UNIT 5 ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS—INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indus Valley in the Indian sub-continent was one of the early centres where man settled down and progressed to lead a highly civilized life. Geographical factors like climate, fertility of the soil and the physical features greatly contributed to the progress and development of man there. This civilization, familiar to the world as the Indus Valley Civilization or the Harappan Culture, flourished about 5000 years ago. In this unit, you will get an insight into the various aspects of this civilization and the objectives of teaching this topic at the secondary level and also the strategies through which various aspects of the Indus Valley Civilization can be taught in the classroom. The unit also deals with the evaluation items which can be used by the teachers.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:
- explain various aspects of the achievements of the people of the Indus Valley;
- identify the major concepts, terms and teaching points required to be taught;
- identify the specific objectives of teaching those concepts and terms;
- select appropriate and effective instructional strategies to achieve expected behavioural changes;
5.3 CONTENT

5.3.1 Indus Valley, Home of a Civilization

Look at the course of the river Indus on the map of the Indian sub-continent. It originates in the Himalayas, flows west initially and then southwards towards the Arabian sea. This river valley was the home of one of the early civilizations of the world. It was at the beginning of this century that the remains of the Indus Valley Civilization were discovered. Some of the sites discovered revealed the existence of a highly advanced people thousands of years ago in this region. These people had achieved a high degree of material life with varied occupations and complex institutions. Therefore, this early culture is described as a civilization.

5.3.2 Why is it called Harappan Culture?

Initially historians called this civilization the Indus Valley Civilization. But of late historians prefer to call it the Harappan Culture. Can you think of reasons for this change?

Most of the sites of this civilization discovered earlier were in the Indus Valley only. The sites included Harappa and Mohenjodaro. But in recent years, a large number of sites belonging to this civilization have been found in areas far away from the Indus Valley. For example, the sites at Kalibangan and Lothal revealed features similar to those of the Indus Valley. Therefore, historians feel that the name Indus Valley Civilization is not appropriate. Further, most of these sites have many similarities to the urbanised culture of the people of Harappa, the first site of this culture to be discovered in 1921. Therefore, this civilization is called the Harappan Culture.

5.3.3 Extent of the Harappan Culture

Fig. 5.1: Extent of the Harappan Culture
The shaded area is the extent of the Harappan Culture. It covered parts of Punjab, Haryana, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the fringes of western Uttar Pradesh. It extended from Jammu in the north to the Narmada estuary in the south and from the Makran coast of Baluchistan in the west to Meerut in the north-east. It covered an area of about 1,299,600 square kilometres. It covered a much larger area than the ancient Egyptian or Mesopotamian culture did.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answers.
    b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. List the names of some other early civilizations of the world.

2. Make a list of the different sites of the Harappan Culture.

5.3.4 Antiquity of the Civilization

The Harappan Culture existed between 2500 B.C and 1800 B.C. Its mature phase lay between 2200 B.C and 2000 B.C. The Harappan Culture is a bronze age civilization. Copper and bronze tools were used extensively during that period.

5.3.5 Geographical Factors which helped the growth of this Civilization

The geographical conditions in the Indus Valley must have been quite conducive for human settlement and progress. This region today is very dry and not too fit for human habitation. What makes us believe that 5000 years ago it was quite different? The Indus seals are found to have figures of a variety of plants and animals which can exist only in moderately wet conditions. Therefore, it is assumed that the climatic conditions were quite moderate. Added to this, the vast plains along the Indus were very fertile. The floods deposited rich alluvial soil on these plains every year and irrigated the lands. These geographical factors greatly helped the prosperity of Indus habitations.

5.3.6 Town Planning

One of the most outstanding features of the Indus cities was that they were well planned. The excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro have shown a lot of evidence of this. The city had two parts, i.e., the citadel and the outer city. The citadel was built on an elevated area. The outer city was at a lower level. The roads were wide and straight cutting each other at right angles. They also had a perfect drainage system. Each house had a well constructed sink from which water flowed into the underground drains. These drains along the road were covered by loose bricks. Houses were of different types, small and large. Burnt bricks were extensively used. Houses were also provided with wells and bathrooms.

