

Lesson3

The Harappan Civilization

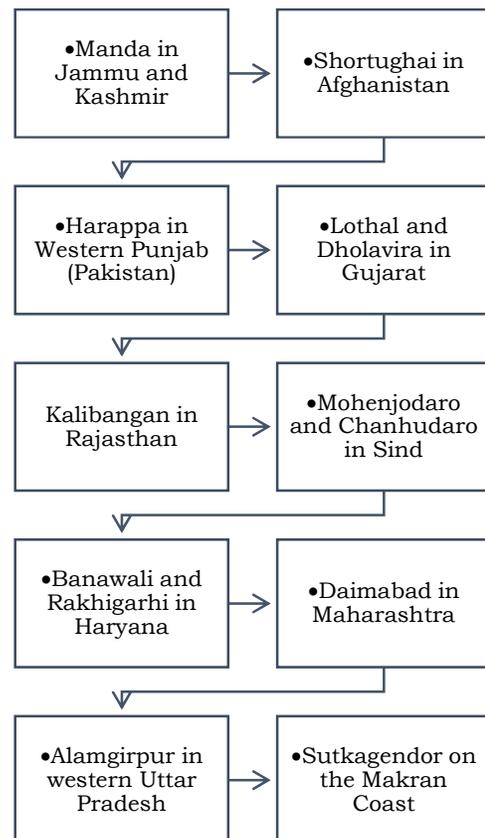
Summary

Harappan civilization was discovered in 1920–22 when two of its most important sites were excavated Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Based on the archaeological findings the Harappan civilization has been dated between 2600 B.C–1900 BC and is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. It is also sometimes referred to as the 'Indus Valley civilization' and Indo -Saraswati civilization. Our knowledge of the life and culture of the Harappan people is based only on the archaeological excavations as the script of that period has not been deciphered so far. You will read about this civilization in a greater detail in this lesson.

Origin and Extent-The whole period of Harappan civilization is in fact divided into three phases:

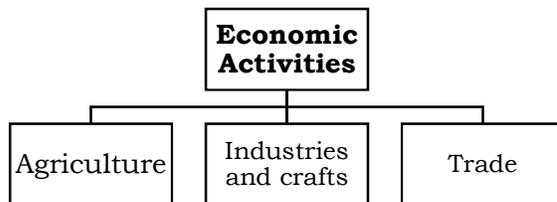
1. **Early Harappan phase** (3500 BC–2600 BC) – it was marked by some town-planning in the form of mud structures, elementary trade, arts, and crafts, etc.
2. **Mature Harappan phase** (2600 BC–1900 BC) – it was the period in which we notice well developed towns with burnt brick structures, inland and foreign trade, crafts of various types, etc.
3. **Late Harappan phase** (1900 BC–1400 BC) – it was the phase of decline during which many cities were abandoned, and the trade disappeared leading to the gradual decay of the significant urban traits

Geographical extent of the Harappan civilization



Town Planning

- The most interesting urban feature of Harappan civilization is its town-planning.
- The uniformity is noticed in the lay-out of the towns, streets, structures, brick size, drains etc.
- The houses of common people differed in size.
- The houses were largely built of burnt bricks.
- The drainage system of the Harappans was elaborate and well laid out.
- All the major sites are divided into two parts—a citadel on higher mound on the western side and a lower town on the eastern side of the settlement.



Agriculture-

- Agriculture along with pastoralism (cattle-rearing) was the base of Harappan economy
- The chief food crops included wheat, barley, sesasum, mustard, peas, jebube, etc.
- Cotton was another important crop.
- Apart from cereals, fish and animal meat also formed a part of the Harappan diet.

Industries and Crafts-

- The Harappan people were aware of almost all the metals except iron.
- They manufactured gold and silver objects. But the use of silver was more common than gold.
- The common tools included axe, saws, chisels, knives, spearheads, and arrowheads.
- Weapons were mostly defensive in nature.
- Stone tools were also commonly used.
- We also have the evidence of the use of the bronze though in limited manner.
- Bead-making was an important craft.
- Pottery-making was an important industry in the Harappan period.
- The Harappans manufactured seals of various kinds.
- Piece of art of the Harappan period is a stone sculpture of a bearded man discovered at Mohenjodaro.

Trade-

- Trading network, both internal (within the country) and external (foreign), was a significant feature of the urban economy of the Harappans.
- The Harappans were engaged in external trade with Mesopotamia.
- Mesopotamia imported copper, carnelian, ivory, shell, lapis-lazuli, pearls and ebony from Meluhha.
- The export from Mesopotamia to

Social Differentiation-

- The Harappan society appears to have been matriarchal in nature.
- The Society comprised of people following diverse professions.
- These included the priests, the warriors, peasants, traders, and artisans (masons, weavers, goldsmith, potters, etc.)
- Our limited knowledge about their dress styles comes from the terracotta figurines and stone sculptures of the period.
- Harappan people loved to decorate themselves.
- Hair dressing by both, men, and women is evident from figurines found at different

Religious Beliefs and Practices-

- The Harappan religion is normally termed as animism i.e., worship of trees, stones etc.
- The evidence of fire worship has also been found at some sites such as Kalibangan and Lothal.
- The burial practices and rituals have been a very important aspect of religion in any culture.
- Kalibangan has yielded evidence of a symbolic burial

Script- The script has not been deciphered yet. It is believed that they used ideograms i.e., a graphic symbol or character to convey the idea directly.

- It consists of about 400 signs and that it was written from right to left.

CHALCOLITHIC COMMUNITIES OF NON HARAPPAN INDIA-

The important non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures lay mainly in western India and Deccan.

- Non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures through flourished in different regions they were marked by basic uniformity in various aspects such as their mud structures, farming and hunting activities, use of wheel made pottery etc.

TOOLS, IMPLEMENTS AND OTHER OBJECTS-

The Chalcolithic cultures are characterized using tools made of copper as well as stone.

- The major tools used were long parallel-sided blades, pen knives, lunates, triangles, and trapezes.

SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY-

The people of these settlements subsisted on agriculture and cattle rearing.

- The main crops of the period include, rice, barley, lentils, wheat, jawar, coarse gram, pea, green gram, etc.

HOUSES AND HABITATIONS-

The people lived in rectangular and circular houses with mud walls and thatched roofs. Most of the houses were single roomed but some had two or three rooms.

Decline-Scholars put forward many theories in this regard.

•Caused by Climate Change

•Drying of the Indus River

•Great flood struck the area

•Earthquakes

Evaluate Yourself

Q. Identify the main characteristics of the town planning of Harappan Civilization.

Q. On the map mark the sites of Harappan civilization.

Q. Describe the reasons for the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization.