



## 100 years of Discovery of IVC

**For Prelims:** Harappan Civilization, [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#), [Indus Valley Civilization \(IVC\)](#), Aryans

**For Mains:** Key features of [Indus Valley Civilization](#), Town Planning, Religion and Decline of Indus Valley Civilization, Contemporary Civilizations its Key Features

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2024**, marked 100 years since the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization, which was announced by archaeologist Sir John Marshall on **20th September 1924**.

- This civilization spans over 2,000 sites across 1.5 million sq. km in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and is famous for its advanced urban planning and architecture.

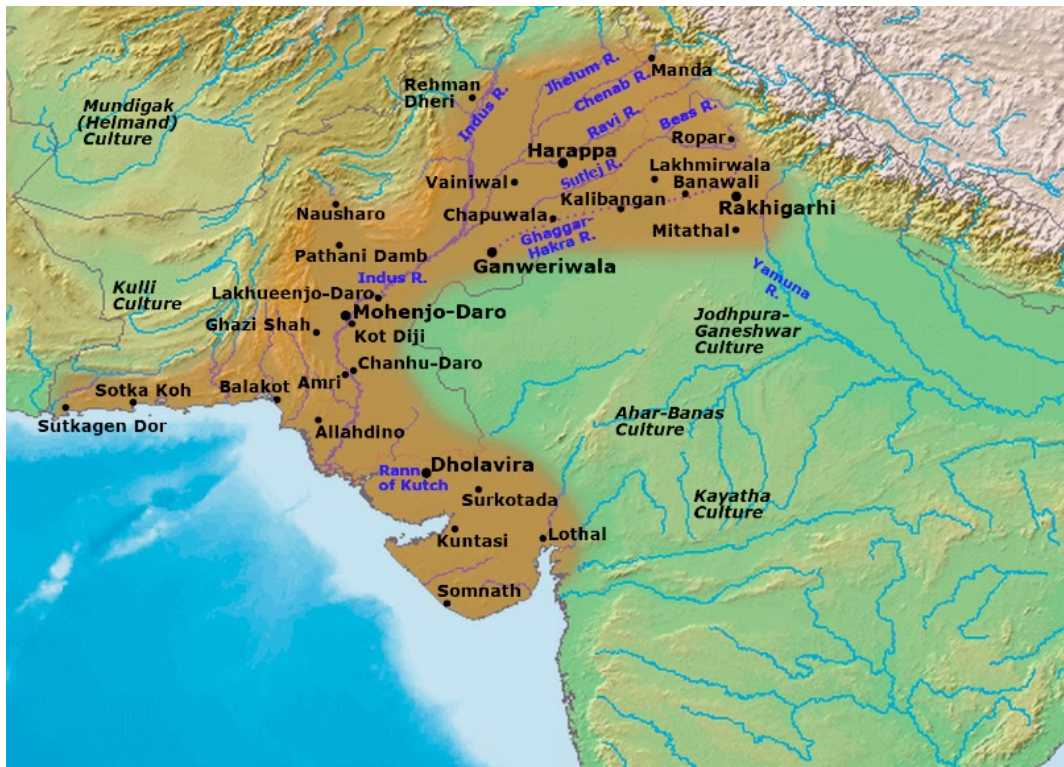
### What was Harappan Civilization?

#### ▪ About:

- The **Harappan Civilization**, also known as the **Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, flourished around **2500 BCE** along the **Indus River**.
- It was the **largest of the four ancient urban civilizations** alongside **Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China**.
- The IVC is classified as a **Bronze-age civilization** due to the discovery of numerous artefacts made from **copper-based alloys**.
- **Daya Ram Sahni** first excavated **Harappa in 1921-22**, and **Rakhal Das Banerji** began excavating **Mohenjo-daro in 1922**.
  - **Sir John Marshall, DG of ASI**, was responsible for the excavations that led to the discovery of **Harappa** and **Mohenjo-Daro** sites of IVC.

#### ▪ Phases:

- **Early phase (3200 BCE to 2600 BCE):** This phase is associated with the Hakra Phase, which was discovered in the Ghaggar-Hakra River Valley. The earliest Indus script dates back to 3000 BC.
- **Mature period (2600 BCE to 1900 BCE):** By 2600 BC, the IVC had reached a mature stage. Early Harappan towns, like **Harappa and Mohenjodaro in Pakistan and Lothal in India**, were growing into major urban centres
- **Late phase (1900 BCE to 1500 BCE):** In this phase, Harappan civilization decayed and collapsed.



