

THE HARAPPAN CIVILISATION

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the meaning of the term Civilisation?

Ans. Civilisation comes from the Latin word 'Civis' meaning someone who resides in a town.

2. Name any two important sites of the Indus Valley. **Ans.** Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro

3. Why is the Indus Valley Civilisation sometimes called the Harappan Culture?

Ans. The first and the best example of the Indus Valley Civilisation was found at Harappa. So this civilisation is sometimes called as Harappan Civilisation or the Harappan Culture.

4. What is the approximate extent of the Harappan Culture? **Ans.** This civilisation extended from Ropar in the North to Narmada and Tapi in the South and from Meerut in the Upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab in the East to the Suktagendor on the Makran coast of South Baluchistan in the West.

5. What is the approximate date of the Indus Valley Civilisation?

Ans. The approximate period of the Indus Valley Civilisation can be specified between 3250 BC and 2750 BC.

6. Give any two features of the town planning of the Indus Valley people.

Ans. (i) The cities grew up according to a set scheme.

(ii) The roads and streets were very wide.

7. Name any one feature of the drainage system of Indus Valley people.

Ans. Each house had its own small drains which were directly connected with the street drain which ran under the main streets and below many lanes.

8. How can you say that civic organisation of the Indus Valley people was well-organised?

Ans. The Indus Valley people lived in well-planned towns. The towns had adequate arrangements for water supply. The discovery of lamp-posts at intervals reveal the existence of street-lighting. Sanitation was also properly looked after. Rubbish was thrown into the dustbins. The sweepers kept the cities neat and clean.

9. Name two things which throw light on the dress of the Indus Valley people.

Ans. Both men and women wore clothes made of cotton and wool. Women wore necklaces, bracelets, bangles and earrings. Men wore amulets.

10. Name any two features of the Great Bath.

Ans. (i) There are galleries and rooms all around the Great bath.

(ii) The Great Bath was used on religious festivals.

11. Mention any one reason why the seals found at the excavations of the Indus Valley are important.

Ans. An idea of the dress, ornaments, hair style etc. of the Indus Valley people is derived from the figures engraved on these seals.

12. What evidence is there to establish that the people of Mohen-jo-daro had a great concern for (i) sanitation and (ii) town planning ?

Ans. (i) Highly developed system of drainage shows that the people of Mohen-jo-daro had a great concern for Sanitation.

(ii) A well-planned city with straight roads show that the people of Mohen-jo-daro had a great concern for town planning.

13. State any one evidence which suggests that the Indus Valley people knew the art of painting.

Ans. A painted pot from Lothal bears the paintings of a crow-like bird sitting on the branch of a tree suggests that the Indus Valley people knew the art of painting.

14. Mention one piece of art in metal which shows that sculpture had reached a high standard in the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- Ans. The bronze figure of a dancing girl, with her hand on her hip, is a masterpiece of the Indus Art of Sculpture. This piece of art in metal shows that sculpture had reached a high standard in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Structured Essay-Type Questions

1. Give an account of the Religion of the Indus Valley people with reference to:

- The worship of Lord Shiva which existed among the people.
- Its two main features
- Animal worship
- The worship of Mother Goddess

- Ans. (a) Among the male gods, Shiva was the most prominent. In one of the seals, this god is shown seated on a raised platform, cross legged in a yogic posture, with his sight fixed on the tip of the nose.
- (b) He has three faces and the crown on the head is adorned by trishul. He is surrounded by animals. This god is believed to be 'Shiva pashupati'. Shiva was also worshipped in the form of linga and yoni.
- (c) They worshipped animals like bulls, buffalo, tiger, rhinoceros, crocodile, snake, etc. To Dr. A.D. Pusalkar, "The feeding troughs (long hollow vessels) which appear before some of these animals have been taken as symbolising food offering to beasts which could not be domesticated, indicating the animals as objects of worship." It is difficult to say whether these animals were worshipped as deities or spirits of deities or vehicles of the gods and goddesses.
- (d) Stone images, figurines and engravings on seals help us to know the religious ideas and beliefs of the Indus Valley people. The discovery of many statues and figurines of the Mother Goddess or *Shakti* shows that the worship of the divine-mother was very common. Her head-dress is like a fan and she is wearing many ornaments. In one particular seal, she has been shown standing in the bifurcated branches of a *pipal* tree and a worshipper is shown as bringing a goat in front of the deity, perhaps for offering as a sacrifice to the Goddess. Moreover, the discovery of so many smoke-stained female figures has led the historians to believe that possibly oil or incense was burnt before the female deity to get her blessings. The worship of the Mother Goddess reveals that these people believed that female energy is the source of all creation.

