



Linguistic Culture of Indus Valley

Why in News

A new research paper has provided some new insight on the **linguistic culture of the [Indus Valley Civilization \(IVC\)](#)**.

- Earlier, a study found that the [diet of the people of IVC had a dominance of meat](#), including extensive eating of beef.
- In July 2021, **UNESCO** announced the Harappan city of [Dholavira in Gujarat as India's 40th world heritage site](#).

Key Points

- **IVC & Dravidian Language:**
 - IVCs have their language roots in **Proto-Dravidian**, which is the ancestral language of all the modern Dravidian languages.
 - The **basic vocabulary items of a significant population of the IVC** must have been proto-Dravidian, or that ancestral Dravidian languages must have been spoken in the Indus Valley region.
 - The speakers of **ancestral Dravidian languages had a greater historic presence in northern India** including the Indus Valley region from where they migrated.
 - Proto-Dravidian was **one among several languages** being spoken in the Indus Valley region.
 - The research claims that there were **more than one or one group of languages spoken** across the one-million square kilometre area of IVC.
- **IVC & Other Civilizations:**
 - Few words in **Akkadian (language spoken in ancient Mesopotamia)** had roots in the Indus Valley.
 - The study took into account the thriving **trade relations between the IVC and the Persian Gulf as well as Mesopotamia**.
 - **Mesopotamian civilizations** formed on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is today Iraq and Kuwait.
 - **Elephant-ivory was one of the luxury goods coveted in the Near East, and archaeological**, and zoological evidence confirms that Indus Valley was the sole supplier of ancient Near East's ivory in the middle-third to early-second millennium BC.
 - Near East, usually the lands around the eastern shores of the **Mediterranean Sea, including northeastern Africa, southwestern Asia, and, occasionally, the [Balkan Peninsula](#)**.
 - Since people of ancient Persia had functioned as **intermediaries between Mesopotamia and IVC traders**, while exporting IVC's ivory, they had arguably **spread the Indic words to Mesopotamia as well**.

Indus Valley Civilisation

- **About:**
 - Indus civilization, also called Indus valley civilization is the **earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent**.

- It is also called **Harappan Civilization** after the **first city to be excavated, Harappa (Punjab, Pakistan)**.

- Among the **world's three earliest civilizations**—the other two are those of **Mesopotamia** and **Egypt**—the **Indus civilization was the most extensive**.

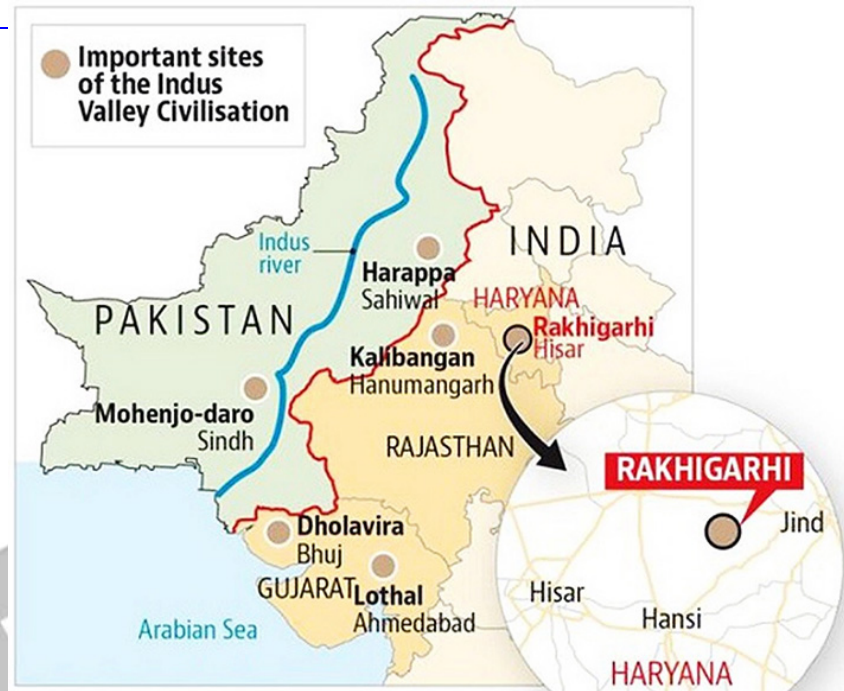
▪ **Time Period:**

- It was **established** around **3300 BC**. It **flourished** between **2600 BC** and **1900 BC**. It started declining around 1900 BC and **disappeared** around **1400 BC**.

▪ **Geographical Extent:**

- Covered Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Western Uttar Pradesh.
- It extended from **Sutkagengor** (in Balochistan) in the West to **Alamgirpur** (Western UP) in the East; and from **Mandu** (Jammu) in the North to **Daimabad** (Ahmednagar, Maharashtra) in the South. Some Indus Valley sites have also been found as far away as Afghanistan.