The other important structures found in the Indus cities include the Great Bath and pillared hall at Mohenjodaro, the dockyard at Lothal and the granary at Harappa. These structures stand testimony to the architectural skills of the Indus people.
5.3.7 Social Life

a) Social classes: The fact that there were different types of houses indicates that there were different social classes. Trading being the major activity, the merchants seem to have formed the upper class. The artisans and farmers might be the common people.

b) Dress: No definite account is available about the type of dresses used by the Indus people. The discovery of a number of spindles suggests the use of cotton and woollen fabrics. The bronze statues too give some information about the dress of the people. The women wore a skirt and an upper garment. Men wore a band of cloth around their loin and a loose garment over their shoulders.
c) **Ornaments**: A large number of ornaments like necklaces, armlets, finger-rings, bangles, etc., have been found from these sites. These were made of gold, silver, ivory and precious stones. Some of the ornaments were also made of shells, bones, copper and bronze. It appears that both men and women wore ornaments. The statues of a dancing girl and a bearded man suggest that these people used hair pins and knew different hair styles.

d) **Recreation and amusements**: The people of Harappa seem to have had a great liking for dance and music. They were also familiar with indoor games like dice. A large number of terracotta toys were found in Mohenjodaro.

### 5.3.8 Economic Conditions

a) **Agriculture**: Agriculture was the main occupation of the Indus people. They grew wheat, barley, peas and in some places rice. They not only produced enough for themselves but also for trade. They did not irrigate their lands by canals. The annual flood provided enough moisture to grow crops. Fields were ploughed using a wooden ploughshare. We are not sure whether animals were used.

b) **Domestication of animals**: On the basis of the Indus seals, it can be said that a large number of animals including goats, buffaloes, oxen, elephants, dogs and camels were domesticated. But the Harappans seem not to have been familiar with the horse.

c) **Crafts**: The Harappan people were good craftsmen. Bronze work had reached a degree of perfection. Brick-making and masonry were other important occupations. Pottery made on potter's wheel was decorated with different designs and painted red and black. Spinning and weaving too were a common craft.

d) **Trade**: The urban culture and highly specialised manufacturing activity suggest that the Harappan cities had a flourishing trade. There was flourishing internal trade between the cities. The river Indus served as the high waterway through which most of this trade was carried out.

They also traded with Mesopotamian cities. Many Harappan seals have been found from Mesopotamian cities. They exported grain, jewellery and pottery and imported thin copper and precious stones.

### 5.3.9 Art of Writing

The Indus seals are a unique source available to us to know about the Harappan culture. They are small rectangular tablets of terracotta on which some figures of plants, animals, etc. are drawn. There is some kind of pictorial writing too on them. About 1500 such seals have been found so far. Since this pictorial script has not been deciphered yet our knowledge about the Harappans is largely limited to those pictures only.

![Fig. 5.4: Seals from Kalibangan](image-url)
5.3.10 Religious Practices

We do not have any specific information about the religious beliefs of the Harappan people. However, on the basis of archaeological finds we can come to certain conclusions. No temples have been found from any of the Harappan sites. Figurines resembling a female deity have been found. They suggest worship of Mother Goddess. A seal with a male figure sitting in a logic posture with a trident-like headgear, surrounded by animals, has been found. This has a lot of similarities with Shiva. From this it is figured that the Harappans might be worshipping Shiva.

5.3.11 Political Organisation

As in the case of religion, we are equally ignorant of the political life of the Harappans. One thing we can be sure of is that absence of temples suggests this. Since trading was the major activity, political authority might have been in the hands of the urban trading class.
5.3.12 Decline

The Harappan Culture lasted for about a thousand years and collapsed by about 1800 BC. This coincides with the advent of the Aryans in India. The exact reason for the decline of this civilization is not known. These cities might have got destroyed in conflicts with the Aryans. But the generally accepted view among historians is that a gradual change in climatic conditions rendered the region inhospitable and caused its decline. Some people also believe that natural calamities like floods or earthquakes might have caused its destruction.

Check Your Progress

Note: Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

3. State whether the following statements are true or false.
   
i) The Indus people irrigated their lands through canals. T/F
   
   ii) The horse was not known to the Harappan people. T/F
   
   iii) The Harappan people used potters' wheel to make pottery. T/F
   
   iv) The Harappan people had trade links with Mesopotamia. T/F

5.4 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

The instructional strategy for this unit includes instructional objectives, teaching-learning activities and evaluation of student performance.

