would probably get a better idea about the social and political life of the Indus Valley Civilization once the script is deciphered.

(a) Archeological Evidences

1. Dress and ornaments

The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton to make clothes. Besides cotton, they wore woolen clothes. Men wore a piece of cloth round their waists and a shawl over their shoulders, while women wore a skirt and do not seem to have worn blouses. Archaeologists have unearthed an idol of a man covered with a shawl (see Figure 1.2). The shawl was tied under the right arm and went across the left shoulder, which left the right hand free. A cloth similar to the *dhoti* worn in rural India was worn at the bottom.

The discovery of needles at the excavations site points out that the people of this civilization were familiar with sewing. Both men and women wore ornaments. These were made of metal, bone, shell and beads. The Indus people loved ornaments. The chief ornaments worn by women included necklaces, armlets, bangles, earrings, nose-rings, rings and waistlets.

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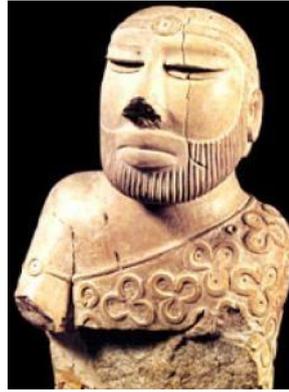


Fig.1.2 Man Covered with a Shawl

The ornaments of rich people were made of gold, silver and precious stones whereas the ornaments of poor people were made of bones, copper and baked clay. Sir John Hubert Marshall who was the Director General of Archaeology in India in 1902 stated, 'seeing the shine and design of gold ornaments it seems that they are brought from an ornaments shop of Bond Street (London) and not from a pre-historical house of five thousand years ago.' Figure 1.3 illustrates a bronze dancing girl.

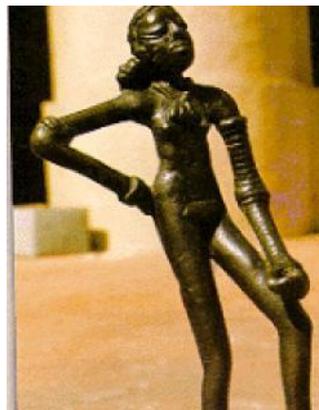


Fig.1.3 Bronze idol of Dancing Girl

2. Farming and cattle rearing

Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people. The climate and seasons were conducive for farming and annual flooding of the rivers made the land fertile. This facilitated the growth of crops. The chief crops were wheat, barley, cotton, maize and millet. They also grew fruits and vegetables. Different methods of irrigation were in use. Channels and embankments were also built to control the flow of water into the fields. Ploughs and sickles were commonly used as agricultural tools.

Animal husbandry was also practised, and oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys and camels were reared. The horse, however, was unknown.

The chief occupation of the Indus people was agriculture. Crops such as wheat, barley, corn and cotton, were cultivated here. According to Dr. Basham, the

people did not know
how to cultivate
rice but there were
many rice fields in
Lothian

Rangpur have proved this conception wrong. Similarly Dr. Lal has said that the cultivation of cotton was the specialty of Indus people. Grinding machines of wheat, barley and crushing machines and storehouses reflect their proficiency in agriculture. Adequate irrigation facilities were developed for agriculture.

Domestication of animals

Agriculture being the chief occupation, the Indus people used to domesticate buffaloes, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, and oxen. The people also earned their living by domestication of animals, which were also helpful in agriculture.

3. Pottery and trade

Next to agriculture, pottery seem to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel. Reddish-brown clay was baked, glazed and decorated with various designs in black. Some broken bits of pottery found in the excavations sites have geometric designs and animal motifs. They speak of the excellent craftsmanship and artistic skills of the Harappan people.

Trade, both by land and by sea, thrived in the Harappan society. A number of seals of Indus origin have been found at various sites in Mesopotamia (Sumer). This indicates that trade flourished between the two civilizations. In order to measure articles, they used a stick with markings on it. They also used various kinds of weights and measures. Figure 1.4 shows samples of the ornaments, pottery and seals prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization.

