






UPSC History

Ancient India Series | Episode 2

 Like •  Subscribe •  Comment Doubts

HARAPPAN CIVILISATION

Previous Year Questions

UPSC CSE

3 Questions

UPSC CDS

7 Questions

UPSC NDA

8 Questions

UPSC CAPF

6 Questions

Total: 24 Questions | All Exams Covered

Attempt every question before seeing the answer! 

The famous female figurine known as 'Dancing Girl', found at Mohenjo-Daro, is made of:

- a) Carnelian
- b) Clay
- c) Bronze
- d) Gold

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) Bronze**

✎ Explanation:

(c) Bronze ✓ The Dancing Girl is a famous bronze statue discovered at Mohenjo-Daro.

(a) Carnelian ✗ Carnelian is a semi-precious stone used for bead making – NOT for the Dancing Girl.

(b) Clay ✗ Clay (terracotta) figurines were common, but the Dancing Girl is specifically made of bronze.

💡 **Dancing Girl = Bronze | Bearded Man = Steatite (stone) | Mother Goddess = Terracotta (clay)**

Which one of the following ancient towns is well-known for its elaborate system of water harvesting

and management by building a series of dams and channelizing water into connected reservoirs?

- a) Dholavira
- b) Kalibangan
- c) Rakhigarhi
- d) Ropar

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) Dholavira**

✎ Explanation:

(a) Dholavira ✓ Dholavira (Gujarat, Rann of Kutch) had a unique water harvesting system – series of dams, channels and giant connected reservoirs.

(b) Kalibangan ✗ Kalibangan is known for fire altars and ploughed fields – NO drainage system, no water harvesting.

(c) Rakhigarhi ✗ Rakhigarhi is the LARGEST Harappan site (~550 ha) – not known for water harvesting structures.

🔔 **Dholavira got UNESCO World Heritage Tag in 2021 – also important for current affairs!**

Which one of the following is not a Harappan site?

- a) Chanhudaro
- b) Kot Diji
- c) Sohgaora
- d) Desalpur

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) Sohgaora**

✎ Explanation:

(c) Sohgaora ✓ (NOT Harappan) Sohgaora is in UP – known for an Ashokan-era bronze plate inscription. It is NOT a Harappan site.

(a) Chanhudaro ✗ Chanhudaro – major Harappan site in Sindh (Pakistan). Only site WITHOUT a citadel.

(b) Kot Diji ✗ Kot Diji – pre-Harappan site in Sindh (Pakistan). Part of Early Harappan phase.

(d) Desalpur ✗ Desalpur is a Harappan site in Gujarat, India.

Which one among the following motifs does not appear on Harappan seals?

- a) Humped Bull
- b) Elephant
- c) Lion
- d) Crocodile

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) Lion**

✎ Explanation:

(c) Lion ✓ (Not on seals) Lion does NOT appear on Harappan seals. This is a key fact for UPSC.

(a) Humped Bull ✗ The humped bull (Indian Zebu) is one of the most common motifs on Harappan seals.

(b) Elephant ✗ Elephant appears on Harappan seals including the famous Pashupati seal.

💡 **On seals: One-horned bull, buffalo, tiger, rhino, goat, elephant – Horse & Lion are ABSENT.**

From which one of the following factory sites were limestone and chert blades mass produced

and sent to various Harappan settlements in Sindh?

- a) Sukkur and Rohri Hills
- b) Khetri in Rajasthan
- c) Chagai Hills
- d) Hills of Baluchistan

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) Sukkur and Rohri Hills**

✎ Explanation:

(a) Sukkur and Rohri Hills ✓ Located in Sindh (Pakistan) – major factory sites where limestone and chert blades were mass produced and sent to Harappan settlements.

(b) Khetri ✗ Khetri (Rajasthan) is associated with copper mining – not chert/limestone blade production.

(c) Chagai Hills ✗ Chagai Hills is in Balochistan – known for mineral resources, not a Harappan blade factory.

