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INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

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Abstract:

The excavation carried in Western India have brought to light the important civilization of the Indus Valley. This is the most important civilization of the pre-historic period. The sites of this civilizations are Mahenjo-Daro, meaning the Mound at the Dead, on the Indus in Sind and the other Harappa on the Ravi in the Montgomery district of the Punjab. The surrounding region of Mohenjo-Daro is wonderfully fertile and is called even today Nakhlistan or the "Garden of Sind". Here, the city built some five thousand years ago was successively destroyed and rebuilt no less than seven times, the inundation of the Indus being perhaps the chief agency of destruction.

Keyword:

Indus Valley Civilization, Mahenjo-Daro, Indian History.

INTRODUCTION

The Indus Valley Civilization was also known as the Harappa civilization. In spite of the urban nature of the civilization, the Harappa Culture was a part of the Village Cultures some of which survived even after the ruin of these cities. The discovery of this civilization has almost revolutionized our conception of Indian History. At a single stroke the antiquity of Indian Civilization has been pushed back to 3000 B.C, if not earlier still and India now ranks along with Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, Egypt and Assyria as a pioneer of human Civilization.

The Indus Valley Civilization embraced the whole of Sind, South Punjab and Baluchistan. But no trace of it has been discovered in the valley of the Ganges.

DISCOVERY: Brief history from 1922 to 1947.

The Indus Civilization came to light as a result of exploration conducted by Rao Bahadur Dayaram Sahani in 1921 at Harappa and Rakhaldas D Banerji in 1922 at Mahenjo-Daro. Both belonged to the Archeological department of India. Sir John Marshall undertook at the above sites extensive excavations from 1924 to 1937, till his retirement in India. During world war II excavations were suspended and again continued by Mortimer Wheeler in 1946-47. The excavations have brought to light buried remains of private houses and huge buildings, streets and drains and a Great Bath, Painted Pottery, Statues Jewellery, household tools and vessels, ornaments of metal and shell and other articles. Recent excavations made by Government of India (Mr. S .R. Rao) have extended the area of Harappa culture in the North and South.

The Date of the Indus civilization.

In 1931 John Marshall estimated the duration

of the occupation of Mahenjo-daro between 3250 and 2750 B.C. Mr. C. J. Gadd published a paper listing a number of Indus or Indus-like seals discovered in Mesopotamian sites particularly Ur which seemed to indicate active trade contacts between 2350 and 1770 B.C. Albright concluded in 1955 that the end of the civilization must have been around 1750 B.C. In 1964 D.P. Agrawal came to the conclusion that the total span of the culture should be between 2300 and 1750 B.C.

Taking the evidence from the material found at Ur, Kish and other places, the date of Harappan culture is fixed during 2500 to 1500 B.C. K.D.N. Sastry and Sreenivasachar would assign the beginning of the third millennium B.C. for the progressive stage of the Harappa culture.

Social and economic life of the people

The ruins of Harappa, and especially those of Mahenjo-Daro tell us a good deal about the Indus valley people and provide us a very useful information regarding the social and economic life of the Indus valley people.

Food :

Wheat was the principal article of food, but barley and palm-date were also familiar. They also used mutton, pork, fish and eggs.

Dress and Ornaments :

Cotton fabrics were in common use. Wool was also used, evidently for warm textiles. Their dress was simple, men used a shawl which was drawn over the left shoulder and under the right, so as to leave the right arm and in the sitting posture came down to the feet. It formed the upper garment. The Lower garment was like a modern dhoti. Men kept short beards and whiskers.

Ornaments such as Necklaces, fillets, armlets, finger rings etc were worn by both men and woman and girdles, nose-studs, ear-rings and anklets, bangles by women alone. The rich made the ornaments of gold, silver, ivory, faience and other semi-precious stones like lapis lazuli, jasper, carnelian, agate or onyx; the ornaments of poor were made of copper, bone, shell and terra-cotta.

Amusements

Among amusements, dancing to the accompaniment of the drum, marbles and some

kind of game played with a marker board and dice pieces appear to have been practiced. Hunting was indulged in people were interested in fishing

Toys:

Children toys were various, interesting and ingenious. Usually they were clay models of birds, animals, whistles, rattles, men women etc. There were wheeled carts and chairs.