2. With reference to the Seals, explain the following :

- One of the seals found among the ruins of the Harappan settlement.
- Significance of Pashupati seal.
- State one reason why the seals of the Indus Valley Civilisation are considered important.

- Ans. (a) An interesting seal from Harappa is that of a nude female figure turned upside down, with outspread legs and a plant issuing from the belly. The reverse side has a man with a sickle-shaped knife in hand and a woman seated on the ground with hands raised in supplication (or entreaty). All this depiction has been identified by historians with a human sacrifice to the Mother Goddess.
- (b) Of all the 2,000 odd seals, the most important is that of Shiva Pashupati which has been found at Mohen-jo-daro. In one of the seals, which is believed to be 'Shiva-Pashupati', this god is shown seated on a raised platform, cross-legged, in a yogic posture. He has three faces and the crown on the head is adorned by a Trishul.
- (c) The discovery of a large number of seals occupies a special importance of its own in the Indus Valley Civilisation. Much of the information regarding the Indus Valley people has been drawn from these seals. An idea of the dress, ornaments, hair style, etc. of the

Sindh (Pakistan, about 130 Kilometres south of Mohen-jo-daro), Lothal in Gujarat near Ahmedabad, Kali Bangan in Northern Rajasthan, Alamgirpur near Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh and Mitahal in Hissar district of Haryana.

(b) The Indus Valley or the Harappan people were primarily urban people. They lived in well-planned towns and took great care to look after their cleanliness. The cities grew up according to a set scheme. The roads and streets were very wide. The width of the streets varied from 3 metres to 4 metres. The roads were 4 metres to 10 metres wide. All the streets and roads ran from north to south and from east to west so that they could be cleaned automatically by the prevailing winds. Building were not allowed to encroach upon the public highways. In fact, the Indus Valley people had developed a keen civic sense and they fully obeyed the Civic authority. According to Dr. A.D Pusalkar a visitor to the ruins at Mohen-jo-daro is struck by the remarkable skill in town planning. The city was the creation of careful fore thought and planning.

(c) **Seals and Their Importance:** The discovery of a large number of seals occupies a special importance of its own in the Indus Valley Civilisation. More than 2,000 of such seals have been found at various sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation. They are made of various materials such as pottery, steatite, faience, ivory, etc. Much of the information regarding the Indus Valley people has been drawn from these seals. Besides providing much knowledge about the physical features of men, women, animals and birds of those days, they reveal the artistic skill of the artists and craftsmen of the Indus Valley. An idea of the dress, ornaments, hair style, etc. of the Indus Valley people can be derived from the figures engraved on these seals. These seals also throw a good deal of light on the religious faiths and commercial activities of the Indus Valley people. Above all, these seals have some inscriptions engraved on them. The most important seal found was that of the Shiva Pashupati.

5. Our knowledge of the Harappan Civilisation is based on excavations carried out in North-Western India. Explain the evidence discovered with regard to the following points :

- (a) The extent of this civilisation.
- (b) Commercial relations.
- (c) Buildings.

Ans. (a) By now more than 250 centres of the Harappan culture have been discovered in different areas of the north-western part of the subcontinent. These sites are scattered in the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the fringes of Western Uttar Pradesh. This civilisation extended from Ropar in the north to the valleys of Narmada and Tapi in the South and from Meerut in the Upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab in the east to the Suktagendor on the Makran Coast of South Baluchistan in the west.

Of the 250 sites of the Indus Valley or Harappan Civilisation so far discovered, Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa are considered to be the most important. These were also the two biggest centres of this civilisation.