🔗 **Chert blades = Sukkur & Rohri Hills | Copper = Khetri (Rajasthan) – Classic UPSC trap!**

Who among the following archaeologists was the first to identify similarities between

a pre-Harappan culture and the mature Harappan culture?

- a) Amalananda Ghosh
- b) Rakhaladas Banerji
- c) Daya Ram Sahni
- d) Sir John Marshall

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) Amalananda Ghosh**

✎ Explanation:

(a) Amalananda Ghosh ✓ First to identify links between pre-Harappan and mature Harappan cultures. He excavated Kalibangan (1953).

(b) Rakhaladas Banerji ✗ RD Banerji excavated Mohenjo-Daro in 1922 – did not connect pre-Harappan cultures.

(c) Daya Ram Sahni ✗ Dayaram Sahni excavated Harappa in 1921 – the first Harappan excavation.

(d) Sir John Marshall ✗ John Marshall was ASI Director General who confirmed the civilization in 1930.

In the citadel and lower-town areas of which one of the following Harappan cities

have several large cisterns and reservoirs been found?

- a) Banawali
- b) Mohenjodaro
- c) Dholavira
- d) Rakhigarhi

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) Dholavira**

✎ Explanation:

(c) Dholavira ✓ Dholavira had multiple large cisterns and reservoirs in both the citadel and lower town areas – unique to this site.

(a) Banawali ✗ Banawali is known for clay plough model and high quality barley – not reservoirs.

(b) Mohenjodaro ✗ Mohenjo-Daro had the Great Bath – but NOT a network of cisterns and reservoirs.

🏰 **Dholavira = Water harvesting + Reservoirs + Sandstone + UNESCO Heritage (2021) + 3-part city**

Why was Dholavira in the news recently?

- a) Skeletons discovered at this site
- b) For its conservation efforts
- c) For the discovery of gold and precious stones at this site
- d) It received the UNESCO World Heritage Tag

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) It received the UNESCO World Heritage Tag**

✎ Explanation:

(d) UNESCO World Heritage Tag ✓ Dholavira (Gujarat) was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2021 – India's 40th World Heritage Site.

(a) Skeletons ✗ No mass skeletal discoveries were reported at Dholavira recently.

(c) Gold & precious stones ✗ No such discovery was the reason for it being in the news.

💡 **Dholavira = Gujarat | Rann of Kutch | UNESCO 2021 | 3-part city | Water harvesting | Sandstone**

The Harappan site at Kot Diji is close to which one of the following major sites of that civilization?

- a) Harappa
- b) Mohenjo-Daro
- c) Lothal
- d) Kalibangan

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (b) Mohenjo-Daro**

✈ Explanation:

(b) Mohenjo-Daro ✓ Kot Diji is situated in Sindh (Pakistan), very close to Mohenjo-Daro – both are in Sindh on the Indus river.

(c) Lothal ✗ Lothal is in Gujarat, India – geographically far from Kot Diji.

(d) Kalibangan ✗ Kalibangan is in Rajasthan, India – not near Kot Diji.

📍 **Kot Diji = Sindh, Pakistan | Pre-Harappan site | Stone houses | Destroyed by fire | Near Mohenjo-Daro**

Which one of the following statements about the Harappan Culture is not correct?

- a) It witnessed the first cities in the subcontinent.
- b) It marks the first use of script, written from right to left.
- c) It marks the earliest known use of iron as a medium for the art of sculpting.
- d) It marks the earliest known use of stone as a medium for the art of sculpting.

✔ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) Iron as a medium for sculpting – NOT CORRECT**

✎ Explanation:

(c) Iron for sculpting ✔ (WRONG statement) Harappans did NOT use iron. Iron came to India ~1000 BCE. Harappans used copper, bronze, stone and terracotta.

(a) First cities ✘ TRUE – Harappan civilisation had the first urban centres in South Asia.

