

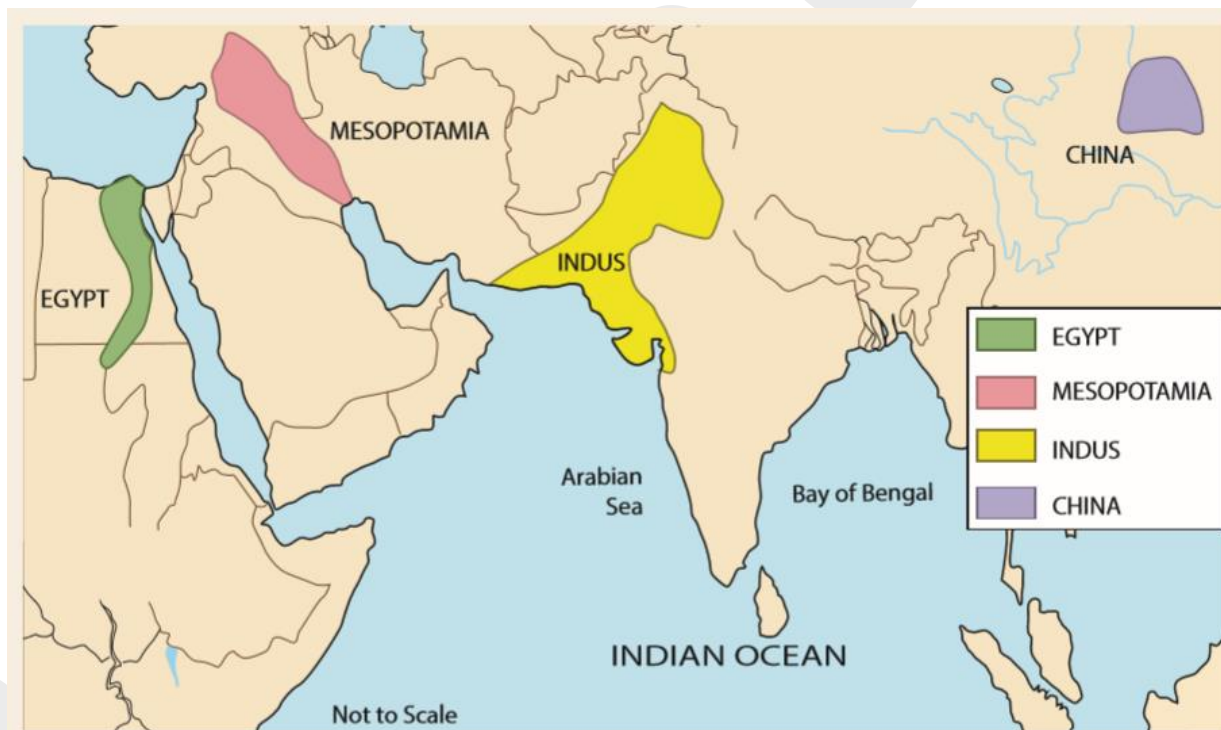
9th Social Science Lesson 2 Notes in English

2. Ancient Civilisations – Indus Civilisation

Introduction

- Societies that adopted complex ways of life were more organised than the early hunter-gatherer and Neolithic farming societies.
- Urban societies had social stratification and well-planned cities. They practised crafts, engaged in trade and exchange, adopted science and technology and formed political organisation (**early form of state**).
- Hence the term '**civilisation**' is used to distinguish them from the early forms of societies.
- However, they should not be considered superior to other forms of societies, since each culture or civilisation had its own unique features.

Early Societies and Early State Formation



Early world civilisations

- Societies before the modern times are classified as bands, tribes, chiefdoms and proto-state by scholars.
- Early societies were organised as bands during the Pre-Mesolithic Age. Bands were small groups of people who were **nomadic**, making their living on hunting and gathering.