(b) **Trade or Commercial Relations:** The people of the Indus Valley maintained close commercial relations with the outside world. For the import of precious stones, different metals and other articles, they had established connections with southern India, eastern India and Kashmir, as well as with certain Central Asian and West Asian countries. There is an overwhelming mass of evidence which clearly shows that a flourishing trade, probably through the land routes of Baluchistan and Persia, took place between the Indus Valley and Sumer (Mesopotamia) in ancient times. Numerous seals of Indian origin with Indus script and Brahmani bulls have been found at various Sumerian (or Mesopotamian) sites. Likewise, various importations from Sumer-like an engraved steatite (soap-stone) vessel, a model ram, an adze (or carpenter's axe), small pottery rings etc. recovered in the Indus Valley, clearly indicate trading intercourse between India and Sumer (Mesopotamia) in ancient times. Historians believe that the Indus Valley people had also maintained trade relations with Egypt and Crete through Sumer. The representation on a seal of a mastless ship, with a central cabin and a steersman seated at the rudder forced Dr. Mackay to believe that the Indus Valley people were in touch with Sumer, Egypt and Crete by the sea-route also.

(c) **Architecture or Buildings:** The Indus Valley people constructed various types of buildings. Their buildings were plain and solid and were far away from artificial decoration, beauty and artistic excellence. Much attention was paid to utility and solidity. They constructed three types of buildings—dwelling houses, public halls and public baths.

6. The Indus Valley people made great progress in the field of Architecture. Describe briefly their

- (d) Dwelling Houses
- (b) Assembly Hall
- (c) Granary
- (d) Great Bath

Ans. (a) First, there were the **Dwellings Houses**. In order to meet the danger of floods, the houses were built on raised platforms and they generally had an upper storey and houses varied in size. The smallest one had one room while the bigger ones looked like palaces. The houses were built of brick, lime and gypsum. Stone was not used in building houses. They had thick and strong walls which were plastered and coloured. Their roofs were flat.

Indus Valley people can be derived from the figures engraved on these seals. These seals also throw a good deal of light on the religious faiths and commercial activities of the Indus Valley people.

3. Give an account of the Indus Valley Civilisation with reference to :

- (a) The two major areas in which it flourished.
- (b) An important feature of the Indus Valley cities.
- (c) One country with which they had commercial relations.

Ans. (a) Important Sites: Of the 250 sites of the Indus Valley of Harappan Civilisation so far discovered, Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa are considered to be the most important. These were also the two biggest centres of this civilisation.

Mohen-jo-daro: In Sindhi language, it means the 'Mound of the Dead'. It was the chief city of the Indus Valley Civilisation and probably the capital of the southern region. From the ruins, the archaeologists have come to the conclusion that it was once a well-planned city with straight, wide roads and a very highly developed system of drainage and sanitation.

Harappa: The ruins of this city were discovered at a distance of 160 kilometres from Lahore on the Ravi river. It was probably the capital of the northern region. It was also a well-planned city like Mohen-jo-daro. It was bigger in area than Mohen-jo-daro. It was the first city of the Indus Valley to be excavated in 1921.

Main Features of The Harappan Civilisation is the Urban Planning or Town-Planning. The Indus Valley or the Harappan people were primarily urban people. They lived in well-planned towns and took great care to look after their cleanliness. The cities grew up according to a set scheme. This is indicated by the uniformity in planning, alignment of streets, planning of houses and public buildings with provisions for thoroughfare. Each city was divided in two parts. To the west of each city was a citadel, built on a high platform. Public buildings, religious structures and granaries were built on the citadel.

According to **Dr. A.D. Pusalkar**, "A visitor to the ruins at Mohen-jo-daro is struck by the remarkable skill in town planning. The city was the creation of careful forethought and planning."

