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HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

- Till 1920, the relics of the civilization were found only in the Indus valley region; therefore, it was known as the Indus civilization.
- In 1920-21, the Harappan civilization was discovered in the excavations by D. R. Salini (at Harappa) and by R. D. Banerjee (at Mohenjo Daro).
- The remains of the civilization were first noticed at Harappa, therefore it is also known as the Harappan civilization.

Geographical Facts

Following are the important geographical facts of distribution of *Harappan* civilization –



- The 1,400 settlements of this civilization discovered so far are distributed over a very wide geographical area covering almost 1,600 km (east to west) and 1,400 km (north to south).
- *Harappan* civilization extent starts from:
 - *Sutkagendor* (Baluchistan) in the west to *Alamgirpur* (Meerut, Uttar Pradesh) in the east and
 - *Manda* (Akhnoor District, Jammu and Kashmir) in the north to *Daimabad* (Ahmadnagar District, Maharashtra) in the south.

- About 1,400 settlements of the *Harappan* culture are known from different parts of India. About 925 settlements sites are now in India and 475 are in Pakistan.
- The total geographical stretch of *Harappan* civilization is about **1,250,000 sq. km** which is more than **20 times of the area of Egyptian** and more than **12 times** of the combined area of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.
- Mostly, the *Harappan* settlements were located on river banks of which:
 - Only 40 settlements were located on the Indus and its tributaries;
 - As many as 1,100 (80%) settlements were located on the vast plain between the Indus and the Ganga, comprising mainly the *Saraswati* river system (which no more exist);
 - About 250 settlements were found in India beyond the *Saraswati* River system; a number of them were located in Gujarat, and a few in Maharashtra.
 - The distribution pattern of settlements shows that the focus of *Harappan* civilization was not the Indus, but the *Saraswati* River and its tributaries, which flowed between the Indus and the Ganga. Therefore, few researchers prefer to call it as *Saraswati* civilization or *Indus-Saraswati* civilization
- The settlements belonging to this civilization can be classified as:
 - Small villages (which were up to 10 hectares),
 - Larger towns and small cities (10 to 50 hectares).
 - Large cities settlements such as –
 - *Mohenjo Daro* (+250 hectares),
 - *Harappa* (+150 hectares),
 - *Ganawariwala* (+80 hectares),
 - *Rakhigarhi* (+80 hectares),
 - *Kalibangan* (+100 hectares), and
 - *Dholavira* (+100 hectares).
- Large cities were surrounded by vast agricultural lands, rivers, and forest that were inhabited by scattered farming and pastoral communities and bands of hunters and food-gatherers.
- Excavations at the sites of *Mohenjo Daro*, *Harappa*, *Kalibangan*, *Lothal*, *Surkotada*, *Dholavira*, etc. have given us a fair idea about the various aspects such as town planning, economy, technology, religion, etc. of this civilization.

Harappan Town Planning

- The orientation of streets and buildings, according to the cardinal directions east-west, and north-south was the distinguishing factor of the *Indus-Saraswati* cities.



- *Harappan* city sites, including *Mohenjo Daro*, *Harappa*, *Kalibangan*, and *Surkotada* were having large gateways at various entry points of the city. These gateways are seen even in the inner fortification areas also.
- At *Dholavira*, a fallen signboard was found close to the main gateway. It is a large inscription having ten symbols each measuring approximately 37 cm high and 25 to 27 cm wide proclaimed some name or title.

Materials Used in Buildings

- Most settlements were situated in the alluvial plains where the most common building materials were mud-bricks and kiln-fired-bricks, wood and reeds.
- In the foothills and on the Islands of Kutch and in Saurashtra, dressed stone replaced bricks (due to an abundance of stone).
- The sizes of bricks have been found identical proportions 1:2:4, that the width is double the thickness and the length four times, the thickness.
- Doors and windows were made up of wood and mats.
- Floors of houses were generally hard-packed earth that was often plastered.
- Drains and bathing areas were made with baked bricks or stone.
- Roofs were probably made of wooden beams covered with reeds and packed clay.

