

The Beginnings of Indian Civilisation

Chapter-6

The Big Ques (Page 85)

Ques 1. What is a civilisation?

Answer:

A Civilisation is a large and complex society that has developed advanced forms of culture, government, and technology. It includes several key features:

Cities: Civilisations have large, organized communities or cities where people live and work together.

Government: They have systems of leadership and rules to help manage and organize the society.

Writing: Civilisations often have writing systems to record important information and communicate.

Technology: They use advanced tools and techniques to make life easier and more productive.

Culture: Civilisations have rich traditions, art, and beliefs that are shared among their people.

Ques 2.

What was the earliest civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent?

Answer:

The earliest Civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent was the Indus Valley Civilisation. It flourished in the northwestern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, particularly in areas that are now parts of Pakistan and northwest India. This Civilisation is known for its well-planned cities, advanced drainage systems, and impressive architecture, including the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The people of the Indus Valley Civilisation engaged in trade, had a system of writing, and developed various crafts and technologies. It was one of the world's earliest urban cultures.

Ques 3.

What were its major achievements?

Answer:

The Indus Valley Civilisation had several major achievements that made it one of the most advanced ancient cultures:

Urban Planning and Architecture: The Indus Valley Civilisation is known for its well-planned cities with a grid-like layout. Cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro had streets laid out in a precise pattern and houses made of baked bricks. They also had advanced drainage systems with covered drains and private bathrooms.

Advanced Drainage Systems: One of their most remarkable achievements was their sophisticated drainage system. The cities had a network of covered drains and sewers that helped manage waste and prevent flooding.

Writing System: The civilisation developed a writing system with symbols, although it remains undeciphered. This writing was used for trade, administration, and possibly religious purposes.

Trade and Commerce: The Indus Valley people engaged in extensive trade with neighbouring regions. They traded goods such as beads, metals, and textiles. Evidence of trade has been found as far away as Mesopotamia.

Art and Craftsmanship: The Indus Valley Civilisation was known for its high-quality craftsmanship. They created beautiful pottery, jewelry, and seals made from materials like clay, stone, and metal. The seals often had animal motifs and were used for trade and administrative purposes.

Agriculture: They developed advanced agricultural techniques, including irrigation systems to grow crops like wheat, barley, and cotton. They also domesticated animals for farming and transport.

Let's Explore

Ques 1.

For each characteristic in the list (on page 86), can you make a list of professions or occupations that might exist in such a society? (Page 87)

Answer:

A list of professions or occupations that might exist in a civilisation with each of the characteristics are as follows:

Government and Administration:

Rulers/Monarchs: Oversee the governance of the society.

Officials/Bureaucrats: Manage various administrative tasks and public services.

Judges: Resolve legal disputes and administer justice.

Tax Collectors: Gather revenue to fund the government and public projects.

City Managers: Coordinate and supervise the operations of urban areas.

Urbanism (Town Planning and City Management):

- Architects: Design buildings, public spaces, and infrastructure.
- Engineers: Develop and maintain construction projects and infrastructure.
- Surveyors: Measure land and create maps for urban planning.
- Plumbers/Sanitation Workers: Install and maintain water supply and drainage systems.
- Construction Workers: Build and repair urban structures and roads.

Crafts and Production:

- Blacksmiths: Forge tools, weapons, and other metal items.
- Potters: Create pottery for everyday use and decoration.
- Weavers: Produce textiles and clothing.
- Jewelers: Craft jewelry and ornamental items.
- Woodworkers/Carpenters: Build and repair wooden structures and furniture.

Trade (internal and external):

- Merchants: Buy and sell goods within and outside the city.
- Traders: Facilitate trade between regions or countries.
- Shipbuilders: Construct vessels for trade and transport.
- Market Vendors: Operate stalls or shops in marketplaces.
- Customs Officers: Inspect and regulate the flow of goods across borders.

Writing and Record-Keeping:

- Scribes: Document transactions, events, and information.
- Librarians: Manage and preserve written records and texts.
- Accountants: Maintain financial records and manage budgets.
- Historians: Study and write about historical events and cultural practices.
- Translators: Translate documents and communication between different languages.

Cultural Ideas (art, architecture, literature, etc.):

- Artists: Create visual art such as paintings and sculptures.
- Architects: Design culturally significant buildings and monuments.
- Writers/Poets: Produce literary works, poetry, and religious texts.
- Musicians: Compose and perform music.
- Performers: Engage in theater, dance, and other performange arts.

Productive 'Agriculture:

- Farmers: Cultivate crops and manage farmland.
- Irrigation Engineers: Design and maintain irrigation systems to support agriculture.
- Animal Husbandry Specialists: Raise and manage livestock.

