



M. A. History, Semester- 1 HY212- INDIAN HISTORY-1

Module-2 Bronze Age Society & Culture in India



HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

Introduction

- Harappan civilization or Indus valley civilization was the earliest civilization in India. The ruins of Harappa were first described in 1842 by Charles Marson. Alexander Cunningham, a British engineer noticed for the first time a Harappan seal in 1853. It is called Harappan civilization because it was the first site discovered. In 1924, scholars in history were roused by the announcement of **Sir John Marshall** that India had a glorious civilization before the Vedic period.
- The Indus or Harappan civilization arose in the north western part of Indian subcontinent. The largest number of Indus sites was found on the banks of river Ghaghar Hakra or mythical Saraswathy River. The Indus civilization was older than the chalcolithic culture. The mature Harappan civilization developed in Sindh and Panjab. The Harappan culture covered parts of Panjab, Haryana, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and fringes of U.P.



Major Harappan sites

- Harappan sites were divided into Pre-Harappan, mature Harappan and Post Harappan sites.
- Pre- Harappan sites:- (1) Amri (2) Kotdiji (3) Kalibangan (4) Rangpur (5) Banawali (6) Mehgarh
- **Harappa**- Harappa site was first briefly excavated by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1872-73. The first extensive excavations at Harappa were started by Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni in 1920. Harappa is the biggest city in the Indus Empire. It is in Montgomery district in Panjab, now in Pakistan. Harappa is comparatively larger in extent than Mohenjodaro. Harappa is situated in the left bank of river Ravi in Panjab. The most remarkable building in Harappa was the Great Granary. In the citadel there were six granaries. Another discovery in Harappa was the workmen's quarters. 891 seals were found from Harappa. Harappa is the only place where traces of coffin burial were found.



Major Harappan sites

- **Mohenjodaro-** It was rediscovered in 1922 by R.D Banerjee. Mohenjodaro is situated 300 miles north of Karachi in Sindh in Pakistan. It is in Larkhano district in Sindh. Mohenjodaro literally means mount of the dead. It lies on the right bank of the river Indus. An important excavation was the Assembly Hall in the southern part. Another notable discovery was the Great Bath. A bearded man in steatite and bronze were found from Mohenjodaro. A dancing girl in bronze was also found from Mohenjodaro.
- 1389 seals were found from Mohenjodaro. A piece of woven cotton cloth has been discovered from Mohenjodaro. A bronze statue of a she buffalo was found from Mohenjodaro. The first street was found at Mohenjodaro.



Major Harappan sites

- **Dholvira-** It is located at Kachch district of Gujarat. The site was discovered in 1967-8 by J.P. Joshi. The excavation brought to light the sophisticated urban planning and architecture, and unearthed large numbers of antiquities such as seals, beads, animal bones, gold, silver, terracotta ornaments and vessels linked to Mesopotomia. Dholvira is the latest and one of the two largest harappan settlements in India.
- **Lothal-** Located in state of Gujarat, it was discovered in 1954. Lothal provides with the largest collection of antiquities in the archaeology of modern India. It was excavated by S.R Rao in 1957. Rice husks were found from Lothal. The famous dockyard was the major discovery. Another notable finding was the beadmaker's shop. It was only in lothal that the Harappan houses opened to the main street. Evidence of couple burial was found from Lothal. Fire pits were also found from Lothal.



Major Harappan sites

- **Suktagendor**-This town was situated in Baluchistan. It was first brought to light by Sir Aurel Stein in 1927. A number of ports have been discovered from Suktagendor.
- **Ropar**-Buildings at Ropar were made mainly of stone and soil. Important findings at the site include pottery, ornaments, copper axes, chert blades, terracotta blades, one inscribed steatite seal with typical Indus pictographs, several burials interred in oval pits, and a rectangular mud-brick chamber. There is also an evidence of burying a dog below the human burial. Ropar is situated in Panjab. It is on the banks of river Sutlej. It was firstly discovered by Y.D Sharmain 1950.



Major Harappan sites

- **Kalibangan-** The word 'Kalibangan' means 'black bangles'. It lay in northern Rajasthan on the banks of river Ghaghar Hakra. Evidence of bangles was found from Kalibangan. It was discovered by A.Ghosh in 1953 and B.K Thapaer and B.B. Lal in 1961. Ornamental bricks were used in Kalibangan.
- **Chanhudaro-** It was the only Harappan city without a citadel. Some remarkable findings at Chanhu-daro include bronze figures of bullock cart and ekkas; a small pot suggesting an inkwell, footprints of an elephant and a dog chasing a cat.
- **Alamgirpur:** It was situated 17 miles west of Merut on the banks of river Hindon. No seals have been found from this place.
- **Amri:** The site is located south of Mohenjodaro.
- **Banwali:** Situated in Hissar district of Haryana. Remains of barley, sesamum and mustard were found from here.



Harappan sites

Harappan sites

Balakot- It is situated near Karachi.

Allahdino- It is situated in Karachi.

Alamgirpur- Situated in Meerat on the banks of Hindon river.

Desalpur- It is in Bhuj district Gujaraton the Banks of Bhadar river.

Balakot- It was located at Las Bala Valley. Mud bricks were the standard building material used in this place

Harappan sites

Rangpur- It was in Gujarat. Rice husks were found from this place.

Ali Murad-It was situated in Sind on the banks of Dadu River. Terracotta figures of bull were found. Black and red potteries were found.