## What were the Important Sites of Harappan Civilization?

| Important Sites of IVC       |                        |  |  |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Site                         | Excavated by           | Location   | Important Findings   |
| Harappa                      | Daya Ram Sahni in 1921 | Bank of river Ravi in Montgomery district of Punjab (Pakistan) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandstone statues of Human anatomy</li> <li>• Granaries</li> <li>• Bullock carts</li> </ul>   |
| Mohenjo-Daro (Mound of Dead) | R.D. Banerjee in 1922  | Bank of river Indus in Larkana district of Punjab (Pakistan)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great bath</li> <li>• Granary</li> <li>• Bronze dancing girl</li> <li>• Seal of Pasupathi</li> <li>• Steatite statue of beard man</li> <li>• A piece of woven cotton</li> </ul> |
| Sutkagendor                  | Stein in 1929          | In southwestern Balochistan province, Pakistan on Dast river   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A trade point between Harappa and Babylon</li> </ul>  |
| Chanhudaro                   | N.G. Majumdar in 1931  | Sindh on the Indus river                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bead makers shop</li> <li>• Footprint of a dog chasing a cat</li> </ul>   |

|            |                       |   |   |
|------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| Amri       | N.G. Majumdar in 1935 | On the bank of Indus river                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antelope evidence</li> </ul>   |
| Kalibangan | Ghose in 1953         | Rajasthan on the bank of Ghaggar river      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire altar</li> <li>• Camel's bones</li> <li>• Wooden plough</li> </ul>  |
| Lothal     | R. Rao in 1953        | Gujarat on Bhogva river near Gulf of Cambay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First manmade port</li> <li>• Dockyard</li> <li>• Rice husk</li> <li>• Fire altars</li> <li>• Chess-playing</li> </ul> |
| Surkotada  | J.P. Joshi in 1964    | Gujarat                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bones of horses</li> <li>• Beads</li> </ul>  |
| Banawali   | R.S. Bisht in 1974    | Hisar district of Haryana                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beads</li> <li>• Barley</li> <li>• Evidence of both pre-Harappan and Harappan culture</li> </ul>                       |
| Dholavira  | R.S Bisht in 1985     | Gujarat in Rann of Kachchh                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water harnessing system</li> <li>• Water reservoir</li> </ul>  |

## What were the Key Features of Harappan Civilization?

### ▪ Town Planning:

- The Harappan culture was notable for its **advanced town planning with cities designed in the grid-like layout.**
- Both Harappa and Mohenjodaro featured a **citadel or acropolis**, likely occupied by the **ruling class**.
  - Below these citadels lay the lower towns, consisting of **brick houses** inhabited by common people.
- **Granaries** of large size were used to store grains, and there was **widespread use of burnt bricks**, which is different compared to the dried bricks used in contemporary Egyptian structures.
- Mohenjodaro had an impressive **drainage system**, and almost all houses had courtyards and bathrooms.
- In Kalibangan, many homes even had private wells.
- At sites like **Dholavira** and **Lothal** in Gujarat, the entire settlement was **fortified**, with internal sections divided by walls.

### ▪ Agriculture:

- Harappan villages, primarily located near floodplains, were **highly productive**, yielding crops such as **wheat, barley, peas, sesame, lentils, chickpeas, rai, and mustard.**
- **Millets** were also cultivated, particularly in Gujarat, though rice was rare. The Indus people were among the **first to produce cotton (Greeks called it "Sindon").**
- **While agricultural activity is evidenced by grain remains**, reconstructing specific farming techniques is challenging.
  - In addition to farming, **animal husbandry** was widespread.

### ▪ Economy:

- Trade played a vital role in Harappan life, evident from the widespread use of **seals, a uniform script, and standardised weights** and measures.