More than 2,000 seals have been found at various sites. The seals were made of terracotta and steatite, a soft stone. Most of these seals are rectangular but some are circular in shape. Some of them have a knob at the back, which contains a hole. It is believed that different guilds or individual merchants and traders used these seals for stamping their consignments. They have a carved picture with some inscription on the other side. These seals throw light on the religion, customs and economic activities of the society. The animal shown in these seals may be a sacred bull. Small-scale industries were also chief sources of living.



Fig. 1.4 Indus Ornaments, Pottery and Seal

Carpenters, potters, weavers, goldsmiths, connoisseurs, and sculptors, constituted the different professions of the time. Potters made a good living by making earthen toys. The Indus Valley Civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport by bullock-driven carts as well as boats. Most of these boats were probably small and had flat-

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bottoms, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today. Archaeologists have discovered a big canal and docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal. The artefacts of this civilization found at the sites of other ancient civilizations suggest trade links with portions of Afghanistan, the coastal regions of Persia, Northern and Central India, and Mesopotamia.

4. Social life in Indus Civilization

On the basis of things found during excavation, it can be said that social conditions during the Indus Valley civilization were excellent. The people of this civilization were resourceful and affluent. Following are certain characteristics of the people belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization:

- **Social organization:** The social organization of the people was divided chiefly into four sections. The first section consisted of the intellectuals, brahmins, astrologers and doctors. The second section included warriors or soldiers. Industrialists, traders, sculptors and artists belonged to the third section. The fourth section comprised labourers, farmers, and servants. The society was matriarchal, and the people of this civilization led a comfortable and prosperous life.
- **Food:** Chief food items included wheat, barley, meat, rice, peas, milk, vegetables and fruits. People were vegetarians as well as non-vegetarian.
- **Cosmetics:** Both men and women had great interest in cosmetics. Women used to apply lipstick, perfumes, soot, powder, and made different kinds of buns and plaits. Men preferred to keep their hair long and were clean shaven. Combs and dressing boxes were made of elephant's tusk and brass. The amount of goods and services common man used here seem to be better than the other places of the contemporary civilized world.
- **Sources of entertainment:** This civilization had developed several sources of entertainment. Chess was the favourite game of its citizens. Discovery of rattles, whistles, sound-creating elephant and clay toys point towards the presence of several varieties of toys. Hunting, cockfighting and music were the chief sources of entertainment. The citizen took special care in the physical development and entertainment of their children.
- **Scientific knowledge:** The citizen used a script, which was primarily pictorial. Unfortunately, it could not be deciphered. Stone weights were usually of hexagonal shape but the heavier ones were spherical and sharp. After examining the authenticity of weights and measures, it can be concluded that the citizens were familiar with algebra, the decimal system and geometry.
- **Medicine:** Indus people had a knowledge of medicinal plants and they used natural medicinal plants for treating human diseases. The evidences of surgery have also been found.
- **Tools of household:** Several earthen pots, knives, chisels, axes, pitchers, plates and glasses have been found from the excavation sites. Pots were beautified by ornamentation.

• **Lastrites:** Evidences show that three techniques were used to perform the last rites for the dead. These are as follows:

- o **Absolutemeditation:** As per this technique, the dead were buried in the earth.
- o **Partialmeditation:** As per this technique, the dead bodies were left in open so that they became food for birds and animals. The leftovers were then buried.
- o **Cremation:** In this technique, the dead bodies were burnt and the ashes were collected in pots and buried.

Fig.1.5 Mother Goddess

(b) Religious Beliefs and Practices

Not temples or shrines of the Harappan Civilization have been found. Our knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Harappans is based on the information derived from these seals and the terracotta and bronze figures. Seals engraved with the figures of animals like the humped bull, elephant and rhinoceros suggest that these animals were probably considered sacred. The image of a three-headed male God sitting cross-legged and surrounded by animals, like the lion, the rhinoceros, the buffalo and the elephant with two deer under his seat is found on many seals. There is evidence that the peepal tree and the serpent were also worshiped. The terracotta figure of a female deity has been identified as that of the Mother Goddess who represented fertility and prosperity. Some statues also bear soot marks at the base, indicating that incense was burnt as a part of the ritual. These evidences show that Harappan people worshipped images.