5.4.1 Instructional Objectives

The main instructional objective is to enable the student to recognise the achievements of the people of the Harappan Culture in various fields. To this end, they should be able to:

- recognise the extent of the spread of the Harappan Culture;
- draw the map of India and mark the areas covered by this Culture;
- recognise the period of the Harappan Culture;
identify the relationship between the geographical factors and the prosperity of the Harappan cities;

draw inferences and generalisations about their social, economic and political life on the basis of archaeological evidence;

formulate a hypothesis about the causes of the decline of the Harappan Culture;

collect and display pictures and charts and specimens of the archaeological findings;

5.4.2 Teaching-Learning Activities

In the preceding pages you have recognised - what is to be taught and why it is to be taught. In this section you will learn how it is to be taught. There is no hard and fast rule about the method to be adopted by a teacher in a classroom. A teacher must be able to select an effective method taking into consideration the resources available to him/her, the nature of the topic, the nature of the learners, the size of the group and the objectives to be achieved. You should remember that there is no single method for instruction. The methods and activities discussed here are only examples. You should be able to think and adopt alternative strategies.

i) Location of Indus Valley

The students are expected to locate the area of the Indus Valley and the extent of the Harappan Culture on a map of the Indian sub-continent. They are also expected to develop the skill of drawing a map and pinpointing the different sites of the Harappan Culture on it.

You may need a physical map of the Indian sub-continent. You could introduce the topic through a discussion about the rivers of India. Lead them to the river Indus. Ask one of the students to show the river Indus on the map. Mark the area forming the Indus Valley on it. On an outline map mark important sites of the Harappan Culture. Ask the students to draw a map of India and mark the Indus Valley region and major Harappan sites on it. State that this region was the home of an early civilization.

ii) Why is it called Harappan Culture?

The teacher may narrate that civilizations initially developed in river valleys. He may give examples of other river valley civilizations. Ask questions like: “What would you call this civilization?” Students will come out with the answer, ‘the Indus Valley Civilization’. Once again use the map showing the Indus Valley and the sites of the Harappan Culture. Point out that a large number of sites found later are actually far away from the Indus Valley. Then ask: “Is it appropriate to call it the Indus Valley Civilization any longer?” Students will feel otherwise. Narrate that Harappa was the first site discovered. There is a lot of similarities in the culture of the people of Harappa and other sites. Therefore, historians prefer to call it the Harappan Culture. Can you think of any other strategy?

iii) Extent of the Harappan Culture

You may need an outline map of the Indian sub-continent. You have to mark (a) the Indus and its tributaries, (b) the important sites in India and Pakistan; and (c) the entire area of the Harappan Culture, with appropriate symbols. Showing this map ask the students the following questions:

- Name the important sites.
- In which modern state does that place lie?
- What was the north-south and east-west extent of this civilization?

Students must be encouraged to find answers to these questions from the map.

iv) Antiquity of the civilization

It is essential to create a clear awareness in the child about the chronological sequence of historical events. For this an effective tool is the time-line. You could make use of a time-line showing the present day and the beginning and end of the Harappan Culture on it. See the time-line below.
What kind of vegetation is found in such areas? Would such a climate help human habitation? After this the teacher will show a physical map showing the rainfall and the vegetation pattern of this region and elicit information about the present day rainfall and vegetation. Students will recognize that the climate and natural vegetation found in the Indus Valley region in the past and today are quite different.

To bring out the importance of the fertility of the soil, the discussion may be guided on the following pattern:

1. What type of soil is found on the flood plains near rivers?
2. What makes this soil fertile?
3. How productive will the agriculture be in these flood plains?

v) Geographical factors which helped the growth of this civilization

The specific objective here is to enable the students to recognize the influence of geographical factors on the growth of a civilization. The teacher could initiate a discussion on the type of climate that existed in the Indus Valley about 5000 years ago. For this purpose a list of plants and animals that are found in the Indus seals is shown to the class. The teacher may ask questions like:

1. What type of climate is necessary for animals like elephants and rhinos to survive?
2. What kind of vegetation is found in such areas?
3. Would such a climate help human habitation?