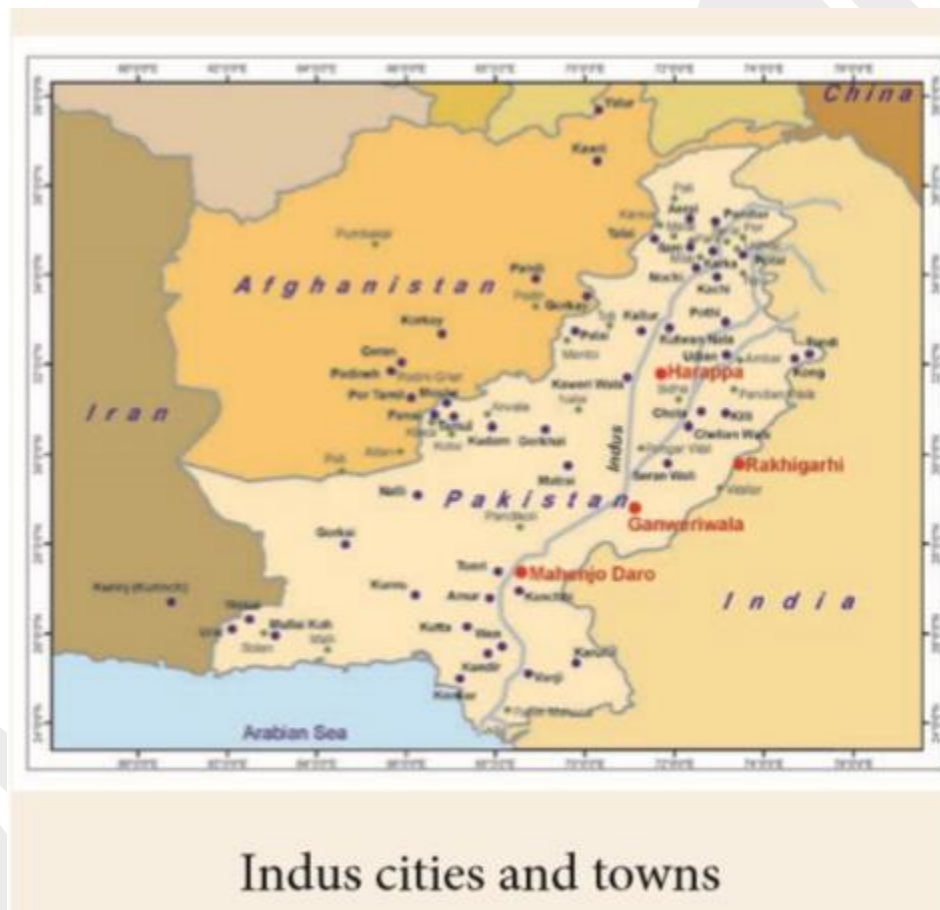
- As the Neolithic way of life came into practice, large groups of people were concentrated in the villages.
- They were organised as tribal communities with a sedentary or semi sedentary lifestyle. The tribal organisations that developed in the Mesolithic times were mostly egalitarian in nature.
- The chiefdoms are political formations larger than the tribal-level formations. People under chiefdoms lived over a larger area than the areas covered by tribes.
- Social distinction existed among these groups in terms of wealth and authority. The cultural developments after the **Neolithic period** in certain regions that had a flowing river and rich and fertile alluvial soil gave rise to civilisations.
- In the post Neolithic period, that is, in the **Bronze Age societies**, early form of state (proto-state) originated in the areas where agricultural surplus and population density was more.
- These early states had a political system that controlled many smaller regions, chiefs and cities through conquests.
- The kings and royals occupied the higher position in the social hierarchy. Palatial buildings were built for their dwelling.
- **Priests, king's officials and traders** formed the middle strata. Craft persons and peasants formed the lower sections in this hierarchical social system.
- Taxes were collected from the peasants and artisans. Language was refined, literary texts were composed and script developed.
- **Sciences, including mathematics and astronomy**, emerged from research. The process of urbanisation began.

