



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?

20th 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.

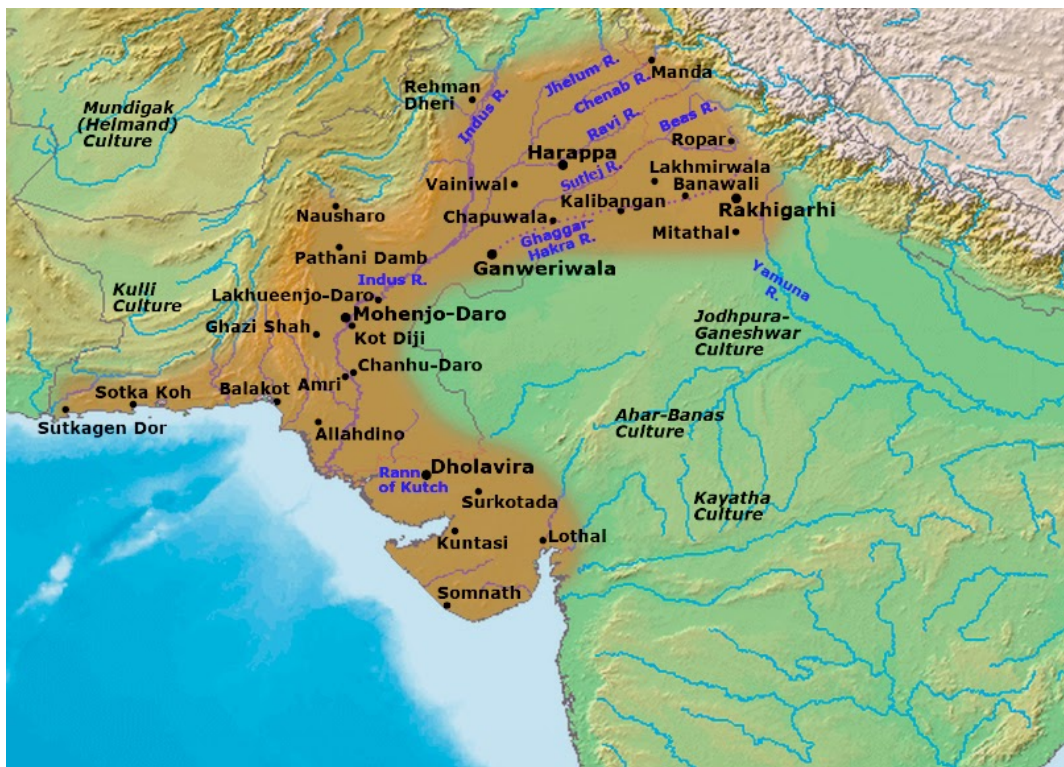
What was Harappan Civilization?

▪ 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"> Sandstone statues of Human anatomy Granaries Bullock carts
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"> Great bath Granary Bronze dancing girl Seal of Pasupathi Steatite statue of beard man A piece of woven cotton
Sutkagendor	Stein in 1929	In southwestern Balochistan province, Pakistan on Dast river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A trade point between Harappa and Babylon
Chanhudaro	N.G. Majumdar in 1931	Sindh on the Indus river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bead makers shop Footprint of a dog chasing a cat

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

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.

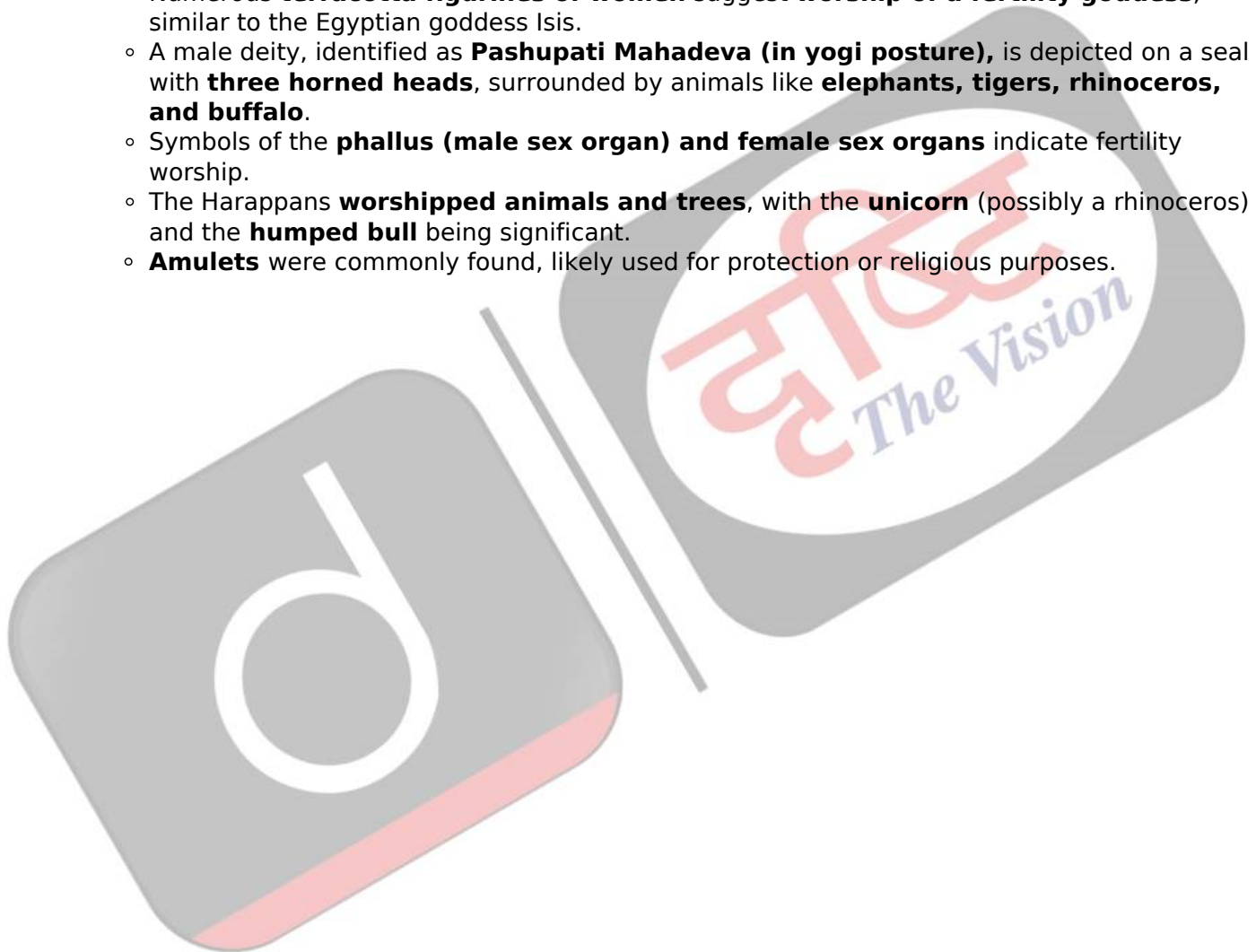
- Major trade items included **stone, metal, and shell**.
- The **barter system** was used, as metal currency did not exist.
- **Navigation** was practised along the Arabian Sea coast.
- A **trading colony in northern Afghanistan** facilitated commerce with Central Asia.
- The Harappans engaged in trade 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)

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)**