



Mohenjo-Daro And Harappan Civilization : A Review

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Abstract : India's history and culture is dynamic, spanning back to the beginning of human civilization. It begins with a mysterious culture along the Indus River and in farming communities in the southern lands of India. The history of India is punctuated by constant integration of migrating people with the diverse cultures that surround

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India. Available evidence suggests that the use of iron, copper and other metals was widely prevalent in the Indian sub-continent at a fairly early period, which is indicative of the progress that this part of the world had made. By the end of the fourth millennium BC, India had emerged as a region of highly developed civilization.

Key Words : Mohenjo-Daro And Harappan Civilization, India's history

Introduction : India is a country in South Asia whose name comes from the Indus River. The name 'Bharata' is used as a designation for the country in their constitution referencing the ancient mythological emperor, Bharata, whose story is told, in part, in the Indian epic Mahabharata. According to the writings known as the Puranas (religious/historical texts written down in the 5th century CE) Bharata conquered the whole sub-continent of India and ruled the land in peace and harmony. The land was, therefore, known as Bharatavarsha ('the sub-continent of Bharata'). Human activity in the Indian sub-continent stretches back over 250,000 years and it is, therefore, one of the oldest inhabited regions on the planet.

Archaeological excavations have discovered artifacts used by early humans, including stone tools, which suggest an extremely early date for human habitation and technology in the area. While the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt have long been recognized for their celebrated contributions to civilization, India has often been overlooked, especially in the West, though her history and culture is just as rich.



Mohenjo-Daro And Harappan Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization dates to 5000 BCE and grew steadily throughout the lower Gangetic Valley region southwards and northwards to Malwa. The cities of this period were larger than contemporary settlements in other countries, were situated according to cardinal points, and were built of mud bricks, often kiln-fired. Houses were constructed with a large courtyard opening from the front door, a kitchen/work room for the preparation of food, and smaller bedrooms. Family activities seem to have centred on the front of the house, particularly the courtyard and, in this, are similar to what has been inferred from sites in Rome, Egypt, Greece, and Mesopotamia.

The most famous sites of this period are the great cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa both located in present-day Pakistan (Mohenjo-Daro in the Sindh province and Harappa in Punjab) which was part of India until the 1947 CE partition of the country which created the separate nation. Harappa has given its name to the Harappan Civilization (another name for the Indus Valley Civilization) which is usually divided into Early, Middle, and Mature periods corresponding roughly to 5000-4000 BCE (Early), 4000-2900 BCE (Middle), and 2900-1900 BCE (Mature). Harappa dates from the Middle period (c. 3000 BCE) while Mohenjo-Daro was built in the Mature period (c. 2600 BCE). Harappa was largely destroyed in the 19th century when British workers carried away much of the city for use as ballast in constructing the railroad and many buildings had already been dismantled by citizens of the local village of Harappa (which gives the site its name) for use in their own projects. It is therefore now difficult to determine the historical significance of Harappa save that it is clear it was once a significant Bronze Age community with a population of as many as 30,000 people. Mohenjo-Daro, on the other hand, is much better preserved as it lay mostly buried until 1922 CE. The name 'Mohenjo-Daro' means 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi. The original name of the city is unknown although various possibilities have been suggested by finds in the region, among them, the Dravidian name 'Kukkutarma', the city of the cock, a possible allusion to the site as a center of ritual cock-fighting or, perhaps, as a breeding centre for cocks.



Mohenjo-Daro was an elaborately constructed city with streets laid out evenly at right angles and a sophisticated drainage system. The Great Bath, a central structure at the site, was heated and seems to have been a focal point for the community. The citizens were skilled in the use of metals such as copper, bronze, lead and tin (as evidenced by art works such as the bronze statue of the Dancing Girl and by individual seals) and cultivated barley, wheat, peas, sesame, and cotton. Trade was an important source of commerce and it is thought that ancient Mesopotamian texts which mention Magan and Meluhha refer to India generally or, perhaps, Mohenjo-Daro specifically. Artifacts from the Indus Valley region have been found at sites in Mesopotamia though their precise point of origin in India is not always clear.

The people of the Harappan Civilization worshipped many gods and engaged in ritual worship. Statues of various deities (such as, Indra, the god of storm and war) have been found at many sites and, chief among them, terracotta pieces depicting the Shakti (the Mother Goddess) suggesting a popular, common worship of the feminine principle. In about 1500 BCE it is thought another race, known as the Aryans, migrated into India through the Khyber Pass and assimilated into the existing culture, perhaps bringing their gods with them. While it is widely accepted that the Aryans brought the horse to India, there is some debate as to whether they introduced new deities to the region or simply influenced the existing belief structure. The Aryans are thought to have been pantheists (nature worshippers) with a special devotion to the sun and it seems uncertain they would have had anthropomorphic gods.

At about this same time (c. 1700-1500 BCE) the Harappan culture began to decline. Scholars cite climate change as one possible reason. The Indus River is thought to have begun flooding the region more regularly (as evidenced by approximately 30 feet or 9 metres of silt at Mohenjo-Daro) and the great cities were abandoned. Other scholars cite the Aryan migration as more of an invasion of the land which brought about a vast displacement of the populace. Among the most mysterious aspects of Mohenjo-Daro is the vitrification of parts of the site as though it had been exposed to intense heat which melted the brick and stone. This same phenomenon has been observed at sites such as Traprain Law in Scotland and attributed to the results of warfare.



Speculation regarding the destruction of the city by some kind of ancient atomic blast (possibly the work of aliens from other planets) is not generally regarded as credible.

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