Harappan Town Planning

- In the Indus Valley the towns followed a grid system. The roads cut at right angles. The town was entered from the east street. The junction of the town was known as Oxford Circus.
- Important cities were divided into two parts, the fortified settlements on the high ground are designated as citadels and the main residential areas to the west were called lower towns.
- Lamp posts at intervals indicate the existence of street lighting. The Harappan houses opened to the main street only at Lothal. The First Street was found in Mohenjodaro. The bricks were usually made out of alluvial soil. Ornamental bricks were found at Kalibangan.
- Great Granary was found at Harappa. In the Great Granary there were six small granaries for pounding the grain. Each house had bathrooms with a system of covered drains connected to the main drain of the street.



Harappan Town Planning

- The Great Bath was at Mohenjodaro. The actual bathing pool measures 39 feet long, 23 feet wide and 8 feet deep. This building resembles the large swimming pool. Water from adjacent well was used to fill the pool with fresh water and the used water was drained out through the outlet in one corner. The Great Bath was probably used during religious ceremonies.
- The Assembly Hall was another striking building found in Mohenjodaro. The largest numbers of structures were found at Mohenjodaro. A large tank found at Dholvira was compared to the Great bath of Mohenjodaro. Every house had a kitchen with a fireplace and large jars for storing grains or keeping other articles of use.



Harappan Economy

- The Indus Valley Civilization flourished on the fertile plains of the river Indus and its tributaries. Farming was therefore the main occupation of the people. The city dwellers were engaged in occupations like arts and crafts, trade, seal making etc.
- Indus people produced significant quantities of cotton. Good quality barley has been discovered from Banawali. Rice husks were discovered from Lothal and Rangpur. The principal products of Harappa and Mohenjodaro were wheat and barley. The major product of Kalibangan was barley. The major products of Lothal, Rangpur and Surkotada were rice and millet.
- The Indus people produced peas, sesamum and mustard. The domestic animals of the people include bull, buffalo, sheep, elephant, pig, dog and camel. Bead maker's shops were found at Chanhudao and Lothal. Kalibangan, Balakot, Lothal and Chanhudaro were centres for shell working and bangle making.



Harappan Economy

- Weights and measures of accuracy existed in Harappan culture
- Major source of items used by Indus people are: (a) Gold- South India, Afghanistan and Persia (b) Silver- Afghanistan, Iran (c) Copper- South India, Baluchistan and Persia (d) Conch shell- Saurashtra, Deccan (e) Lapis Lazuli- Badakshan (f) Turquoise- Iran (g) Amethyst- Maharashtra (h) Agate- Saurashtra and western India (i) Jade- central India, Tibet.
- Indus people had close commercial contacts with Iran, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Elam, Crete etc.



Harappan Script

- The writings of Harappans were found in their seals which was used as mark of their property. The Harappan scripts were very short and brief texts. The average number of symbols on the seals is 5, and the longest is only 26. The language underneath is unknown. Lack of bilingual texts creates impediments in its decipherment. Following are the attempts made by scholars for deciphering the script: (a) **Wadel**- He was a European scholar who wrote a book entitled "*Indus and Sumerian Script Deciphered*". According to him the Sumerians conquered the Indus Valley and introduced their rule and script there (b) **Dr. Pran Nath**-He supported the theory of Wadel. According to him many ancient scripts were pictographic. (c) **Morris. J. Spivak**- he was an American archaeologist. According to him the Harappan script denotes the Hebrew legends especially the stories of Adam and Eve and Noah's arch.



Harappan Script

- (d) **Sudhamsu Keemer Ray**- The Harappan script was and archaic Sanskrit script (e) **M.V.N Krishna Rao**- The Harappan script is closely related to the Aryan language. (f) **Dr. Fateh Singh**- He supported the view of Sudhamsu Keemer Ray that it was an archaic Sanskrit script. (g) **Dr. S.K Purpola**- According to him it was a Dravidian script (h) **Dr.S.R Rao**- He wrote a book entitled "***The Decipherment of Indus Script***". According to him the Indus Script was an Indo Aryan script with the springling of Iranian words (i) Dr. Iravathan Mahadevan- According to him it was a Dravidian script. (j) **K.K.Raman**- He wrote a book in Malayalam entitled "***Saindavamudrakalilurangunna Charitrasathyangal***" in which he claimed that the Indus script was purely a Dravidian script. (k) **N.K Varma and Arun Pathak**- They were two scholars from Bihar. They claimed that the Indus script is very similar to the script used by the Santhal tribes.



Harappan Religion

- Mother Goddess was the principal divinity of the harappan people. In one figurine, a plant is shown growing out of the embryo of a woman. The image probably represents the goddess of the earth.
- The male deity is represented on a seal. This God has three horned heads and is represented in a yogic posture. The God is surrounded by an elephant, a rhinoceros, a tiger and below his throne there is a buffalo and at his feet two deer. It is identified as Pasupati Siva according to John Marshall.
- No temple has been found, though idolatry was practiced. The Indus Valley people worshipped trees especially papal. They also worshipped symbol swasthika. Animals were worshipped and the most important among them were one horned bull or unicorn which may be identified with rhinoceros. Three forms of burials practiced include complete burial, fractional burial and post cremation burial



Decline of Indus Civilization

- The following are the probable factors suggested by the scholars for the decline of Indus Valley civilization: (1) Mortimer Wheeler suggested the sudden death theory. According to him Aryan invasion was the main reason for the decline of the Indus civilization (2) Mackay suggested that the vagaries of the Indus River were the main factor for the decline (3) G.F Dales suggested that natural calamities caused for the decline of the Indus civilization (5) W.A Fairservis considered ecological factors for the decline. The growing population and fall in production led to the decline (7) Aureil Stein and John Marshall suggested the theory of the climatic change as the chief reason for the decline of Indus civilization. This theory was supported by the archaeologists like F.A Durrani and Khuldip Singh (8) A. Ghosh suggested that the decline of trade relations especially with Mesopotamia was the chief reason for the decline of Indus civilization.



Thank You Dr. Shaji A.