



## UPSC History

Ancient India Series | Episode 2

[Like](#) • [Share](#) • [Subscribe](#) • [Comment Doubts](#)

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

*(Harappan Civilisation – Bronze Age)*

- ✓ Introduction & Chronology
- ✓ Town Planning & Architecture
- ✓ Agriculture & Animals
- ✓ Technology, Craft & Trade
- ✓ Seals, Weights & Society
- ✓ Script & Religion
- ✓ Burial Practices
- ✓ Important Sites (8 key sites)
- ✓ Decline of Harappan Civilisation
- ✓ Late Harappan Phase
- ✓ Harappan vs Mesopotamian
- ✓ Extent & Excavation Timeline
- ✓ Key Facts for Exam
- ✓ Site-wise Quick Revision
- ✓ Mind Map – All-in-One

# Introduction & Chronology

HARAPPAN CIVILISATION - BRONZE AGE | c. 3300 - 1300 BCE

**First Urban Civilisation** in South Asia | Contemporary to **Mesopotamia (Iraq) & Egypt** | Covered **8,00,000 sq.km** (Largest of the 3 civilisations)  
First discovered at Harappa in **1921** by Dayaram Sahni | Also called "**Indus Valley Civilisation**" | Part of India's **Proto-history**

## THREE PHASES OF HARAPPAN CIVILISATION

### Early Harappan

 3300 - 2600 BCE


 Harappa, Amri, Kot Diji

---

Regionalisation Phase – Small settlements, trade network, craft specialisation

### Mature Harappan

 2600 - 1900 BCE

 Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Dholavira

---

Integration Phase – Full urbanisation, writing, uniformity in artefacts, full trade

### Late Harappan

 1900 - 1300 BCE

 Cemetery-H (Harappa), Rangpur, Rojdi

---

Localisation Phase – Decline, abandonment of cities, pastoral mode

# Town Planning & Architecture

GRID SYSTEM • CITADEL • DRAINAGE • BURNT BRICKS

## City Layout

- Grid system – roads cut at right angles
- Citadel (upper town) – ruling class occupied
- Lower town – common people with brick houses
- City divided into many blocks
- No window faced the streets
- Houses often 2+ storeys; bathrooms in most
- Some houses had own wells
- Built on platforms with walled fortifications

## Drainage System

- Most impressive feature of Harappan cities
- Drains made of mortar, lime and gypsum
- Covered with brick or stone slabs
- Connected to main street drains
- Emphasis on HEALTH & HYGIENE
- No other civilisation gave equal importance to sanitation
- Soak jars found in many houses
- Kalibangan – only site with NO drainage system

## Construction

- Burnt bricks (baked) used across all mature sites
- Standardised brick ratio: 1:2:4
- Mud bricks used in early Harappan phase
- Dholavira – large scale use of sandstone
- Kalibangan – only site with decorative bricks in flooring
- Great Bath (Mohenjo-Daro) – remarkable brickwork
- Houses had bathrooms & drainage outlets
- Monotonous style but practical design

# Agriculture & Animal Domestication

FOOD PRODUCTION • WORLD'S FIRST COTTON • GRANARIES

## AGRICULTURE

### Crops grown

Wheat (esp. Mehrgarh), Barley, Peas, Sesame, Mustard, Millets, Rice (Lothal)

### Sowing season

Seeds sown in November (floodwater receded) → Wheat & barley harvested in April

### Tools

Wooden ploughshare used; Clay model of plough found at Banawali

### World's FIRST cotton

Harappans were earliest to produce cotton → Greeks called it 'Sindon' (from Sindh)

### Storage

Surplus grains stored in Granaries – found at Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro & Lothal

### Diet

Milk, curd, non-vegetarian food; fish-eating common; molluscs (coastal Gujarat)

## DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

✓ **Cattle:** Oxen, buffaloes – most common; evidence of bulls on seals

✓ **Asses & Camels:** Used as beasts of burden for transport

✓ **Goat & Sheep:** Commonly domesticated for meat and milk

⚠ **Horse:** Evidence present but NOT in regular use; NOT found on seals

✓ **Pigs & Dogs:** Both domesticated; dogs buried with masters at Burzahom

✓ **Elephants:** Well known in Gujarat region; not domesticated in Mesopotamia

# Technology, Craft & Metallurgy

BRONZE • POTTERY • BEAD MAKING • GOLDSMITHING

## Bronze & Copper

Well acquainted with Bronze (alloy of copper + tin). Made spears, knives, axes. Craftsmen used pure copper & bronze both.