Weights and Measures:

People used large number of weights. Cubical weights were most common. The unit weight had the value of 8750 gms, the largest weight being 10970gms. Copper pans were used as a scale. The decimal system was known to the people of the Indus.

Funeral Customs:

The archaeological discoveries show three kinds of disposal of the dead such as :

- 1). Complete burial of the dead body.
- 2) Exposure of the body to beasts and birds and then burials of bone.
- 3) Cremation and burial of ashes in urns.

Agriculture.

The basic economy of the Indus people was necessarily agricultural. Cultivation was on an extensive scale, facilitated by the presence of rivers. The principal food grains were wheat, barley, peas and sesamum. Cotton was also grown. They domesticated animals for agricultural purpose.

Trade:-

They maintained trade contact with the outside world. Trade between the Indus region and Iraq was carried on through the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. There was an intermediate trade centre, Magan or Makan, identified with Oman or some other part of south Arabia. Trade contacts were maintained with Sumer, Egypt and Crete.

Import and export:

For the import of various metals, precious stones and other articles they had connections with

southern and Eastern India, Kashmir, Mysore and the Nilgiri Hills, as also with the countries immediately to the west and central Asia. Besides copper, the Indians exported peacocks, ivory and ivory particles made of apes, pearls and cotton textiles.

Art an Architecture:

The Indus people had made great progress in the field of art.

Architecture:

The Indus people made plain and solid buildings rather than beautiful and decorative. They had constructed three types of buildings - dwelling houses, shrines or public- halls and public baths. Most of houses were double storied. made of baked bricks and mud-mortar. The roofs were made of mud, reed and wood. The most imposing structure in Mahenjo-Daro is that of the Great Bath. The actual bathing pool is about 139 feet in length, 23 feet in breadth and 9 feet in deep. This bath was used by the general public on certain religious festivals.

Art of sculpture.

Many statues and figurines of animals and men found in the Indus valley prove that people made great progress in the art of sculpture. Among these statues, a young bull, a strong watchdog, a shawl-wearing yogi, a dancing girl are worthy of note. They look quite life- like and realistic.

Art of Pottery:

Indus people made great progress in the art of pottery Indus valley skilled potter could give colour, shape and delicacy to his pots. The glazed pottery which he turned out is generally regarded as the earliest example of its kind in the ancient world.”

Art of painting:

Indus people were found of painting. Different kinds of figures and designs were drawn on earthen wares and utensils. They achieved great skill In drawing the figures of men, animals and various other subjects of nature.

Art of carving :

People were fully conversant with the art of carving. Their engravings of various animals on the numerous seals are very remarkable. These figures on ivory, soap-stone, leather, metal & wood possessed the artistic skill of a very high order in carving.

Religion

Among the materials discovered in the cities of the Indus valley, there are no temples, shrines altars. But on the basis of articles discovered at different sites in the Indus valley suggest that there people indulged in some sort of image worship. They worshipped Parvati or Durga who is represented as a horned deity seated under a Piple tree with a devotee. The figurines have been identified with “Shakti” or “Mother Goddess”.

Lord Shiva was the chief male god of the Indus people. In seal Shiva is sitting in a yogic fashion surrounded by animals. Some stones resembling the Linga and signs of spastics are also got from the excavations. These suggest that the Indus people ere the Hindus devoted to the worship of Shiva and Parvati.

It also appears that the Indus people worshipped tree. Rivers, birds and animals. The elaborate bathing arrangement marking the city of Mahenjo-daro would suggest that purification by bath formed a feature of the religion of the Indus valley people .It will be seen from these characteristics that modern Hinduism is greatly indebted to the Indus valley culture. There is an organic relationship between the Hinduism of today and the ancient culture of the Indus valley.

CONCLUSION

The people of Indus valley had a highly developed culture and civilization as far back as 5000 years. It is not human how the cities of Mahenjo-Daro-and Harappa got buried under the earth, or how exactly the civilization of the Indus valley come to an end. It is believed that the over flowing Indus river destroyed these cities several times. A sudden wave of barbarian invasion might have put an end to this great civilization.

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