(b) Script R-to-L ✘ TRUE – Harappan script was written right to left (boustrophedon).

💡 **Harappans used: Bronze, Copper, Stone, Terracotta | NEVER iron | Iron Age came AFTER Harappan decline**

Which among the following materials was used in making the Harappan seals?

- a) Sandstone
- b) Lapis lazuli
- c) Jasper
- d) Steatite

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) Steatite**

✎ Explanation:

(d) Steatite ✓ Harappan seals were primarily made of STEATITE (a soft soapstone), fire-hardened with a white lustrous finish.

(a) Sandstone ✗ Sandstone was used at Dholavira for construction – not for seals.

(b) Lapis lazuli ✗ Lapis lazuli was imported from Afghanistan for bead making – not seals.

💡 **Seals = Steatite | Dancing Girl = Bronze | Beads = Agate, Jasper, Carnelian – Memorise these!**

Which one of the following Harappan sites was a specialised centre for making shell objects?

- a) Lothal
- b) Balakot
- c) Amri
- d) Kot Diji

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (b) Balakot**

✈ Explanation:

(b) Balakot ✓ Balakot (Balochistan, Pakistan) – specialised centre for making shell bangles, ladles and ornaments in large quantities.

(a) Lothal ✗ Lothal was a PORT and bead-making centre – not primarily known for shell objects.

(c) Amri ✗ Amri is known as an early Harappan site with distinctive pottery – not shell objects.

💡 **Lothal = Port + Beads | Chanhudaro = Beads + Seals | Balakot = Shell objects – Key site specialisations**

Harappan crafts display an amazing degree of standardization. According to Kenoyer,

what was the possible reason for such an achievement?

- a) Availability of raw materials at local level
- b) Centralized markets for crafts
- c) Specialized training centres for craftsmen
- d) State control

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) State control**

✎ Explanation:

(d) State control ✓ According to Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, remarkable standardisation across Harappan sites was the result of STATE CONTROL over production and distribution.

(a) Raw materials ✗ Raw material availability cannot explain uniform standards across 800,000 sq.km.

(b) Centralized markets ✗ Markets alone cannot explain the strict standardisation seen in weights and bricks.

🔍 **Proof of standardisation: Brick ratio 1:2:4 | Weights in multiples of 16 | Same pottery & seals at all sites**

Consider the following statements:

1. Terracotta models of the plough have been found at sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana).
2. There is evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan associated with the mature phase of Harappan civilization.
3. The ploughed field at Kalibangan had two sets of furrows crossing at right angles suggesting two different crops were grown together.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) None of the above

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) 1 and 3 only**

Statement 1 ✓ **CORRECT** Terracotta plough models found at Cholistan (Pakistan) and Banawali (Haryana).
Statement 2 ✗ **WRONG** Ploughed field at Kalibangan belongs to the PRE-Harappan phase – NOT the mature phase.
Statement 3 ✓ **CORRECT** Kalibangan's ploughed field had two sets of furrows at right angles – two crops grown simultaneously.
✓ Ploughed field = Kalibangan (PRE-Harappan phase) | Clay plough model = Banawali & Cholistan

At which among the following Harappan sites are fire altars found?

- a) Kalibangan
- b) Harappa
- c) Mohenjo-Daro
- d) Rakhi Garhi

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) Kalibangan**

✈ Explanation:

(a) Kalibangan ✓ Fire altars found in the eastern lower mound of Kalibangan (Rajasthan) – evidence of fire worship or Vedic-type rituals.

(b) Harappa ✗ Harappa is known for granaries, coffin burials and Cemetery H – NOT fire altars.

(c) Mohenjo-Daro ✗ Mohenjo-Daro is famous for Great Bath and Great Granary – NOT fire altars.

💡 **Fire Altars found at: Kalibangan & Lothal – CLASSIC UPSC repeat question!**

In the Mesopotamian records, which one of the following terms was used for the Indus Valley (Harappans)?