## Bead Making

Experts in bead making. Bead factories found at Chanhudaro & Lothal. Beads made from agate, jasper, chalcedony.

## Spinning & Weaving

Woven cloth found at Mohenjo-Daro. Cotton, silk and wool garments. Evidence of spinning and weaving clearly present.

## Gold & Jewellery

Goldsmiths made silver, gold & precious stone jewellery. Necklaces, bracelets, pendants, brooches excavated.

## Pottery

Potter's wheel in full use. Glossy red ware pottery painted with black designs. Jars, plates, bowls in various shapes.

## Sculpture & Art

Famous 'Bronze Dancing Girl' (Mohenjo-Daro). Stone sculpture of bearded man with embroidered cloak. Mother Goddess terracotta figurines.

# Economy – Trade, Seals & Weights

BARTER TRADE • SEALS • MELUHA • MESOPOTAMIA CONNECT

## TRADE

- ▶ No metallic money – all exchange through BARTER system
- ▶ Ancient name of Indus region: MELUHA (mentioned in Mesopotamian records)
- ▶ Intermediate trading stations: DILMUN (Bahrain) and MAKAN (Makran coast, Oman)
- ▶ Mesopotamia IMPORTED from Harappans: copper, ivory, shell, pearls, ebony
- ▶ Mesopotamia EXPORTED to Harappans: garments, wool, perfume, leather, silver
- ▶ Inland transport: Bullock carts (primary mode)

## SEALS

- ▶ ~2000 seals found – greatest artistic creation
- ▶ Animals: one-horned bull, buffalo, tiger, rhino, goat, elephant (NO horse)
- ▶ 3 Mesopotamian-type cylindrical seals at Mohenjo-Daro
- ▶ Pashupati Mahadeva seal – most famous (surrounded by elephant, tiger, rhino, buffalo, deer)

▶ 1398 seals at Mohenjo-Daro alone (56% of total)  
UPSC History | Indus Valley Civilization

## WEIGHTS & MEASURES

- ▶ Weights based on multiples of 16: 16, 64, 160, 320, 640
- ▶ Foot = 37.6 cm | Cubit = 51.8 – 53.3 cm
- ▶ Shell scale – Mohenjo-Daro
- ▶ Shell object (measuring angles) – Saurashtra

▶ Ivory scale – Lothal

▶ Copper scale – Harappa

# Society & Script

MATRIARCHAL SOCIETY • PICTOGRAPHIC SCRIPT • BOUSTROPHEDON

## SOCIETY

**Three social sections:** Elite (citadel) | Middle class merchants | Labourers (lower town)

**Nature:** Believed to be MATRIARCHAL – large number of female terracotta figurines (Mother Goddess)

**Dress:** Cotton, silk, wool garments. Men wore cloth wrapped around lower body, one end over left shoulder

**Woven cloth:** Fragment found at Mohenjo-Daro – evidence of spinning & weaving

**Hair dressing:** Both men and women – evident from figurines at different sites

**Food:** Milk, curd, non-veg; fish eating common

**Urban society:** Divided by occupation and wealth, not caste

## SCRIPT

**Type:** NOT alphabetical – PICTOGRAPHIC & LOGOSYLLABIC (each symbol = word/syllable)

**Direction:** BOUSTROPHEDON – right to left and left to right in alternate lines

**Status:** NOT YET DECIPHERED – major mystery of Harappan civilisation

**Medium:** Mostly written on seals

**Disappeared:** Around c. 1700 BCE – did not percolate downwards

**Cultural significance:** Common script across all sites → points to great cultural integration

**Symbols:** Graphic characters/symbols used to convey ideas – over 400 signs identified

# Religion & Burial Practices

MOTHER GODDESS • PASHUPATI • THREE BURIAL TYPES

## RELIGION

### Mother Goddess

Cardinal feature of Harappan religion. Large number of terracotta female figurines excavated. Earth worshipped as fertility goddess – similar to Egyptian worship of Nile goddess Isis.

### Linga & Yoni

Worship of stones in form of linga (phallus) and yoni (fertility). Terracotta piece from Kalibangan shows linga & yoni together.

### Pashupati Mahadeva

Famous seal shows a yogi surrounded by elephant, tiger, rhino, buffalo, deer. Likely proto-Shiva. Bulls/oxen on seals also indicate worship of Shiva.