- Agricultural Labourers: Assist with planting, tending, and harvesting crops.

Ques 2.

Some of the important cities of this civilisation are marked in the map (Fig. 6.3 on page 89). As a class activity, can you try to match these cities with the modern states or regions in the table given below? (Pages 89 & 90)

Harappan city	Modern state / region
Dholavira	Punjab
Harappa	Gujarat
Kalibangan	Sindh
Mohenjo-daro	Haryana
Rakhigarhi	Rajasthan

Answer:

Harappan city	Modern state / region
1. Dholavira	(b) Gujarat
2. Harappa	(a) Punjab
3. Kalibangan	(e) Rajasthan
4. Mohenjo-daro	(c) Sindh
5. Rakhigarhi	(d) Haryana

Ques 3.

Have a debate in class about the last two interpretations. Can you think of any others? Remember that in this case, we do not have any other source of history-no inscription, no text, no traveller's account. (Page 93)

Answer:

Do it yourself.

Ques 4.

As a class activity, measure the length of your classroom, a school corridor or

a playground with the help of any measuring tape. Compare these lengths with the length of the largest reservoir in Dholavira. (Page 95)

Answer:

Do it yourself.

Ques 5.

Imagine you cook a meal in a Harappan house. What dish or dishes would you prepare, based on the data (on Pages 96 & 97)?

Answer:

Based on the data provided about the Harappan diet and cooking practices, here are some dishes I might prepare if I was cooking a meal in a Harappan house:

Utilise the cereals like barley and wheat that were commonly grown by the Harappans to make a nutritious porridge. I could enhance it with spices and perhaps some dried fruits or nuts.

Prepare a vegetable stew using a variety of vegetables and pulses that were part of their diet. Adding ingredients like turmeric and ginger would give it a flavourful twist, reflecting their use of these spices.

Although rice was not always grown, including it in the meal along with pulses could provide a balanced and hearty dish. I could make a simple rice and dal (pulses) dish seasoned with turmeric and ginger.

While cotton itself is not edible, a salad using fruits like bananas (found in their cooking pots) would complement the meal. The use of fruits reflects their diverse diet.

Based on the remains of animal bones and fish found during excavations, I could prepare a curry with fish or meat, incorporating spices like turmeric and ginger to reflect their culinary practices.

Ques 6.

Looking at three Harappan seals (on page 99) with some writing signs, what goes through your mind? Would you like to suggest any interpretations? Let your imagination run! (Page 99)

Answer:

The Harappan seals featuring a unicorn, a bull, and a horned tiger, along with writing signs, offer intriguing insights into the symbolism and possible religious or cultural practices of the Harappan Civilisation. Here are some interpretations and thoughts that might come to mind:

Symbolism and Religious Beliefs:

Unicorn Seal: The unicorn on a Harappan seal is a unique and enigmatic symbol. It might represent a mythical or sacred animal, possibly associated with fertility, prosperity, or divine protection. The unicorn could symbolize a revered deity or a protective spirit in Harappan culture.

Bull Seal: Bulls were commonly associated with strength and fertility in many ancient cultures. In the context of the Harappan Civilisation, the bull might signify agricultural prosperity, as bulls were crucial for farming and plowing. It could also represent a deity or a totemic animal linked to agricultural and pastoral activities.

Horned Tiger Seal: The horned tiger is another fascinating symbol, potentially representing power and ferocity. It might be linked to hunting, protection, or a deity associated with strength and courage. The horn could signify a supernatural or divine quality.

Writing Signs:

The presence of writing signs on these seals suggests that they were used for administrative, economic, or ritualistic purposes. The writing might indicate ownership, convey messages, or be part of a complex system of record-keeping.

The combination of imagery and writing could imply that these seals were used for identification or authentication, possibly in trade, religious ceremonies, or governance.

Cultural and Social Insights:

The variety of symbols on the seals suggests a rich cultural and religious life. The Harappans likely had a complex system of beliefs and practices that included reverence for specific animals and deities.

These seals might also reflect the trade and interaction between different regions, as symbols and writing could serve as a form of communication or branding.

Ques 7.

Complete the story found on the Lothal pot (on page 101). How was such a story remembered for more than 4,000 years, in your opinion? (Page 102)

Answer:

Once, a thirsty crow found a pot with a little water at the bottom. The crow couldn't reach the water by just dipping its beak. Cleverly, it dropped pebbles into the pot one by one. As the pebbles piled up, the water level rose until the crow could drink. Happy and refreshed, the crow flew away.