After this the teacher will show a physical map showing the rainfall and the vegetation pattern of this region and elicit information about the present day rainfall and vegetation. Students will recognize that the climate and natural vegetation found in the Indus Valley region in the past and today are quite different.

vii) Town planning

The specific objective here is to enable the students to recognize the features of town planning practised by the Harappan people and to compare those with modern town planning.

Fig. 5.7: Time Line
You could start with a discussion on a planned city. Through students' responses list the main features of a planned city of modern times. The discussion should cover areas like roads, drainage, civic amenities, houses, public buildings etc.

After this discussion you could show pictures or film strips on the Harappan town planning relating to its drainage, roads and other structures. Through proper questions and student response, list the features of the Harappan towns.

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<td>3. Make a list of pictures and film strips which you may need to teach the features of town planning of the Harappan cities.</td>
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vii) Social life

The objective here is to enable the students to draw inferences and form generalisations about the social classes, dress, ornaments and recreation and amusements of the Harappan people from the evidence excavated from the Harappan Culture sites. You need to have either the pictures or film strips or clay models of these archaeological finds. The bronze statues of a dancing girl and a bearded man, toys and jewellery are the sources which are of special importance.

Start a discussion on the types of houses. You may adopt the following pattern:

- Are all houses found in the Harappan cities alike?
- What do the small and big houses suggest?
- What groups you think might have formed the upper and the lower classes?

You will be able to make the students conclude that there were different classes. May be the farmers and artisans formed the lower class and the merchants and the ruling group formed the upper class.

Show the pictures/film strips of the bronze statues of Harappa. Ask the following questions:

- Do these pictures give you any idea of the dress worn by the Harappans?
- Is there any difference in the dresses used by men and women?
- Can you explain the type of dresses they wore?
- What material do you think the Harappans used for their dress?

You could also ask the students to make clay models of these bronze statues as a home activity.

Show the pictures / film strips of the Harappans jewellery to the students. You could ask them to list the different types of ornaments found in those pictures. You may also ask them to identify the materials from which those ornaments were possibly made. As a home assignment you may ask them to make a comparative study of the ornaments used today and the Harappan jewellery.

Again, show them the pictures of the terracotta toys. Start a discussion on the purpose of those objects. Allow students to use their imagination. Remember that any reasonable inference / conclusion by the students should be acceptable. You could also point out the figure of the dancing girl and ask questions about the status etc. of women in that society.

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<td>4. Make a list of the pictures / film strips you may need to teach about social classes, dress, ornaments and amusements of the Harappan people.</td>
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viii) Economic conditions

The students are required to recognise the various economic activities undertaken by the people belonging to the Harappan Culture. This could be done by combining discussion and narration. Here there are four broad areas, namely, agriculture, domestication of animals, crafts and trade.
To make the discussion vivid and realistic, you may prepare a chart with information on those areas. An attempt is made here. You can think and prepare in your own way.

![Economic Activities of the Harappans](image)

**Fig. 5.8 : Economic activities of the Harappans**

Using this chart you may ask questions about various economic activities and encourage students to deliberate on them. Some of the questions which may be asked:

- What were the major economic activities during the Harappan civilization?
- What crops were cultivated during that period?
- What animals were domesticated?
- What were the main crafts of the people during those days?
- What type of goods were imported?
- What were the goods exported?

Not all information is available here in this chart, so you may resort to narration wherever necessary. History teachers normally opt for narration. But one should remember that it is not an effective method. The major weakness of narration is that it makes learners passive. It becomes difficult to hold the attention of learners through long spells of narration. Therefore, one should opt for it as a last resort and not as a first choice. It is for this purpose that charts as devised above become quite useful.

ix) **Art of writing**

Students are required to recognize the pattern of writing used by the Harappan people. Since these writings are found in the Harappan seals, the best teaching aid is a model of the Harappan seal. Each student may be asked to bring a handful of clay to the classroom. They may be asked to shape this clay in the form of a seal. They may also be instructed to mark the different figures including the picture writing seen on the model seal. After this activity the teacher may initiate a discussion on the Harappan script with the following question:
Teaching of History

- Can you read these writings?
- What kind of writings are these?
- What may be the purpose of these seals?
- What information can we have, if this script can be read? etc.

x) Religious practices

Though nothing specific is known about the religious beliefs of the Harappans, students should be helped to draw inferences on the basis of some of the archaeological findings. For this purpose, the following approach may be followed: No temples or religious places have been discovered from Harappan cities. What do you think of this? The teacher should have the pictures/film strips of Mother Goddess and Pashupati. Show them to the class. Narrate the unique features of these two findings. Ask, if they can provide any idea about the religious practices of the Harappans. Ask if they can compare it with present day religious practices.

xi) Political organisation

Here too you could follow the same approach as you have adopted to teach about the religious beliefs. Start the discussion on the following pattern.