### Yoga & Fire Rituals

Figurines in yogic asanas. Fire altars found at Kalibangan and Lothal. Great Bath used for ritual/ceremonial bathing by ruling & priestly classes.

## BURIAL PRACTICES

**Complete Burial:** Burial of the whole body (most common)

**Post-Cremation:** Cremation → ashes buried. Found at Mohenjo-Daro

**Grave goods:** Food, pottery & other items placed with the body

**Fractional Burial:** Body exposed to wild beasts/birds → remaining bones collected & buried

**Direction:** Dead placed in NORTH-SOUTH direction

**Special Burials:** Coffin burials – Harappa | Double burial (male+female) – Lothal | Urn burials – Kalibangan

# Major Harappan Sites – Pakistan

HARAPPA • MOHENJO-DARO • CHANHUDARO • KOT-DIJI • SUKTAGENDOR

## Harappa

Ravi R.

📍 Punjab, Pakistan | Dayaram Sahni (1921)

- ▶ Two rows of 6 granaries
- ▶ Evidence of coffin burial (only here)
- ▶ Direct trade with Mesopotamia
- ▶ Post-cremation burial most numerous
- ▶ Cemetery R-37 & Cemetery-H
- ▶ Virgin goddess seal
- ▶ Barley in wooden mortar, vanity box

## Mohenjo-Daro

Indus R.

📍 Sindh, Pakistan | RD Banerjee (1922), E.Mackay & John Marshall (1930)

- ▶ Great Bath – largest public building
- ▶ Great Granary + Assembly Hall
- ▶ Bronze Dancing Girl
- ▶ Stone bearded man sculpture
- ▶ Pashupati Mahadeva seal
- ▶ Fragment of woven cotton cloth
- ▶ Mass death skeletons found

## Chanhudaro

Indus R.

- ▶ ONLY Harappan city WITHOUT a citadel
- ▶ Industrial town – artisans centre
- ▶ Bead factory (beads, seals, ornaments)
- ▶ No fortified structure

## Kot-Diji

Sindh R.

- ▶ Pre-Harappan site
- ▶ Houses made of stone
- ▶ City destroyed by force or fire
- ▶ Fortified settlement – upper citadel + lower town

## Suktagedor

Dasht/Dashak R.

- ▶ Evidence of trade with Babylon
- ▶ Originally a PORT town
- ▶ Later cut off from sea due to coastal uplift

# Major Harappan Sites – India

LOTHAL • DHOLAVIRA • KALIBANGAN • BANAWALI • RAKHIGARHI • SURKOTADA

## Lothal

📍 Gujarat | S.R.Rao (1957)

- ▶ ONLY PORT SITE of Harappan civilisation
- ▶ Dockyard – sea trade centre
- ▶ Double burial (male+female together)
- ▶ Lower part of city is walled
- ▶ Fire altars present
- ▶ Mesopotamian & Bahraini seal found
- ▶ Terracotta model of ship
- ▶ Rice husk found (only 2 places)

## Banawali (Haryana)

📍 Haryana (Hisar)

- ▶ Pre-Harappan + Mature + Late Harappan all 3 phases
- ▶ Clay model of plough
- ▶ High quality barley

## Dholavira

📍 Gujarat (Rann of Kutch) | J.P.Joshi (1990-91)

- ▶ THREE parts: Citadel + Middle town + Lower town
- ▶ Unique WATER HARVESTING system
- ▶ Giant water reservoir + check dams + stadium
- ▶ Large scale use of SANDSTONE (not mud bricks)
- ▶ Harappan script inscription on a SIGNBOARD (10 large signs)
- ▶ Bronze animal figurines; stone sculpture of mongoose

## Rakhigarhi (Haryana)

📍 Haryana (Hissar)

- ▶ LARGEST Indus valley site in the world (~550 ha)
- ▶ All 3 phases of Harappan culture
- ▶ 40 human remains found

## Kalibangan (Black Bangles)

📍 Rajasthan (Ganganagar) | Amlananand Ghosh (1953), BB Lal & BK Thapar (1961)

- ▶ Fire altars in eastern lower mound
- ▶ Ploughed field surface (pre-Harappan)
- ▶ NO drainage system
- ▶ ONLY site with decorative bricks in flooring
- ▶ Burials in circular & rectangular graves
- ▶ Cylindrical Mesopotamian-style seal
- ▶ Linga & Yoni piece found here

## Surkotada (Gujarat)

📍 Gujarat (Bhuj)