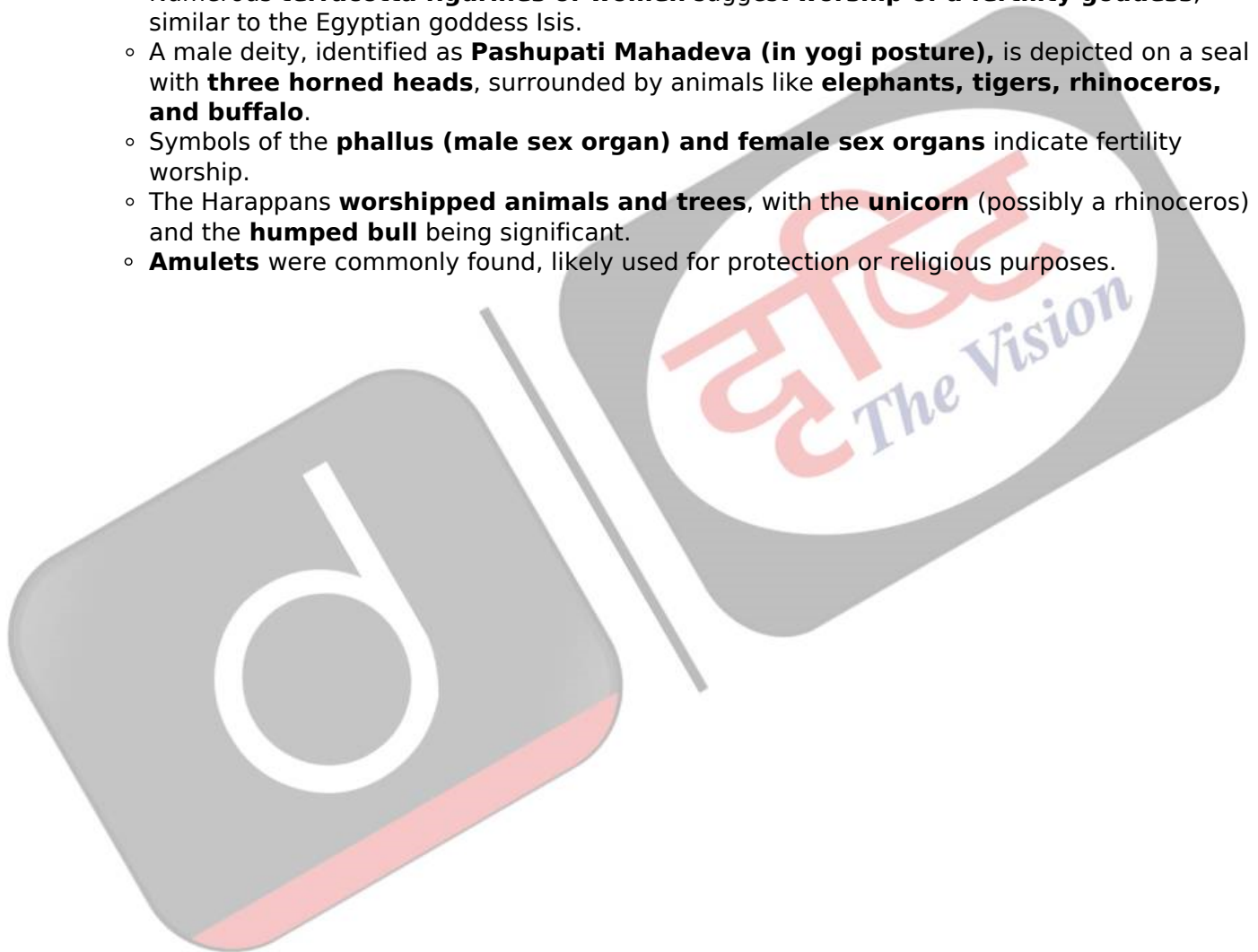
- Major trade items included **stone, metal, and shell**.
- The **barter system** was used, as metal currency did not exist.
- **Navigation** was practised along the Arabian Sea coast.
- A **trading colony in northern Afghanistan** facilitated commerce with Central Asia.
- The Harappans engaged in trade with **Mesopotamia (Tigris-Euphrates region)**.
- **Long-distance trade in lapis lazuli** (blue semi precious stone) likely enhanced the social status of the ruling class.

▪ **Crafts:**

- Harappans were skilled in **bronze manufacturing**, using **copper** from **Rajasthan (Khetri mines)** and tin possibly from Afghanistan.
- **Textile impressions** on objects suggest a knowledge of weaving.
- **Key crafts** included boat-making, bead-making, seal-making, and terracotta production.
- Goldsmiths **crafted jewellery** from gold, silver, and precious stones.
- The potter's wheel was widely used, producing **glossy, distinctive pottery**.