▪ **Important Sites:** [//](#)



- **Kalibangan** (Rajasthan), **Lothal**, **Dholavira**, **Rangpur**, **Surkotda** (Gujarat), **Banawali** (Haryana), **Ropar** (Punjab).
- **In Pakistan: Harappa** (on river Ravi), **Mohenjodaro** (on Indus River in Sindh), Chanhudaro (in Sindh).

▪ **Some Important Features:**

- The Indus Valley cities show a **level of sophistication and advancement** not seen in other contemporary civilizations.
- Most cities had similar patterns. There were two parts: a **citadel** and the **lower town** showing the presence of hierarchy in society.
- Most cities had a **Great Bath**.
- There were also **granaries**, 2-storied houses made of burnt bricks, closed drainage lines, excellent stormwater, and wastewater management system, weights for measurements, toys, pots, etc.
- A large number of seals have been discovered.

▪ **Agriculture:**

- The **first civilization to cultivate cotton**.
- Animals were **domesticated like sheep, goats, and pigs**.
- Crops were **wheat, barley, cotton, ragi, dates, and peas**.
- Trade was conducted with the Sumerians (Mesopotamia).

▪ **Metal Products :**

- These were produced including those with **copper, bronze, tin, and lead**. **Gold and silver** were also known.
- **Iron was not known** to them.

▪ **Religious Beliefs:**

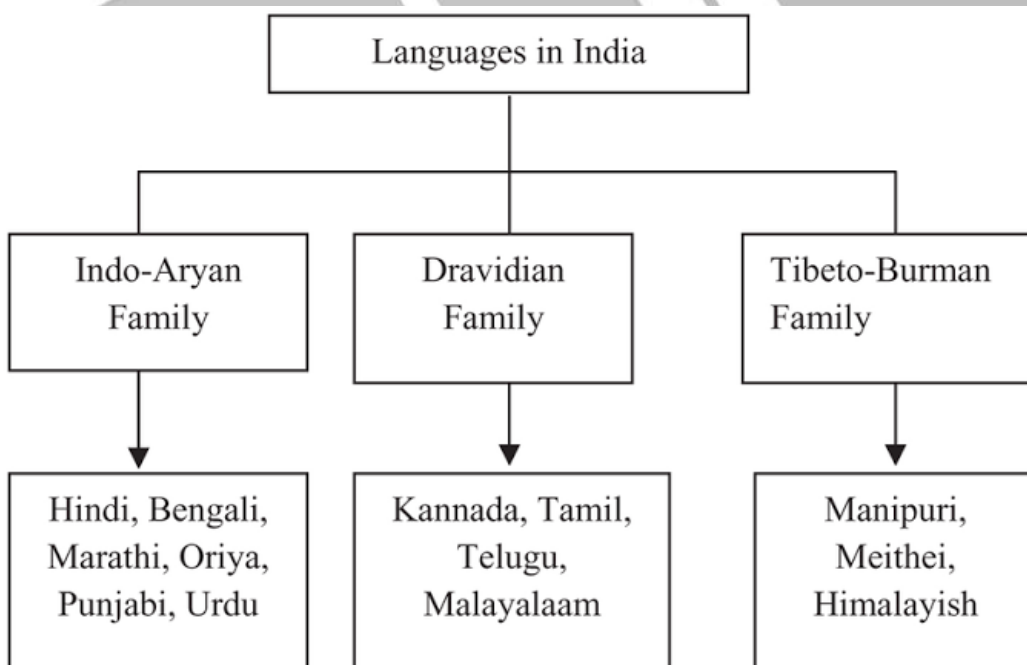
- No structures like temples or palaces have been found.
- The people **worshipped male and female deities**.
- A seal which was named '**Pashupati Seal**' has been excavated and it shows an image of a three-eyed figure.
- **Pottery:**
 - Excellent pieces of **red pottery designed in black** have been excavated.
 - Faience was used to make beads, bangles, earrings, and vessels.
- **Art Forms:**
 - A statuette named '**Dancing Girl**' has been found from Mohenjodaro and is believed to be 4000 years old.
 - A figure of a **bearded Priest-King** has also been found from Mohenjodaro.
- **Other Facts:**
 - **Lothal was a dockyard.**
 - Disposal of the dead was by burial in wooden coffins.
 - The Indus Valley script has not yet been deciphered.

Proto-Dravidian Language

- It is the **linguistic reconstruction of the common ancestor of the Dravidian languages**. Proto-Dravidian **gave rise to 21 Dravidian Languages**.

Dravidian languages

- Dravidian languages, a family of some **70 languages spoken primarily in South Asia**. They are spoken by more than 215 million people in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- The Dravidian languages with the most speakers are (in descending order of number of speakers) **Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam**, all of which have long literary traditions. Smaller literary languages are **Tulu and Kodava**.
- There are also a number of Dravidian-speaking **Scheduled Tribes**, such as the **Kurukh in Eastern India** and **Gondi in Central India**.
- Dravidian place names along the Arabian Sea coasts and Dravidian grammatical influence such as clusivity in the **Indo-Aryan languages**, namely, Marathi, Gujarati, Marwari, and Sindhi, suggest that **Dravidian languages were once spoken more widely across the Indian subcontinent**.



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