- ▶ Remains of HORSE BONES found (important!)
- ▶ Only site with horse evidence

# The Great Bath & The Great Granary

## MOHENJO-DARO'S ICONIC STRUCTURES – DIRECT UPSC QUESTIONS

### THE GREAT BATH – Mohenjo-Daro

- Situated in the CITADEL part of the town
- Largest and most important public building
- Big well in adjacent room – supplied water to the bath
- Drains connected for inlet and outlet of water
- Ring of rooms (big and small) + corridors around it
- Three sides had galleries for spectators
- Used exclusively by the RULING & PRIESTLY CLASS
- Made of remarkable, watertight brickwork
- Bitumen used to make it watertight
- Believed to be used for ritual/ceremonial bathing
- Example of advanced engineering & civic planning

### GRANARIES

**Harappa:** Two rows of SIX granaries (12 total) with circular brick threshing floor in south

**Mohenjo-Daro:** Great Granary – largest structure in the city; near the Great Bath

**Lothal:** Warehouse building in the citadel area served as granary

**Purpose:** Storage of surplus grain to feed urban population

**Significance:** Proves advanced administrative system & surplus agricultural economy

**Location:** Always in or near the citadel – controlled by ruling/elite class

**Construction:** Raised platforms for ventilation to prevent grain from rotting

# Decline of Harappan Civilisation

c. 1900 BCE – NO SINGLE AGREED CAUSE – MULTIPLE THEORIES

Harappan decline is roughly dated at 1900 BCE. Historians have proposed multiple theories – no unanimous agreement.

1

## Aryan Invasion

Aryans invaded and destroyed Harappan cities. Archaeological proof: skeletal remains with injuries from sharp weapons at Mohenjo-Daro. Aryans knew iron weapons; Harappans did not.

2

## Epidemic

Uncontrollable epidemic (disease) wiped out the urban population due to lack of medical facilities. Supported by mass burial evidence.

3

## Earthquake

Harappan area lay under seismographic zones. Repeated vibrations eroded buildings. The earthquake theory is considered one of the most important causes.

4

## Floods

Massive and frequent floods in the Indus river. Proven by silt clay covering collapsed houses at Mohenjo-Daro. People fled inundated areas permanently.

5

## Less Rainfall / Climate Change

Fall in average rainfall led to desert-like conditions. Decline in agriculture → trade collapse → people migrated to other regions.

6

## Change in River Course

The Ghaggar-Hakra river changed course, increasing aridity. The site where Harappan culture once flourished is a DESERT today.

# Late Harappan Phase (c. 1900 – 1300 BCE)

POST-URBAN PHASE • LOCALISATION ERA • 5 GEOGRAPHICAL ZONES

## FIVE GEOGRAPHICAL ZONES OF THE POST-URBAN PHASE

### West Punjab Phase

Cemetery-Harappan culture

### East Punjab Phase

Extended Harappan settlements

### Jhukar Phase

Sites: Jhukar, Chanhudaro, Amri

### Rangpur Phase

Kutch, Saurashtra, mainland Gujarat

### Ganga-Yamuna Doab Phase

Eastern migration of Harappan people

## KEY FEATURES OF LATE HARAPPAN PHASE

- ▶ More sites in number but SMALLER, more rural → shift from urban to rural lifestyle
- ▶ Pottery: LESS BRIGHT, less intricate designs; mostly PAINTED GREY WARE (PGW); thicker and sturdier pots
- ▶ Post-urban Harappans: rural life → agriculture, stock raising, hunting and fishing
- ▶ END of Harappan trade with West Asian centres
- ▶ Arrival of new group with distinct burial practices → 'CEMETERY H' culture (Late Siswal Culture)
- ▶ Beginning of DOUBLE CROPPING: Wheat & barley (winter) + Millets & sorghum (summer)
- ▶ Declining culture also called 'SUB-INDUS CULTURE'
- ▶ NO tools for measurements found in this phase
- ▶ Phase was mainly CHALCOLITHIC in nature
- ▶ Disappearance of seals, weights, long-distance trade, craft specialisation, writing