The story was remembered for over 4,000 years in the following ways:

- **Moral Lessons:** The story teaches cleverness and problem-solving, important lessons that people remembered and shared.
- **Oral Tradition;** People passed the story down by telling it to others, helping it stay alive through generations.
- **Art on Pottery:** The story was depicted on pottery, making it easier for people to remember and recognize.
- **Educational Value:** The story was used to teach values and skills, which made it popular and widely told.
- **Archacological Finds:** Discovering artifacts like the Lothal pot keeps the story alive, connecting us with the past.

Ques 8.

Consider the 'Dancing Girl' figurine (on page 101). What do you make of the attitude the figurine expresses? Observe her bangles covering an entire arm, a practice still visible in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Where else in this chapter can you spot bangles worn in this manner? What conclusion should we draw from this? (Page 102)

Answer:

The bronze Dancing Girl figurine from the Indus Valley Civilisation is a remarkable artefact that provides insight into the culture and aesthetics of the time. Here's a closer look at what the figurine expresses and the significance of the bangles:

Attitude of the Figurine

Pose and Expression: The Dancing Girl is depicted in a confident and graceful pose, suggesting that dance and physical expression were important aspects of her culture. The posture indicates a sense of poise and self-assurance.

Detailed Features: The figurine is highly detailed, with attention to features like the curves and the intricacy of the jewelry, indicating a sophisticated understanding of art and body aesthetics.

Bangles on the Figurine

Bangles: The figurine's arm is adorned with numerous bangles covering an entire arm, a practice that emphasizes the significance of jewelry in their society. This style of wearing bangles is still observed in modern Gujarat and Rajasthan, highlighting the continuity of certain cultural practices over millennia.

We can spot bangles in this chapter in Harappan seals which depicts figures with multiple bangles. Other artefacts and objects from the Indus Valley Civilisation also show jewellery styles that include elaborate bangle designs.

Conclusion

Cultural Continuity: The presence of similar bangle styles in contemporary Gujarat and Rajasthan suggests a strong cultural continuity from ancient times to the present. Traditional practices in jewellery and adornment have persisted across thousands of years.

Cultural Significance: The detailed depiction of bangles and jewellery in the Dancing Girl figurine reflects the high value placed on personal adornment and aesthetics in Harappan society. It indicates that jewelry was not just ornamental but also held cultural and possibly symbolic meanings.

Artistic Sophistication: The intricate detailing on the figurine showcases the artistic skill and craftsmanship of the Indus Valley people, suggesting that they had a well-developed sense of style and artistry.

The Beginnings of Indian Civilisation Ques Answer (Exercise)

Ques 1.

Why does the civilisation studied in this chapter have several names? Discuss their significance.

Answer:

The civilisation studied in this chapter, often referred to as the Indus Valley Civilisation, is known by several names due to various historical, geographical, and cultural reasons. These are as follows:

Indus Valley Civilisation this name is based on the civilisation's location along the Indus River and its tributaries. The Indus Valley Civilisation is one of the earliest known urban cultures, and the Indus River played a crucial role in its development. The Civilisation's reliance on the river for agriculture, trade, and daily life is reflected in this name.

Harappan Civilisation this was named after the site of Harappa, one of the first discovered and extensively excavated cities of this civilisation. Harappa is a key archaeological site that provided valuable insights into the urban planning, architecture, and artefacts of the civilisation. The term "Harappan" is often used to refer to the entire civilisation, emphasizing its historical significance.

Mohenjo-daro, another major city of the Civilisation, Mohenjo-daro, also gives its name to the culture. Mohenjo-daro is crucial for understanding the urban layout, drainage systems, and daily life of the civilisation. Like Harappa, the name "Mohenjodaro" highlights the importance of this city in archaeological studies.

Sarasvati Civilisation, based on the reference to the Sarasvati River, mentioned in ancient texts and believed to have once flowed through the region. The Sarasvati River's name connects the civilisation to the Vedic traditions and texts. This name reflects the cultural and religious significance of the river in ancient Indian history.

Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation, it combines references to both the Indus and Sarasvati rivers. This term acknowledges the geographical and cultural contributions of both rivers to the civilisation. It reflects a broader understanding of the civilisation's extent and its connection to historical texts.

Ques 2.

Write a brief report (150 to 200 words) summing up some of the achievements of the Indus-Sarasvatī civilisation.

Answer:

The Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation, one of the earliest urban cultures, achieved remarkable advancements in various fields. Its sophisticated urban planning is evident from the well-organized cities of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, and Dholavira. These cities featured advanced drainage systems, grid-patterned streets, and standardised brick sizes, reflecting a high level of municipal administration and engineering expertise.