Types of Buildings

- Excavations have uncovered many types of houses and public buildings at both large and small settlements.
- The architecture may be grouped into three categories with some variations as:

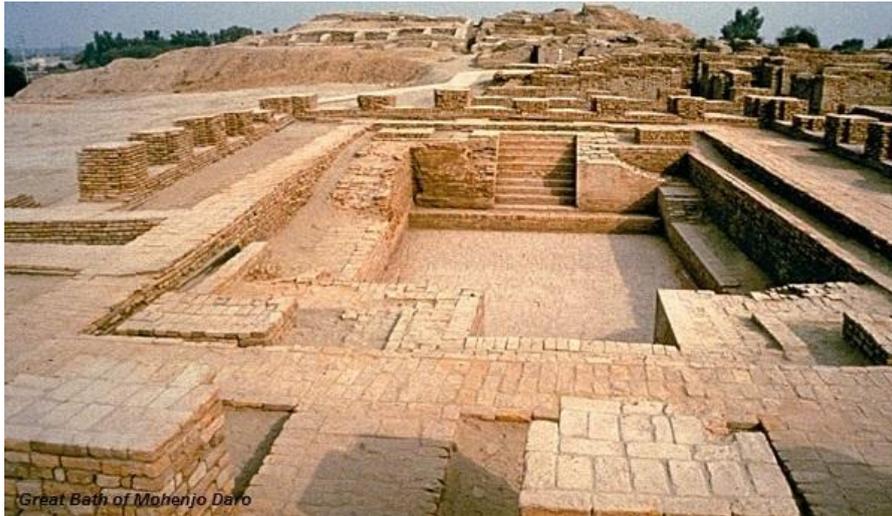
- Private houses,
 - Large houses surrounded by smaller units, and
 - Large public structures.
- Doorways and windows rarely opened out into the main street, but faced side lanes.
 - The view into the house was blocked by a wall or a room around the front door. This was done to protect the activities in the central courtyard from the view of passers-by.
 - The doors were made with wooden frames and a brick socket set in the threshold served as door pivot.
 - Some of the doors seem to have been painted and possibly carved with simple ornamentation.
 - The windows were small at first and second stories.
 - The adjacent houses were separated by a narrow space of "no man's land".

Public Buildings

- Some large and distinct structures have been found in several cities designed especially for the public purpose.

Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro

- The Great Bath of *Mohenjo Daro* is the most remarkable feature of any *Harappan* site.
- The Great Bath was a brick structure, which measured 12 m by 7 m and is nearly 3 m deep from the surrounding pavement.
- Water was evidently supplied by 3 large well placed in an adjacent room.
- Surrounding the bath, there were porticos and sets of rooms, while a stairway led to an upper storey.
- The bath was linked with some sort of ritual bathing, which was very common in Indian life right from the ancient times to till date.
- Immediately to the west of the Great Bath (at *Mohenjo Daro*) was a group of 27 blocks of brickwork crisscrossed by narrow lanes. This structure measures 50 m. east-west and 27 m. north-south. These structures have been identified as granaries, which were used for storing grains. Similar structures have been also found at *Harappa*, *Kalibangan*, and *Lothal*.
- The dockyard found at *Lothal* was another important structure. It was a large structure measuring 223 m. in length, 35 m. in width and 8 m. in depth, provided with an inlet channel (12.30 m. wide) in the eastern wall and a spillway.



- The inlet channel was connected to a river. By its side, it was 240 m. long and 21.6 m wide wharf. This was a dockyard where ships and boats used to come for loading and unloading of trading goods.
- *Lothal* was a major trading center of the *Harappan* civilization.

Streets and Drains

- The most outstanding features of the *Harappan* civilization were the streets and side lanes equipped with drains system.



- The streets cut each other on the right angles and the width of these streets was in a set ratio.
- No encroachment on the streets was to be seen.
- Even smaller towns and villages had impressive drainage systems. This indicates that people had a great civic sense of sanitation and care for health and hygiene.
- Burnt bricks were used to make drains. Small drains connected with bathing platforms and latrines of private houses were joined with the medium sized drains in the side streets then these drains ran into larger sewers in the main streets which were covered with bricks or dressed stone blocks.

Crafts & Industries

- The *Harappan* civilization is referred to as a Bronze Age civilization.
- Customarily, unalloyed copper was used for manufacturing artifacts and rarely tin was mixed with copper to make bronze.

Harappan Tools

- Tools and weapons were simple in form. They comprised of flat -axes, chisels, arrowhead, spearheads, knives, saws, razors, and fish-hooks.