Early Civilisations

- Civilisation is seen as an advanced, organised way of life. It instilled a way of life that could be considered as an adaptation to particular environmental and cultural contexts.
- When it became necessary for large numbers of people to live in close proximity, they brought in planning, organisation and specialisation.
- Settlements were planned and laid out, a polity emerged, society became organised and food production and craft production were regulated.
- As civilisations began to take shape, huge buildings were built, the **art of writing** developed and **science and technology** contributed to the betterment of society.
- The surplus food production by the farmers in the fertile regions supported the livelihood of a large number of people.
- The people who did not cultivate crops engaged in artisanal activities such as making of **bronze tools, ornaments and pottery**.
- **Priests, scribes, nobles, rulers, administrators and craft persons** became part of this civilisation.

- The **Egyptian, Mesopotamian, the Chinese and the Indus** were the important early civilisations.
- While these civilisations flourished in certain regions, people in other parts of the world lived as huntergatherers and pastoralists.
- The hunter gatherers and pastoralists maintained their relationships with these civilisations through interactions.
- Their history is also equally important.
- During the time of these civilisations, South India witnessed the emergence of Neolithic agro-pastoral communities and Microlith form of life by hunter-gatherers.

Indus Civilisation



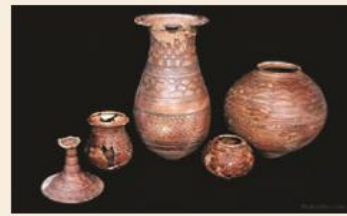
- The Indus civilisation, known also as the Harappan civilisation, covers an area of over 1.5 million square kilometres in India and Pakistan.
- **Sutkagen-dor in the west on the Pakistan–Iran border; Shortugai (Afghanistan) in the north; Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh in India). in the east; and Daimabad (Maharashtra in India). in the south** are the boundaries with in which the Harappan culture has been found.
- Its main concentration is in the regions of Gujarat, Pakistan, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Planned Towns

- Harappa (Punjab, Pakistan), MohenjoDaro (Sindh, Pakistan), Dholavira (Gujarat, India), Kalibangan (Rajasthan, India), Lothal (Gujarat, India), Banawali (Rajasthan, India), Rakhigarhi (Haryana, India) and Surkotada (Gujarat, India) are the major cities of the Indus civilisation.
- Fortification, well-planned streets and lanes and drainages can be observed in the Harappan towns.
- The Harappans used baked and unbaked bricks and stones for construction. A civic authority perhaps controlled the planning of the towns.
- A few of the houses had more than one floor. The tank called the **Great Bath** at Mohenjo-Daro is an important structure, well paved with several adjacent rooms.
- Some unearthed structures have been identified as the granary. We do not know about the nature of the state or political organisation of the Harappans.
- But they must have had a political organisation at the level of an early form of state. A male image from MohenjoDaro has been identified as '**priest king**', but we do not know about the accuracy of this interpretation.
- The structure identified as granary should be considered as archaeologists' interpretation.



The Great Bath

The priest king
from Mohenjo-Daro

Harappan painted pottery.



The Dancing Girl from Mohenjo-Daro

Rohri chert blades from Harappan site of
Shikarpur, Gujarat

Agriculture and Animal Domestication

- The Harappans practiced agriculture. They cultivated wheat, barley and various types of millets. They adopted a double cropping system.
- Pastoralism was also known to them. They reared **cattle, sheep and goats**.
- They had knowledge of various animals including elephants but did not use horses.

- The **Harappan cattle are called Zebu**, and it is a large breed, often represented in their seals.

Pottery

- The Harappans used painted pottery. Their potteries have a deep red slip and black paintings.
- The pottery has shapes like **dish-on-stands, storage jars, perforated jars, goblets, S-shaped jars, plates, dishes, bowls and pots**.
- The painted motifs, generally noticed on the pottery, depict pipal tree leaves, fish-scale designs, intersecting circles, zigzag lines, horizontal bands, and geometrical motifs, and floral and faunal patterns.