- a) Dilmun
- b) Meluha
- c) Magan
- d) Failaka

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (b) Meluha**

✈ Explanation:

(b) Meluha ✓ Meluha was the name used in Mesopotamian records for the Indus Valley / Harappan region. Mesopotamia imported copper, ivory, shell, pearls and ebony from Meluha.

(a) Dilmun ✗ Dilmun = Bahrain (Persian Gulf) – an intermediate trading station between Mesopotamia and Harappans.

(c) Magan ✗ Magan = Makran coast / Oman – another intermediate trading station.

🗺 **Trading Route: Mesopotamia ↔ Dilmun (Bahrain) ↔ Makan (Oman) ↔ MELUHA (Indus Valley)**

The cylindrical stone seals were used in which civilization?

- a) Harappan
- b) Egyptian
- c) Roman
- d) Mesopotamian

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) Mesopotamian**

✈ Explanation:

(d) Mesopotamian ✓ Cylindrical seals (rolled to make impressions on clay tablets) were characteristic of Mesopotamian civilization.

(a) Harappan ✗ Harappan seals were SQUARE or rectangular, made of steatite – NOT cylindrical. However, 3 Mesopotamian-type cylindrical seals were found at Mohenjo-Daro.

(b) Egyptian ✗ Egyptian civilisation used hieroglyphic symbols – not cylindrical seals.

🔦 **Harappan seals = Square Steatite | Mesopotamian seals = CYLINDRICAL – Key distinction!**

Which of the following is/are important markers for archaeologists to identify an archaeological site as a centre of craft production?

1. Evidence of raw materials such as stone nodules, whole shells, etc.
2. Geographical expanse of the site
3. Evidence of unfinished objects, rejects and waste material
4. Evidence of variety of pottery

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 4 only
- d) 3 only

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (b) 1 and 3 only**

Match List-I with List-II (Harappan Site – Location):

- A. Nageshwar – 1. Uttar Pradesh B. Alamgirpur – 2. Rajasthan
C. Kalibangan – 3. Saurashtra (Gujarat) D. Rakhigarhi – 4. Haryana

Select the correct answer:

- a) A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4
b) A-4, B-2, C-1, D-3
c) A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3
d) A-3, B-2, C-1, D-4

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4**

- A. Nageshwar → 3. Saurashtra** ✓ Nageshwar is in Saurashtra, Gujarat – known for shell-working.
B. Alamgirpur → 1. Uttar Pradesh ✓ Alamgirpur is in Meerut, UP – the EASTERNMOST Harappan site.
C. Kalibangan → 2. Rajasthan ✓ Kalibangan is in Ganganagar, Rajasthan – on the Ghaggar river.
D. Rakhigarhi → 4. Haryana ✓ Rakhigarhi is in Hissar, Haryana – the LARGEST Harappan site.
📍 **Easternmost = Alamgirpur (UP) | Northernmost = Manda (J&K) | Largest = Rakhigarhi (Haryana)**

Most of the mature Harappan sites in the region of Cholistan had been abandoned during:

- a) c. 2250 BCE
- b) c. 2000 BCE
- c) c. 1800 BCE
- d) c. 1700 BCE

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (c) c. 1800 BCE**

✎ Explanation:

(c) c. 1800 BCE ✓ Most mature Harappan sites in the Cholistan region (Bahawalpur area, Pakistan) were abandoned around 1800 BCE during the Late Harappan decline phase.

(b) c. 2000 BCE ✗ General Harappan decline started ~1900 BCE but Cholistan sites continued a bit longer until ~1800 BCE.

(d) c. 1700 BCE ✗ 1700 BCE is the Cemetery-H culture phase – not the abandonment of mature sites.

🕒 **General Harappan decline = ~1900 BCE | Cholistan abandonment = ~1800 BCE | Full end = ~1300 BCE**

Which of the following is/are the most distinctive artefacts of the Harappan Civilisation?