Like their contemporaries—the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people—the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea. Examples of this script are found on these seals, most of which bear an inscription. Figure 1.5 shows the idol of the Mother Goddess.



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Although the Indus Valley Civilization has declined and disappeared, its influence on the Indian culture remains. The worship of the Mother Goddess in image form as the symbol of female power or *shakti* was introduced in the Later Vedic Age. The bullock carts still seen in Indian villages today are similar to the carts of the Harappan cities. The realistic carving of animals on these seals can also be seen on Ashoka's Lion Capital at Sarnath.

The religious knowledge of the people of the Indus is based on the findings of seals, inscriptions on copper plate, and idols. We do not have any knowledge of their philosophy due to lack of clear and readable written material. According to most historians, the Mother Goddess and Lord *Shiva* were the most important deities. The primary features of their religion are as follows:

- **The worship of mother goddess:** Mother goddess or nature was the main religious deity of the time. In none of the idols, a plant is seen coming from a woman's abdomen and, in another, a woman is sitting with legs crossed. Sacrifices were also in vogue to please the Mother Goddess.
- **The worship of Lord Shiva:** The tradition of praying to Lord Shiva was also much prevalent. In none of these seals, a yogi is surrounded by animals and has three faces with a crown of two horns. This image is considered to be that of Lord Shiva. Historians accept Shaivism as the oldest religion after finding its origin in the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **The worship of the womb:** Along with the worship of Shiva, the worship of the *linga* or the womb was also in practice. Several rings have been found during excavations, which were made of shell, stone, and clay. Structures in the shape of female organs of reproduction have been found from the Indus area as well as Baluchistan.
- **The worship of trees or nature:** Coins reveal that worship of trees was also in practice. It had two forms: (i) worshipping trees in their natural form (ii) worshipping trees in the symbolic form, i.e., worshipping trees while considering them to be a place of residence of God. The Banyan tree was considered to be a sacred tree by the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **The worship of animals:** Animal worship was a popular practice of the Indus people. They considered the ox, bull, snake, sheep, buffalo and lion as holy animals.
- **Other traditions:** There are evidences, which prove the worship of rivers and the sun. Idol worship was practised but historians have differences with regard to the existence of temples. Most probably prayers were offered at sites consisting of pillars and the sign of the swastika. From the discovery of an idol depicting an naked woman, it is assumed that the devadasi system was in practice.

The religious beliefs of the Indus civilization had a lot in common with modern Hinduism. This proves that the Hindu religion is very ancient and is still today practised with little changes. The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. Its affinity to peace is still today the central character of our culture. The idol worship practice is the gift of this civilization only. It is believed that people of

this civilization were happier than those of other civilizations. The tradition of Indian culture which was started by the Indus Valley civilization is still today constantly flowing. Indian culture is indebted to the Indus Civilization especially in the field of religion and art.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name the two archaeologists who carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh and at Harappa.
2. What helped Harappa to attain its urban character?
3. Name the crops the Harappans cultivated.
4. How can you confirm that trade thrived in the Harappan society?
5. What were the sources of entertainment for the Harappans?
6. How do you know that the Harappans worshipped nature?

Settlement Patterns and Town Planning

One of the most remarkable features of the Indus Valley Civilization was meticulous town planning. This is especially evident in the city of Mohenjo-daro.

(i) Architecture in the Indus Valley Civilization

Evidence of town management of this time is found from the remains of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Kalibanga, and Lothal. Towns were so well managed and organized that it is still a matter of wonder. The roads were very broad. The drainage system was very fine. Figure 1.6 illustrates the citadel, the Great Bath and the city of Mohenjo-daro. The remains of Mohenjo-daro are proof of the unparalleled art of the ancient cities, their cleanliness and construction. It is quite clear from studies that cleanliness was given a lot of importance.



Fig. 1.6 Mohenjo-daro

The shape of the city was rectangular. The roads cut each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block, there was a network

of narrow lanes. The drainage system was magnificent and lights were arranged on roads. It seems that the town planning was the work of efficient engineers.