Metal, Tools and Weapons

- The Harappans used chert blades, copper objects and bone and ivory tools. They **did not** possess knowledge about **iron**.
- The tools and equipments such as points, chisels, needles, fishhooks, razors, weighing pans, mirror and antimony rods were made of bronze.
- The chisels made out of **Rohri chert** were used by the Harappans. Their weapons included arrows, spears, a chisel-bladed tool and axe.
- The bronze image of **dancing girl from Mohenjo-Daro** is suggestive of the use of lost-wax process.
- Rohri chert refers to the chert raw material collected from Rohri in Pakistan. It was used by the Harappans for making blades.
- The Harappans used **both stone and bronze tools**.

Textiles and Ornaments



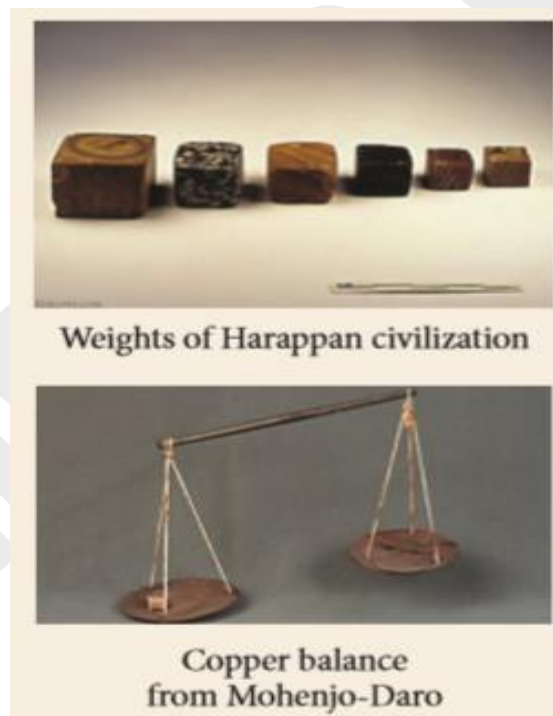
Indus ornaments.

- The Harappans used metal and stone adornments. They had knowledge of cotton and silk textiles.
- They made **carnelian, copper and gold ornaments**. Faience, stoneware and shell bangles were also used.
- Some of them had etched designs, and the Harappans exported them to the Mesopotamia.

Trade and Exchange

- The Harappans had close trade links with the Mesopotamians.
- Harappan seals have been found in **the West Asian sites, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq and Iran**.
- The cuneiform inscriptions mention the trade contacts between Mesopotamia and the Harappans.
- The mention of '**Meluhha**' in the cuneiform inscriptions is considered to refer to the Indus region.

Weights and Measures



- The Harappans developed a system of proper weights and measures. Since they engaged in commercial transactions, they needed standard measures.
- The cubical chert weights are found at the Harappan sites. The copper plates for weighing balances have also been found.
- The weights point to their knowledge of the binary system. The ratio of weighing is doubled as 1:2:4:8:16:32.

Seals, Sealings and Scripts

- The seals from various media such as steatite, copper, terracotta and ivory are found in the Harappan sites.
- They were probably used in the trade activities. The Harappan script is not yet deciphered.
- About **5,000** texts have been documented from the Harappan sites.
- Some scholars are of the view that the script is in Dravidian language.

Arts and Amusement

- The terracotta figurines, paintings on the pottery and the bronze images from the Harappan sites suggest the artistic skills of the Harappans.
- 'Priest king' made of steatite and dancing girl made of bronze (**both from Mohenjo-Daro**) as well as stone sculptures from Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Dholavira are the important objects of art.
- **Toy carts, rattles, wheels, tops, marbles and hop scotches** made in terracotta suggest the amusement of the Harappan people.

Religion

- The Indus people had a close relationship with nature. They worshipped pipal trees. Some of the terracotta figures resemble the mother goddess.
- Fire altars have been identified at **Kalibangan**. The Indus people buried the dead.
- Burials were done elaborately and evidence for cremation has also been found.