(b) One country with which they had commercial relations. Trade or Commercial Relations: The people of the Indus Valley maintained close commercial relations with the outside world. There is an overwhelming mass of evidence which clearly shows that a flourishing trade, probably through the land routes of Baluchistan and Persia, took place between the Indus Valley and Sumer (Mesopotamia) in ancient times. Numerous seals of Indian origin with Indus script and Brahmani bulls have been found at various Sumerian (or Mesopotamian) sites. Likewise, various importations from Sumer - like an engraved steatite (Soap-stone) vessel, a model ram, an adze (or carpenter's axe), small pottery rings, etc. recovered in the Indus Valley, clearly indicate trading intercourse between India and Sumer (Mesopotamia) in ancient times. Historians believe that the Indus Valley people had also maintained trade relations with Egypt and Crete through Sumer. The representation on a seal of a mastless ship, with a central cabin and a steersman seated at the rudder, forced Dr. Mackay to believe that the Indus Valley people were in touch with Sumer, Egypt and Crete by the sea-route also.

4. The Harappan Civilisation is characterised by the uniformity of its culture. On this important aspect, comment on the following points :

- (a) The sites selected for settlements.
- (b) The layout of the towns.
- (c) The uses of seals.

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Ans. (a) Important Sites: Of the 250 sites of the Indus Valley or Harappan Civilisation so far discovered, Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa are considered to be the most important. These were also the two biggest centres of this civilisation.

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ideal of they had *kachcha* floors. They had fewer windows. The doors were of different sizes and they opened in the streets. Almost every house had wells, drains, bathrooms, kitchens and court yards.

(b) Besides dwelling houses, we find a few huge and large buildings such as **Pillared Halls**. It is difficult to tell the exact nature and purpose of these buildings. They might have been used for different public purposes. A high-pillared hall, 24.5 metres square, has been discovered at Mohen-jo-daro. Perhaps, it was an assembly hall which was used to carry on the business of the state.

(c) Another huge building, known as the 'Great Granary', has been discovered at Mohen-jo-daro. It is 45.71 metres long and 15.23 metres wide. It was used for storing grains. At Harappa we find two rows of six granaries.

(d) The most important building is perhaps the **Great Bath**, unearthed at Mohen-jo-daro. It resembles a large swimming pool. This building is 55 metres long and 35 metres wide. There is a swimming pool in the centre, 12 metres long, 7 metres wide and 2.5 metres deep. There are galleries and rooms all-round the swimming pool. It was used on religious festivals. It has a flight of steps at either end. It was fed by a well nearby. Arrangements had been made to discharge the dirty water by a huge drain. This pool is very strong and watertight. Near the south-west corner of the Great Bath was the '*humam*', i.e., the hot air bath. The solidity of the building is clearly borne out by the fact that it has fully withstood the ravages of 5,000 years. These public structures clearly show the skill of the engineers and architects of the Indus Valley. We must conclude that the art of building had reached a high degree of perfection.

7. Use the following points and write on the layout of the Townships of the Indus Valley Civilisation:

(e) Their towns were well-planned.

(f) They had a perfect drainage system.

(g) Among the buildings the Great Bath was a remarkable construction.

Ans. (a) Civic Organisation: The Indus Valley people lived in well planned towns. The towns had adequate arrangements for water supply. The discovery of lamp-posts at intervals reveals the existence of street lighting. Buildings were not allowed to encroach upon the public roads. There were inns for travellers. The system of watch and ward at night also existed. Nobody could build pottery-kilns in the city. All these things indicate the existence of some civic organisation whose authority was people. It has been rightly said that the well-planned towns, elaborate system of drainage and efficient civic organisation were the monumental achievements of the Indus Valley people.

(b) **The Drainage System:** The Indus Valley people had a high sense of health and sanitation and they possessed an elaborate drainage system. Each house had its own small drains which were directly connected with the street drain which ran under the main streets and below many lanes. Each house had its own soak-pit

and water flowed from the sink into the underground sewers in the streets. The drains were made of mortar, lime and gypsum. They were covered with bricks and stones. There were manholes at regular intervals for inspection. People did not throw ash and other refuse in the drain. All this shows that the drains were constructed on scientific lines and their drainage system was in no way inferior to the underground drainage system of the modern times. In this connection Prof.

S R. Sharma writes, "Archaeologists have marvelled at the skill with which the whole system was planned and constructed."

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