Since nothing is known about their government, could you conclude that they had no government? If there was a government, what kind of government might they have had? Is it possible to have a well-organised prosperous society without a proper administration? Since it was an urban culture dependent on trade, which class of people might have had political power?

xii) Decline

Since historians are not unanimous about the cause of the decline of this civilization, you should not force any definite view. You must help the students to formulate their own hypotheses. The teacher could at best narrate during the discussion the different theories and also the reasons for not upholding them as conclusive.

Activities

5. Make a list of the Harappan seals when you need to teach the Harappan art of writing.
6. Identify the expected behavioural outcome of the discussion on the topic of religious practices.
7. Identify the expected behavioural outcome of this topic.

5.4.3 Evaluation

Teaching and evaluation go together. Both are purposeful and objective-based activities. Evaluation helps the teacher verify if the desired behavioural outcomes have been achieved. It also enables him to identify the slow learners and to plan appropriate remedial measures. Evaluation has to be continuous and should form a part of the instructional process. Below are listed some of the evaluation items relevant to the unit. As in the case of instructional strategies, the classroom teacher is the one who can finally decide the appropriate items too.

- On an outline map of the Indian sub-continent mark
  a) the Indus and its tributaries.
  b) the area of the Harappan Culture.
  c) important Harappan sites.

- Why is the Indus Valley Civilization called the Harappan Culture?

- The Harappan Culture originated around 2500 BC and ended by _________ BC.

- The Harappan Culture was a _________ age culture. (stone, bronze, iron, neolithic)
• Describe the type of climate that might have existed in the Indus Valley 5000 years ago.
• Make a list of the animals known to the Harappan people.
• How did Harappans irrigate their lands?
• Mention the important features of the Harappan cities.
• What features of the Harappan cities are comparable with those of the modern cities?
• The existence of small and big houses in the Harappan cities suggests the
  a) existence of social classes
  b) existence of different occupations
  c) prosperity of the people
  d) absence of town planning
• The excavation of a large number of spindles suggests that was an important occupation.
  a) Carpentry
  b) Pottery
  c) Spinning and weaving
  d) Metal work
• What ornaments did the Harappan people wear?
• What were the amusements of the Harappan people?
• Name the crops grown by the Harappan people?
• Name the main occupations of the Harappan people?
• Name the goods imported and exported by the people of the Harappan cities.
• Why is our knowledge about the Harappans limited?
• What do you know about the religious beliefs and practices of the Harappans?
• Describe the Harappan seals. How are they useful to us?
• State whether the following statements are true or false
  a) The Harappan people did not know the use of iron.
  b) The Harappan people used horse-drawn chariots.
  c) The Harappan cities were well planned.
  d) The Harappan people used only sun-dried bricks for their houses.
  e) The Great Bath is a unique structure found at Harappa.
  f) The Harappan script has not been deciphered yet.
• What, in your view, was the reason for the decline of the Harappan Culture?

5.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt in detail the various features of the Harappan Culture and how to teach those aspects to your students. You were able to identify the objectives and specific behavioural outcomes you wanted to develop among your students during the course of your teaching. It was also expected that you were able to select and develop suitable evaluation items and teaching aids. You must also have got insight into the mode of organising and guiding students' activities in the classroom.

As already pointed out, the methods discussed are only some illustrations of the ways of teaching. You must be able to devise your own method.
5.6 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

Select another topic and formulate the instructional objectives, list the teaching aids required and the instructional strategy you would adopt.

5.7 POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does one identify the instructional objectives? How do they help in teaching contents of history?
2. How does one select an evaluation item?

5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Egyptian civilization, Mesopotamian civilization, Chinese civilization.
2. Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Kalibangan, Roopar, Rahmandhar, Manda, Gumla, Anu Daro, etc.
3. i) False, ii) True, iii) True, iv) True.

5.9 SUGGESTED READINGS