- People also made copper and bronze vessels. They made small plates and weights of lead, and gold and silver jewelry of considerable sophistication.
- The *Harappans* continued to use knives of *chert* blades. Further, a great skill and expertise have been seen in precious and semi-precious stone beads and weights.
- Long barrel shaped cornelian beads (up to 10 cm. long) are the finest examples of craftsmanship.

- Steatite was used for making a variety of objects like seals, beads, bracelets, buttons, vessels, etc. but its use in making faience (a form of glass) is particularly noteworthy.
- The gold objects found in the form of beads, pendants, amulets, brooches, and other small ornaments in the *Harappan* civilization. The *Harappan* gold is of light color indicating high silver content.
- Mature *Harappan* pottery represents a blend of the ceramic tradition of the pre-*Harappan* culture of both west of the Indus region as well as of the *Saraswati* area.
- The pottery technology was quite advanced. Most of the pots were wheel-made.
- Big storage jars were also produced. Pots were beautifully painted in black on the bright red surface with geometric designs, plants, animals, and a few paintings seem to depict scenes from stories.
- More than 2,500 seals have been found. These are made of steatite. They mostly depict a single animal-unicorn bull, elephant, rhinoceros etc. but some also depict trees, semi-human, and human figurines; in some cases, participating in a ceremony.
- Shell working was another flourishing industry. Artisans, settlements close to the sea manufactured shell ornaments like pendants, rings, bracelets, inlays, beads etc., besides objects as bowls, ladles, and gamesmen.

Trade and Commerce

- Intensive agricultural production and large-scale trade played significant roles in flourishing of the *Harappan* civilization.
- The elegant social structure and the standard of living must have been achieved by a highly developed system of communication and a strong economy.
- The trade must have been internal in the beginning i.e. between one zone and another.
- Agricultural produce, industrial raw materials (including copper ores, stone, semi-precious shells, etc.) were traded on a large scale.
- Besides the raw material, they used to trade –
 - Finished products of metals (pots and pans, weapon, etc.);
 - Precious and semi-precious stones (beads, pendants, amulets, etc.); and
 - Ornaments of gold and silver were also traded to various areas.
- They procured –
 - Copper from *Khetri* mines of Rajasthan;
 - Chert blades from *Rohri* hills of Sindh;
 - Carnelian beads from Gujarat and Sindh;
 - Lead from south India;
 - Lapis-lazuli from Kashmir and Afghanistan;
 - Turquoise and jade from central Asia or Iran;
 - Amethyst from Maharashtra; and
 - Agate, chalcedony, and carnelian from *Saurashtra*.
- The occurrence of mature *Harappan* seals and other artefacts in contemporary Mesopotamian civilization, and some of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian objects in *Harappan* civilization, and the evidence of Mesopotamian documents established that the *Harappans* had the trading relationship with each other.

Weights and Measures

- The trade requires a regulation of exchange and of weights and measures.
- *Harappan* weights and measures were cubical and spherical in shape and were made up of *chert, jasper, and agate*.
- The system of weights proceeded in a series i.e.
 - first doubling, from 1, 2, 4, 8, to 64, then going to 160; then
 - Decimal multiples of sixteen, 320, 640, 1600, 6400 (1600 × 4), 8000 (1600 × 5) and 128,000 (i.e. 16000 × 8).
- The tradition of 16 or its multiples continued in India till 1950s.
- Sixteen *chhatank* made a *ser* (equivalent to one kilo) and 16 *annas* made one rupee.
- The measure of length was based upon a foot of 37.6 cm. and a cubit of 51.8 to 53.6 cm.

Transport and Travel

- Pictures of ships and boats are found on some seals and drawings on pottery from *Harappa* and *Mohenjo Daro*.
- Ship or a boat, with a stick-impressed socket for the mast, has been found from Lothal.
- The boats depicted on seals and pottery resembles with the boats used in Sindh and Punjab areas (even today).
- For land transport, bullock-carts and pack animals like bull, camel, ass etc. were used.
- The terracotta models of bullock-cart found on roads from various sites indicate that carts used in those days were of the same size and shape used in the present day.

Harappan Culture

Arts

- A large variety of objects such as seals, stone statues, terracotta, etc. is superb examples of the art activities.
- A *Yogi* from *Mohenjo Daro* and two small figurines from *Harappa* are the most outstanding pieces of art.