1. Steatite seal 2. Bricks of a standardised ratio
3. Gold bangles 4. Silver spittoon

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2, 3 and 4
d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (b) 1 and 2 only**

- 1. Steatite seal** ✓ Steatite seals are the MOST iconic and distinctive artefacts – found across all major Harappan sites.
2. Standardised bricks ✓ Uniform brick ratio 1:2:4 found across all sites – proof of standardisation and planning.
3. Gold bangles ✗ Gold jewellery was found but is NOT a distinctive/unique marker of Harappan civilisation.
4. Silver spittoon ✗ No such distinctive artefact is specifically associated with Harappan civilisation.

Which one of the following statements about the Harappan script is NOT correct?

- a) It has about four hundred signs
- b) It was written from right to left
- c) It has been found on bone rods and jewellery
- d) It refers to the people of Meluhha

✔ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) It refers to the people of Meluhha – NOT CORRECT**

✎ Explanation:

(d) NOT correct ✔ Harappan script has NOT been deciphered yet. We CANNOT say it refers to Meluhha – that is a Mesopotamian term, not found in Harappan script.

(a) ~400 signs ✘ TRUE – Harappan script has approximately 400 signs/symbols identified.

(b) Right to left ✘ TRUE – Harappan script was generally written right to left (boustrophedon).

(c) Bone rods & jewellery ✘ TRUE – Script found on seals, bone rods, pottery and jewellery.

Which of the following statements about the Harappa Civilization is/are correct?

1. There is extraordinary uniformity in artefacts as evident in pottery, seals, bricks and weights.
2. The late Harappa sites also maintained the same construction techniques as were used in mature Harappa sites.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (a) 1 only**

Statement 1 ✓ **CORRECT** Mature Harappan phase shows extraordinary uniformity – same brick ratios, pottery styles, seal types and weights (multiples of 16) across all sites.

Statement 2 ✗ **WRONG** In LATE Harappan phase, construction DETERIORATED. Houses were shoddily built with irregular bricks. Uniformity was LOST.

🔗 **Mature Harappan = Uniform & standardised | Late Harappan = Deteriorated construction + Rural**

Which one among the following is not true of bead-making as a salient feature of mature Harappan crafts?

- a) Harappan beads were made of gold, copper, shell, lapis lazuli, ivory and a variety of semi-precious stones
- b) Archaeologists have identified bead-makers' shops on the basis of assemblages of unfinished objects
- c) At Chanhudaro, tools, furnaces and beads in various stages of preparations have been found
- d) The structure at Banawali yielded many beads in finished, semi-finished and unfinished states

✓ **CORRECT ANSWER: (d) Banawali bead structure – NOT TRUE**

(d) Banawali ✓ (NOT true) Banawali is NOT known for bead making. Major bead-making centres were Chanhudaro and Lothal – NOT Banawali.

(a) Bead materials ✗ TRUE – beads made of gold, copper, shell, lapis lazuli, ivory, agate, jasper, carnelian etc.

(b) Bead-makers shops ✗ TRUE – unfinished objects and waste help identify bead-making workshops.

(c) Chanhudaro ✗ TRUE – Chanhudaro had tools, furnaces and beads in various stages of preparation.



Bead factories: CHANHUDARO & LOTHAL | Banawali = Clay plough model & barley – NOT beads

THANK YOU!

PYQs Covered Today:

UPSC CSE

CSE 2025, 2021, 2019 – 3 Questions

UPSC CDS

CDS 2025, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2018, 2017, 2016 – 7 Questions

UPSC NDA

NDA 2025, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2017, 2016, 2015 – 8 Questions

UPSC CAPF

CAPF 2023, 2021, 2020, 2018, 2014 – 6 Questions

 Like |  Subscribe |  Comment your doubts below!

Next Episode: Vedic Culture & Mahajanapadas ॐ