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(ii) Art of Making Buildings

The houses, built of burnt bricks, were constructed on both sides of the roads. There were covered drains along the roads, in which sewage from the houses flowed. Some houses had only one or two rooms while others had several, indicating different living quarters for the rich and the poor. The Indus people were excellent constructors. There are other things related to architecture and idol making, which are living examples of their efficiency. The interiors of these buildings prove that the Indus people were definitely aesthetically inclined. Of all the remains of the Indus Civilization, the best is the Great Bath. Its walls are cemented. There are stairs on the corners. In order to keep the water safe and the foundations strong, the masons worked cleverly. The system of filling and emptying the water tank was no doubt extraordinary. There was also a system for hot water, which was probably used by the priests. The biggest proof of the durability of the bath is that it was constructed in 5000 BC and is still today totally intact.

(iii) Town Planning

Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro reveal that all these cities were similarly planned. They were divided into two parts—a raised area with large buildings called the citadel at the western end and a lower town. The roads ran at right angles, bringing out the grid pattern of the township. The citadel was built on a raised platform, constructed with bricks and stones, about 12 metres high and rectangular in shape, and surrounded by a huge brick wall with watch towers. This protected the buildings and the people from the recurrent flooding of the river Indus. The citadel was probably the seat of the government and overlooked the lower town. The ruler or the administrator lived here along with the nobles. It also had public buildings such as the granaries, the assembly or town hall and important workshops. The Great Bath was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres. A flight of steps led down to the pool at two ends. Broad corridors on four sides with a number of rooms surrounded the pool. It is the finest specimen of the engineering skill of the Harappan people.

In Harappa, archaeologists found the Great Granary located in the citadel. It measured 61.5 by 15.5 metres and consisted of two similar blocks with a wide passageway between them. Each block had six halls further divided into smaller rooms and compartments with openings for ventilation. The largest granary was found in Mohenjo-daro. Close to the granaries at Harappa, circular brick platforms have been found. According to archaeologists, these were used for threshing grain. Grain was brought by boats along the rivers. The grain collected as tax was safely stored to be used in times of crises like floods or famine. The granaries prove that the land was fertile.

Town hall

A huge structure, almost 70 metres long and over 23 metres wide, with walls about 1.5 metres thick has been excavated in Mohenjo-daro. It has twenty pillars made of burnt bricks, arranged in four rows of five each. Archaeologists believe that this

great hall may have been used as an assembly hall, a prayer hall or a hall for cultural shows.

Residential area and houses

Below the citadel was the residential area of the town where the merchants, artisans and craftsmen lived. The whole area was divided into blocks by wide roads, which formed a grid. Sun-dried and baked bricks were used for construction of houses. They were single or double storeyed. All houses had a courtyard around which there were rooms. Every house had a well and a hearth for cooking. The main entrances opened onto the lanes or side alleys instead of the main street in order to keep out dust and to ensure privacy. Within the houses, the rooms were built around a central courtyard. Some houses also had wells to supply water. Several *pukka-kutchas* and big-small buildings have been found during the excavations of the remains. Houses were well ventilated. The roofs of the houses were flat and made of wood. Each house had its own bathroom with drains, which were connected to the drains in the street.

Streets

The streets and lanes ran straight from north to south and east to west, cutting each other at right angles. They were 4 to 10 metres wide. Roads were paved and suitable for movement of bullock carts. Ruins of lamp posts suggest that there were street lights. Dustbins were provided at regular intervals to keep the roads clean.

Drainage system

Another striking feature of the Indus town was their drainage system. It was the best drainage system known to the world in ancient times. Drains were constructed on either side of the roads connected to a drain from each house. They were lined with bricks and were covered with slabs of stone, which could be removed in order to clean them. This shows that the dwellers had great concern for health and sanitation.