- A dancing girl statue of about 11.5 cm. in height made up of bronzes was found from *Mohenjo Daro*.
- *Daimabad* bronze animals' workmanship, most likely belong to *Harappan* period.
- The red sandstone torso found at Harappa is made up of **detachable limbs and head**.
- The grey stone torso perhaps illustrates a dancing figure. Both these are so **realistic** that none would believe that they belong to the *Harappan* period.
- *Harappan* people produced a large number of terracotta figurines, which were handmade. The figurines include humans, animals, birds, and monkey.
- Following are the Specimen of Arts from the *Harappan* Civilization –
 - Bronze statue (Dancing Girl);
 - Terracotta Bulls;
 - Terracotta Female Figurine;
 - Head of a Yogi; and
 - Painted Jar dogs, sheep, and cattle.
- The most artistic depictions are the figures of humped bull. Figurines of both humped and humpless bulls are found in excavations.
- A painting was found only on pottery. Unfortunately, no wall paintings, even if there were any, have survived.

Script



- The language of *Harappan* is still unknown. But some scholars connect it to the Dravidian languages and others to Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit.
- There are nearly 400 specimens of *Harappan* signs on seals and other materials such as copper tablets, axes, and pottery. Most of the inscriptions on seals are small, a group of few letters.
- The Harappa script has 400 to 500 signs and it is generally agreed that it is not an alphabetic form of writing.

Agriculture

- Agriculture was generally practiced along the river banks most of which were flooded during the summer and monsoons. The flood deposited every year fresh alluvial silt, which is highly productive and for which no major furrowing and certainly no manures and irrigation were required.
- The cultivated field excavated at *Kalibangan* shows crisscross furrow marks indicating that two crops were grown simultaneously. This method is followed even today in the Rajasthan, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh.
- The granaries found at *Harappan* cities suggest that cereals were produced in such a large quantities. They also kept enough reserve to face any future emergency.
- The principal cereals were wheat and barley. Rice was also known and was a favored grain. Remains of rice have been found from Gujarat and Haryana areas.
- Six varieties of millets including *ragi*, *kodon*, *sanwa*, and *jowar* were cultivated, along with peas and beans.
- Fragments of cotton cloth found at *Mohenjo Daro* and other sites show that cotton was also grown.
- Cotton has been found at *Mehrgarh* at least 2,000 years before the mature phase of the Civilization. This is the oldest evidence of cotton in the world.
- Other major crops include dates, varieties of legumes, sesame, and mustard.
- Wooden plough with a copper or wooden ploughshare was used for tilling fields.
- Terracotta models of the plough have been found at *Mohenjo Daro* and *Banawali*.
- Harvesting of crops would have been done with copper sickles as well as stone blades hafted in wood.
- Animals like sheep, goat, humped bull, buffalo, elephant, etc. have been depicted on the seals. This shows that the range of animals domesticated by the *Harappan* people was quite large.

- Skeletal remains of several animals like sheep, goat, bull, buffalo, elephant, camel, pig, dog, and cat etc. have been found in excavations.
- Wild animals were hunted for the food. Bones of animals like spotted deer, sambhar deer, hog deer, wild pig, etc. found in the excavation prove it. Besides, several types of birds as well as fishes, were also hunted for food.
- Bones of horses have been reported from *Lothal*, *Surkotada*, *Kalibangan*, and several other sites.
- Terracotta figurines of the horse have been found at *Nausharo* and *Lothal*. But this animal is not depicted on seals.

Harappan Religion

- There are generally two aspects of Harappan religion –
 - Conceptual or philosophical and
 - Practical or ritualistic.



Mother Goddess

- The available evidence indicates that the religion of the Indus people comprised of –
 - Worship of the Mother Goddess;
 - Worship of a male deity, probably of Lord Siva;
 - Worship of animals, nature, semi human, or fabulous;
 - Worship of trees in their natural state or of their indwelling spirits;
 - Worship of inanimate stones or other objects, of *linga* and *yonis* symbol;
 - Chrematheism as illustrated in the worship of the sacred "incense-burners";
 - Faith in amulets and charms indicative of demonophobia; and
 - Practice of yoga.
- These characteristics suggest that the religion was mainly of an indigenous growth and "the lineal progenitor of Hinduism," which is characterized by most of the features.
- A large number of female figurines of terracotta have been found, which are the representations of the Great Mother Goddess.
- A striking rectangle sealing found at *Harappa* represents the Earth or Mother Goddess with a plant growing from her womb.