Agricultural innovation was a cornerstone of the civilisation. The Harappans cultivated a range of crops, including wheat, barley, and cotton-the latter being the earliest known instance of cotton cultivation in Eurasia. They employed tools such as the plough, which highlights their agricultural advancements.

Craftsmanship and trade were highly developed. Artisans produced intricate jewellery, pottery, and seals, many of which depict detailed animal motifs and writing signs. The civilisation engaged in extensive trade, evidenced by the exchange of goods with distant regions, including Mesopotamia.

The Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation's contributions to urban planning, agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade underscore its significance as a pioneer of early complex societies.

Ques 3.

Imagine you have to travel from the city of Harappa to Kalibangan. What are your different options? Can you make a rough estimation of the amount of time each option might take?

Answer:

If, I needed to travel from Harappa to Kalibangan, I could choose from a few different options such as:

I could walk or use a cart pulled by animals. It might take about 20-30 days because it's a long distance and travel is slow.

I could travel with a caravan of camels or oxen, which could carry more and travel faster. This might take around 15-25 days, as caravans are faster and can carry more goods.

If there are rivers I can use, travelling by boat could be quicker. This option might take about 10-20 days, depending on how fast the boat travels and if you need to switch to land transport.

I have combined river travel and land transport for a quicker journey. This could take around 15-20 days, balancing both travel methods.

But, each option depends on the weather and the route.

Ques 4.

Let us imagine a Harappan man or woman being transported to an average kitchen in today's India. What are the four or five biggest surprises awaiting them?

Answer:

The five surprises a Harappan man or woman might encounter in a modern kitchen in today's India are as follows:

(i) Seeing electric appliances like refrigerators, ovens, and microwaves would be surprising, as they didn't have these in ancient times.

- (ii) The variety of packaged and processed foods, such as snacks and ready-to-eat meals, would be new to them.
- (iii) The use of gas or electric stoves for precise cooking would be different from their traditional open fire methods.
- (iv) The use of electric lights in the kitchen would be surprising compared to the oil lamps or candles they were used to.
- (v) The availability of many different spices and ingredients from around the world would be a big change from the local ingredients they were familiar with.

Ques 5.

Looking at all the pictures in this chapter, make a list of the ornaments/gestures/objects that still feel familiar in our 21 st century.

Answer:

Do it yourself.

Ques 6.

What mindset does the system of reservoirs at Dholavira reflect?

Answer:

The system of reservoirs at Dholavira reflects the following mindset:

1. The reservoirs show careful planning to manage water resources in a dry region, indicating foresight and strategic thinking.
2. The complex water management system demonstrates an understanding of how to efficiently use and conserve water for agriculture and daily needs.
3. The large-scale infrastructure suggests a focus on the well-being of the entire community, ensuring that water was available to support both the city's population and its agricultural activities.
4. The construction of such reservoirs reflects advanced engineering skills and knowledge of hydrology, highlighting the Civilisation's technical capabilities.

5. The system indicates adaptability to the challenging environment, showing how the Harappans adjusted their technology and planning to suit the local conditions.

Ques 7.

In Mohenjo-daro, about 700 wells built with bricks have been counted. They seem to have been regularly maintained and used for several centuries.

Discuss the implications.

Answer:

The presence of around 700 wells built with bricks in Mohenjo-daro, which were regularly maintained and used for several centuries, has several important implications:

1. The large number of wells indicates careful planning and organization to ensure a steady supply of water for the city.
2. Regular maintenance of these wells shows an understanding of the need to manage and preserve water resources over a long period.
3. The use of brick wells suggests a high standard of living, with access to clean water being a priority for the city's residents.
4. Building and maintaining brick wells reflects advanced technological skills and engineering knowledge in ancient times.
5. The fact that these wells were used for several centuries implies that Mohenjo-daro was a thriving and stable settlement with a consistent population.

Ques 8.

It is often said that the Harappans had a high civic sense. Discuss the significance of this statement. Do you agree with it? Compare with citizens in a large city of India today.

Answer:

The statement that the Harappans had a high civic sense reflects their attention to organized city planning and public facilities. Its significance are as follows:

1. Harappan cities like Mohenjo-daro and Harappa had well-planned streets, drainage systems, and public baths, showing they cared about cleanliness and order.
2. The presence of wells, reservoirs, and a sophisticated drainage system indicates they managed resources and waste effectively, benefiting all residents.
3. Regular maintenance of infrastructure, like wells and drainage systems, suggests a shared responsibility for public well-being.

The comparison with citizens in a large city of present-day India are as follows:

1. Modern large cities in India also have well-planned infrastructure with roads, sewage systems, and public facilities, reflecting similar civic concerns.
2. Today's cities manage resources through modern utilities and services, but maintenance and access can vary.