▪ **Religion:**

- Numerous **terracotta figurines of women** suggest **worship of a fertility goddess**, similar to the Egyptian goddess Isis.
- A male deity, identified as **Pashupati Mahadeva (in yogi posture)**, is depicted on a seal with **three horned heads**, surrounded by animals like **elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, and buffalo**.
- Symbols of the **phallus (male sex organ) and female sex organs** indicate fertility worship.
- The Harappans **worshipped animals and trees**, with the **unicorn** (possibly a rhinoceros) and the **humped bull** being significant.
- **Amulets** were commonly found, likely used for protection or religious purposes.



# MAJOR CIVILISATIONS OF THE WORLD

## MESOPOTAMIA, 4000-3500 BC

- ↳ Modern-day Iraq and parts of **Iran, Syria, Kuwait,** and **Turkey**, between **Tigris** and **Euphrates Rivers**
- ↳ Known as **Fertile Crescent/Cradle of civilization**
- ↳ Diverse collection of cultures bound by their script, gods, and views on women
- ↳ **Highly esteemed education system** (law, medicine, and astrology, reflecting rich cultural and religious landscape)
- ↳ Both **men and women were involved in diverse occupations**
- ↳ **Cities built around ziggurats**, step-pyramid temples, honoured their patron deity
- ↳ Cities, made of **sun-dried brick**, were the world's first

## ANCIENT EGYPT, 3100 BC

- ↳ Set along fertile **Nile River**
- ↳ Most known for **pyramids, tombs, and mausoleums** practice of mummification to prepare corpses for afterlife
- ↳ Left legacy of monumental writing and mathematics systems
- ↳ Civilization **ended in 332 BC** with Alexander the Great's conquest

## INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION, 3300 BC

- ↳ Located in modern-day **India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan**
- ↳ Relatively peaceful compared to other ancient civilizations, with little evidence of widespread warfare
- ↳ **Organised city planning**, complete with **uniform baked-brick homes**, a grid structure, and drainage, sewage, and water supply systems
- ↳ **Declined around 1800 BC**, actual reasons behind demise still debated (theories propose Aryan invasion or climatic & natural factors for decline)

## ANCIENT CHINA, 2000 BC

- ↳ Protected by the Himalayan Mountains, Pacific Ocean, and Gobi Desert, and **situated between Yellow and Yangtze rivers**
- ↳ Flourished in isolation from invaders and other foreigners for centuries
- ↳ Generally divided into four dynasties—**Xia, Shang, Zhou, and Qin** - ancient China was ruled by a succession of emperors
- ↳ Credited with developing the **decimal system, abacus, and sundial**, as well as **the printing press**
- ↳ Mobilised populations to build massive infrastructure projects (like Egyptians)



## What were the Possible Reasons for Decline of Harappan Civilization?

- **Invasion Theory:** Some scholars suggest that **Indo-European tribes**, known as the Aryans, invaded and overthrew the IVC. However, evidence of cultural continuity in later societies challenges this abrupt invasion narrative.
- **Natural Environmental Changes:** More widely accepted is the impact of environmental factors.
  - **Tectonic Activity:** Earthquakes may have altered river courses, leading to the drying up of essential water sources.
  - **Changes in Rainfall Patterns:** Shifts in monsoon patterns could have diminished agricultural productivity, resulting in food shortages.
  - **Flooding:** Altered river courses might have caused flooding in key agricultural areas, further threatening the civilization's stability.

## Recent Initiatives Related to IVC Sites

- **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC):** Under the **Sagarmala programme**, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) is **developing a NMHC** at Lothal. It includes a museum, theme parks, a research institute, and more, to showcase India's maritime history and heritage, and attract tourists.
- **Dholavira added to UNESCO's World Heritage list:** In July 2021, Dholavira was named India's 40th [World Heritage Site](#) by [UNESCO](#).
- **Development of Rakhigarhi as an Iconic Site:** Union Budget (2020-21) has proposed to develop Rakhigarhi (Hisar district, Haryana) as an [iconic site](#).

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

#### Q. Regarding the Indus Valley Civilization, consider the following statements: (2011)

1. It was predominantly a secular civilization and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the scene,

2. During this period, cotton was used for manufacturing textiles in India.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: (c)**

**Q. Which of the following characterize/characterises the people of the Indus Civilization? (2013)**

1. They possessed great palaces and temples.
2. They worshiped both male and female deities.
3. They employed horse-drawn chariots in warfare.

**Select the correct statements using the codes given below:**

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

**Ans: (b)**

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### **Mains**

**Q1:** The ancient civilisation in the Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment. **(2015)**

**Q2:** To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to present-day urbanization? Discuss. **(2014)**