Original Inhabitants and their Culture

- The authors of the Harappan civilisation are not known, since the script has not been deciphered.
- One school of thought argues that they spoke the Dravidian language.
- The archaeological evidence shows movement of the Harappans to the east and south after the decline of the Indus civilisation.
- It is probable that some of the Harappan people moved into different parts of India. Only the decipherment of the script can give a definite answer.
- Indus civilisation had more than one group of people. Several groups including farmers, pastoralists and hunter-gatherers lived in the Indus region.
- The Indus region had villages and large towns. The population was mixed.
- The period of the civilisation has been divided into **Early Harappan, starting around 3300 BCE and continuing to 2600 BCE and mature Harappan, are the last phase civilisation from 2600 to 1900 BCE. The later Harappan existed upto 1700 BCE.**

Decline of Indus Culture

- The Indus civilisation and its urban features started declining from about **1900 BCE**.

- Changes in climate, decline of the trade with Mesopotamia and drying up or flooding of the river Indus, foreign invasion were some of the reasons attributed to the collapse of this civilisation and for the migration of people in the southern and eastern directions.
- It did not completely disappear. It continued as rural culture.

Indus Civilisation and Tamil Civilisation

- The similarity of the graffiti found on the megalithic burial pots of South India with the Indus script and the identical place names of Tamil Nadu and Indus region of Pakistan are presented as arguments to establish the relationship between the Indus civilisation and Tamil culture.
- Researchers like **Father Henry Heras, Asko Parpola and Iravatham Mahadevan** find similarity between the Indus script and the Dravidian/ Tamil language. Archaeological evidence points out that several groups of people have been living in Tamil Nadu and South India continuously from the Mesolithic period.
- A few groups from the Indus region might have migrated into southern India. Some of the ideas and technologies of the Indus civilisations had reached South India in the Iron Age.
- The carnelian beads, shell bangles and bronze mirrors found in **the Megalithic/Early Historic sites of Tamil Nadu** were first introduced by the people of the Indus civilisation.
- More research is needed to arrive at any definite conclusion in this matter.
- The towns of ancient Tamilagam such as **Arikkamedu, Uraiyur and Keezhadi** that flourished are part of the second urbanisation of India and these towns are much different from the Indus cities.
- These towns emerged approximately 1,200 years after the decline of the Indus civilisation.

More to Know:

1. The Indus Valley civilisation is also known as the Harappan civilisation, since Harappa was the first site to be discovered. This civilisation is known as **Harappan civilisation** rather than Indus Valley civilisation, since it extended beyond the Indus river valley.

2. The Terracotta Army



Terracotta Warriors, China

- The Terracotta Army refers to the large collection of terracotta warrior images found in China. They depict the armies of the **king Qin Shi Huang**, the first emperor of China.
- They were buried with the king in 210–209 BCE. They are found at the northern foot of the Lishan Mountain, thirty five kilometres northeast of Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, as part of the mausoleum of the king.

3. The Great Wall of China

- The Great Wall of China, one of the wonders of the world, was a massive effort undertaken for the protection of China from the Mongols.
- In 220 BCE, under Qin Shi Huang, earlier fortifications were connected by walls as a form of defence against invasions.
- It was built from third century BCE until 17th century CE. It ran for over **20,000 kilometres** covering the hills and plains, from the border of Korea in the east to the Ordos Desert in the west.

4. **Ziggurats** were pyramid-shaped monuments found in ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). One of the most famous Ziggurats of the time is the one in the city of Ur.

5. **Assyrian Empire** was the first military power in history. They emerged militarily powerful because they were the earliest to use iron technology effectively.

6. The **Epic of Gilgamesh** is perhaps the oldest written epic on earth. It was originally written on twelve clay tablets in cuneiform in ancient Sumaria.

7. The **city of Akkad** later became the city of Babylon, a commercial and cultural centre of West Asia.

8. The word 'paper' comes from 'Papyrus'. The Egyptians wrote on the leaves of a plant called papyrus, a kind of reed, which grew on the banks of Nile.