(iv) Art

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and capable of making beautiful and attractive idols. Certain aspects of the art forms during the Indus Valley Civilization are as follows:

- **Proficiency in constructing buildings:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were proficient in constructing buildings. Big buildings and good bathrooms proved their mastery in this art.
- **Proficiency in idol making:** The idols of this time are of very good quality. These idols are very imaginative and artistic. The artists paid great attention to detailing to achieve the right facial expressions on their idols. The idol of the *Tribhanga* dancer is an excellent example. The metal idols were made by melting and moulding metals.
- **Proficiency in seal making:** Seals were prepared from different kinds of stones, metals, clay and ivory. These seals were mainly square, rectangular or

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circular in shape. To increase the beauty of the coins, shapes of animals were made on them. People had acquired great proficiency in this field.

- **Art of writing:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were familiar with the art of writing. Their script was symbolic in character. They wrote from right to left. Though the language is not decipherable, these seals tell us that the text used was brief and short.



Fig. 1.7 An Indus Valley Pictograph Appears on this Seal

- **Dance and music:** It is known from seals and other things that the Indus Valley people were familiar with dance and music. A copper idol has been found in which a lady in a dancing pose is standing on her right leg.
- **Other art forms:** The Indus Valley people were familiar with the art of metallurgy, drawing, pot making and manufacturing statues.

Textile workers were also considered as craftsmen. The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the first in the world to cultivate cotton and weave it into cloth. The textile workers of Harappa were believed to have woven cloth by hand interlacing two or more sets of strands. They did not use looms. Instead spindles made of terracotta were used. Remnants of dye vats have been found at some Indus sites, and it is believed that these were used to dye cotton cloth. Cotton cloth was also an important trade item.

Not only metallurgists but even stone workers made sharp-edged tools. A parallel-sided chert flake was supposed to have been used as a blade. Stone was used to make statues. The sculpture of a bearded man that was found at one of the sites is proof of the existence of skilled sculptors.

Urban Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

Like other unanswered questions about the Indus Valley Civilization, the question of its devastation, of how, when, and why it disappeared, is unanswered. Many historians have given their own opinion. Seven layers have been found during excavations at

different sites, which inform us that the Indus Valley Civilization would have been established and devastated a number of times. The chief reason being the floods in the Indus river. The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.

Another opinion regarding the decline of the Indus Valley civilization is geographical in nature including scarcity of rain fall, change in the course of the river, drought and earthquake, which may have devastated this developed civilization. In the opinion of a few scholars, this civilization was devastated due to the attack of the Aryans. Religious books clarify that there is mention of forts and towns of non-Aryans in the Rig Veda which were probably ravaged in these attacks. The use of horses and chariots made these attacks successful. However, it has not been completely clarified as to how this civilization met its end.

The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits. Though this civilization began to decline by 1500 BC, the exact causes of the decline are not known. However, historians have made various suggestions based on evidence, and they can be summed up as follows:

- The most commonly accepted theory is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or change in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration.
- Some historians are of the opinion that epidemics or fire destroyed the cities.
- Others believe that foreign invasions (probably of the Aryans) led to its decline.
- Yet another theory is that ecological changes due to deforestation led to the land becoming dry and uninhabitable.

Post-Harappan Traditions

It is believed that the decline of the urban society happened in many stages, more than a century ago, or even earlier. The urban system may have broken down between 2000 and 1750 BC but this does not imply that the lifestyle of the urban population all over the Indus region broke down completely. However, the system of control, both social and political, that may have existed did end. Urban traits such as usage of seals, writing and other specialized crafts seem to have vanished from the urban areas. This era was referred to as the post-urban era. The period that followed and lasted till about 750 BC was known as the post-Harappan era.

In the Saraswati valley, the representative of the post-Harappan era is the pottery from the Cemetery H at Harappa. At the same time, there is proof of a marked reduction in the number and size of settlements. This suggested that there was definitely some environmental deterioration. In the eastern Punjab region also, while the disappearance of bigger urban sites was noticed, there was not a complete decrease in the number of smaller settlements. These same points were suggested in the settlements in the Ganga-Yamuna valleys more towards the east. Therefore, it was concluded that in the post-urban period, regional variations developed in material culture. Some of the traits characteristic of pre-urban and urban phases continued in some parts.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Why is Mohenjo-daro called the planned ancient city?
8. What is referred to as the town hall?
9. What reasons have been cited by historians for the disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization?

ARYAN CIVILIZATION

Scholar have