

THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

The discovery of the ancient ruins of Harappa by Dayaram Sahni in 1921 and of Mohenjodaro by Rakhal Das Banerjee in 1922-23, both officers of the Archaeological Survey of India, exploded an age-old myth. It was earlier believed that the history of India began with the coming of the Aryans. The excavations of the ruins of Harappa and Mohenjodaro pushed the history of India by almost 2000 years.

Our knowledge about the civilization comes mainly from the archaeological remains excavated from various sites. The main characteristics of this civilization are town planning, architecture. The people were skillful builders. The buildings were of two types- dwelling houses and public buildings.

The dwelling houses of this civilization included large blocks of houses built along the sides of the streets. The houses were made of baked bricks. An average house had a courtyard surrounded by rooms, a bathroom, a kitchen and a well.

The public buildings of this civilization are –The Great Granary at Harappa, the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro and the Assembly Hall.

The drainage system of this civilization is that the people of the Harappan Civilization had an excellent, well-planned drainage system. The Harappan society consisted of several social groups..rulers,merchants,traders and artisans,farmers and manual labourers. The main occupation of the people of the Harappan Civilization was farming.

The people carried on flourishing trade both within and outside India. More than 2000 seals have been unearthed from various sites. Seals are valuable sources of information about the life and culture of the people.

Some of the objects found in the ruins help us to form an idea of the religion of the Harappans. No temples have been found. Numerous smoke stained clay figures of a temple deity have been found. Like the Egyptians, the Harappans also believed in life after death.

The Harappan civilization, which flourished for about 1000 years came to an abrupt end. Scholars have put forward various theories to explain its collapse.

The Harappan Civilization is India's earliest known urban civilization. The Harappan cities may be in ruins but by the reconstruction and rediscovery of our ancient culture from these ruins instill in us a feeling of great pride in our ancient and glorious past.

Short questions

1. Which British officer is credited with carrying out the preliminary excavations in Harappa?

2. Give an example that tells us that the Harappans had a good knowledge of animal anatomy?

3. Which sites were the biggest centres of the Harappan civilization?

4. What are citadels?

5. What was the main occupation of the Harappans?

6. How do we know that the Harappans had trade relations with the outside world?

7. What was the chief means of conveyance in the Harappan civilization?

Long questions...

1. How were the Harappan cities planned? Explain the main features of the dwelling houses?

3. The study of objects and artefacts found in the ruins of the cities helps to form an idea of Harappan religion. Explain

4. With reference to the engineering skills explain briefly the features of the Great Bath.

5. When did the civilization come to an end? Give reasons.