# Harappan vs Mesopotamian Civilisation

## COMPARISON TABLE - DIRECT UPSC MCQ SOURCE

Feature	Harappan Civilisation	Mesopotamian / Egyptian
Location	Banks of Indus & Ghaggar-Hakra	Tigris & Euphrates (Meso)   Nile (Egypt)
Town Planning	GRID system; excellent drainage; scientific layout	Haphazard, unplanned growth of towns
Area	~8,00,000 sq.km - LARGEST of 3 civilisations	Comparatively smaller area
Script	Pictographic; Boustrophedon; NOT YET deciphered	Cuneiform (Meso) & Hieroglyphics (Egypt) - both deciphered
Script Medium	Mostly written on seals	Meso → clay tablets   Egypt → papyrus sheets
Unique Feature	Expert pottery & seal making; systematic drainage	No such equivalent feature
Rice & Elephants	Produced rice (Gujarat); domesticated elephants	Neither rice nor elephants in Mesopotamia
Decline	Around 1900 BCE	Continued to exist after 1900 BCE
Trade name	Called 'MELUHA' in Mesopotamian records	Traded via DILMUN (Bahrain) & MAKAN (Oman)
Money	No metallic money - BARTER system	Some forms of standard exchange used

# Extent of Civilisation & Excavation History

BOUNDARIES • KEY EXCAVATORS • CHRONOLOGY



## EXTENT OF HARAPPAN CIVILISATION

**North:** Manda (Jammu & Kashmir)

**South:** Daimabad (Maharashtra) / Narmada estuary

**West:** Suktagendor (Makran coast, Balochistan)

**East:** Alamgirpur (Meerut, UP)

**Shape:** Triangular in shape

**Area:** ~8,00,000 sq.km – largest 3rd millennium BCE civilisation



## CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EXCAVATIONS

1829	Charles Masson	Came across Harappa – wrongly identified it as Sangala
1856	Alexander Cunningham (1st ASI Director)	Visited Harappa; wrongly concluded it was a Buddhist monastery
1921	Dayaram Sahni	Began excavating Harappa on banks of Ravi river
1922	Rakhal Das Banerjee, John Marshall	Found seals at Mohenjo-Daro – confirmed single archaeological culture
1931	N.G.Mazumdar	Excavated Chanhudaro
1946	R.E.M. Wheeler	Excavated Harappa and Kot Diji deposits
1955	S.R.Rao	Began excavations at Lothal, Gujarat
1960	BB Lal & BK Thapar	Began excavations at Kalibangan
1990	J.P. Joshi / R.S. Bisht	Began excavations at Dholavira

# Site-wise Quick Revision – Must Know Facts

## 1 LINER PER SITE – READ BEFORE EXAM

Site	State/Country	River	KEY Unique Feature
Harappa	Punjab, Pakistan	Ravi	2 rows of 6 granaries; Coffin burial (only here); 1st excavation (1921)
Mohenjo-Daro	Sindh, Pakistan	Indus	Great Bath; Bronze Dancing Girl; Pashupati seal; Mound of the Dead
Chanhudaro	Sindh, Pakistan	Indus	ONLY site without citadel; Bead factory; Industrial town
Lothal	Gujarat, India	Bhogava	ONLY PORT; Dockyard; Double burial; Ivory scale; Rice husk
Dholavira	Gujarat, India (Rann of Kutch)	Luni	3-part city; Giant water reservoir; Sandstone; Script signboard
Kalibangan	Rajasthan, India	Ghaggar	Fire altars; NO drainage; Decorative bricks in flooring; Ploughed field
Banawali	Haryana, India	Rangoi	Clay plough model; All 3 phases; High quality barley
Rakhigarhi	Haryana, India	Drishadvati	LARGEST site (~550 ha); All 3 phases; 40 human remains
Surkotada	Gujarat, India (Bhuj)	-	Horse bones found (only site with horse remains)
Kot-Diji	Sindh, Pakistan	Sindh	Pre-Harappan site; Stone houses; Destroyed by fire/force
Suktagedor	Balochistan, Pakistan	Dashak	PORT site; Trade with Babylon; Later cut off from sea
Rangpur	Gujarat, India	Madar	Rice husks found; Yellow & grey pre-Harappan pottery

# THANK YOU!

---

## Topics Covered Today:

- ✓ Introduction & Chronology (3 Phases)
- ✓ Town Planning, Drainage & Architecture
- ✓ Agriculture, Animals & Technology
- ✓ Trade, Seals, Weights & Economy
- ✓ Society, Script & Religion
- ✓ Burial Practices
- ✓ 8+ Major Sites (India & Pakistan)
- ✓ Great Bath & Granaries
- ✓ Decline – 6 Theories
- ✓ Late Harappan Phase & Comparison Table
- ✓ Extent, Excavation Timeline
- ✓ Site-wise Quick Revision Table

---

 Like |  Subscribe |  Comment your doubts below!

Next Episode: Vedic Culture & Mahajanapadas ॐ