- A male deity, which depiction Siva as *Pasupati* (i.e. the prototype of the historic Siva), is portrayed on a seal with three faces, seated on a low throne in the typical posture of a Yogi, with two animals on each side - elephant and tiger on right and rhinoceros and buffalo on left, and two deer standing under the throne.
- A terracotta piece having *linga* and *yoni* in one piece found from *Kalibangan*. People of Kalibangan region were worshiped the symbolic representation of *Siva* and *Sakti* respectively.
- A remarkable seal, found at *Mohenjo Daro*, standing between two branches of a *pipal* tree, represents the deity.
- A large number of 'fire-altars' have been found from the sites located in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Haryana. From *Kalibangan*, *Lothal*, and *Banawali* a number of 'fire-altars' have been found.
- *Swastika*, a sacred symbol with Hindus, Buddhists, and Jaina has been depicted on seals, painting, and graffiti.
- A large number of terracotta figurines depict the individuals in various yogic postures (*asanas*) indicating thereby that the *Harappans* practiced yoga.

Social Stratification

- The *Harappan* society appears to have been divided into three sections, viz.
 - An elite class associated with the Citadel;
 - A well-to-do middle class; and
 - A relatively weaker section, occupying the lower town, which was generally fortified.
- The Craftsmen and laborers normally were resided outside the fortified area.
- It is, however, difficult to say whether these divisions were based purely on the economic factors or had a socio-religious basis.
- At *Kalibangan*, it appears that the priests resided in the upper part of the citadel and performed rituals on fire altars in the lower part of it.

Political Setup

- It is also difficult to ascertain that what kind of political setup was prevailed at the time of the *Harappan* civilization.
- The entire area of Indus Empire was administered from one capital, with a few regional administrative centers or provincial capitals.
- There were several independent states or kingdoms, each with cities like *Mohenjo Daro* in Sindh, *Harappa* in Punjab, *Kalibangan* in Rajasthan, and *Lothal* in Gujarat as their capitals.
- During 1,000 B.C., the area was divided into sixteen *Mahajanapadas* each independent with its own capital.

Disposal of the Dead

- Scattered burials, as well as discreet cemeteries, have been found at many major sites.
- The skeletal remains are few in comparison to the size of settlements and the population that may have lived on them.

- The general practice was that skeletons were placed in an extended position with the head towards the north. Earthen pots containing food grains, etc. were placed in the grave and, in some cases, the body was buried with ornaments.
- Cremation was also practiced, which has been proved by many cinerary urns or other receptacles containing calcined human bones and ashes together with vessel offerings for the use of a dead person in the next life.

Harappan Chronology

- Marshall suggested that *Harappan* civilization flourished between 3,250 and 2,750 B.C.
- Wheeler dated it to 2,500-1,500 B.C.
- On the basis of radiocarbon dating method following chronology of the civilization emerges as –
 - Early *Harappan* Phase: c. 3,500 – 2,600 B.C.
 - Mature *Harappan* Phase: c. 2,600 - 1,900 B.C.
 - Late *Harappan* Phase: c. 1,900 – 1,300 B.C.

Decline

- **John Marshall** (Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928) declares that *Harappan* civilization declined due to environmental degradation. The cutting of forests for agricultural land and timber for fuel and over-exploitation of resources, etc. resulted in the land to become barren and in the silting of rivers.
- The environmental degradation, flood, drought, and famine must have become a recurring feature, which finally led to its decline.
- **Wheeler** opined that it was destroyed by the *Barbarian* Aryans who came to India in about 1,500 B.C.
- The archaeological or biological evidence proved that Wheeler's thesis of Aryan was the destroyer of the *Harappan* civilization was a myth.
- The *Harappan* civilization was spread over a large area. There may be many causes of its decline as –
 - In the River *Saraswati* region, most likely, it declined mainly due to shifting of river channels.
 - Along the River Indus, most likely, it declined largely due to recurring floods.
 - Rainfall declined in general, which affected the agriculture, the main economic resource.
 - With the decline in economic conditions all other institutions like trade and commerce, administrative and political structures, Civic amenities, etc. also declined over a period of time.
- Archaeological evidence shows that *Harappan* civilization did not disappear suddenly.
- The decline was gradual and slow, which is witnessed over a period of almost 600 years from c. 1,900-1,300 B.C.

- Features such as town-planning, grid patterns, drainage system, standard weights, and measures etc. slowly disappeared and a kind of realization takes place with distinctive regional variations.

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