

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Indus Valley Civilization - Art & Culture [Art & Culture Notes for UPSC]

Introduction

- Indus Valley art emerged during the second half of the third millennium BCE (i.e. from 2500 BC onwards).
- Forms of art: seals, pottery, sculpture, gold jewellery, terracotta figures, etc.
- The two major sites of this civilisation, Harappa and Mohenjodaro showcase excellent town planning as well, like houses, planned streets, public baths, drainage systems, storage facilities, etc.
- Harappa and Mohenjodaro are in Pakistan.
- Major sites in India are: Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Ropar (Punjab), Kalibangan and Balathal (Rajasthan), Lothal and Dholavira (Gujarat).

Stone statues

- Two male statues in stone – the Bearded Man (priest king) and a torso in red sandstone.
- **Bearded man (Priest)**
 1. Appears to be of a priest
 2. A shawl is draped over the left shoulder
 3. Slightly elongated eyes as if in half-meditation
 4. Well-formed nose, with a moustache, short beard and whiskers
 5. Wearing an armlet and probable other jewellery.

Bronze casting

- The bronze statues found in Harappa were made by the technique called Lost Wax technique.
- This technique is used in some parts of the country even today showing continuity of traditions.
- This technique was popular in almost all the sites.
- First, wax figures were made and then covered with clay. The clay was allowed to dry and then the figure was heated to melt the wax. This wax was drained out through a hole in the clay. After that, the hollow clay was filled with the metal of choice. After cooling the metal, the clay was removed revealing the desired metal figurine.
- Both animal and human figures were made this way.
- Examples of bronze figures: Dancing Girl, Buffalo with uplifted head.
- **Dancing Girl**
 1. 4 inch copper figure

2. Long hair tied in a bun
3. Left arm covered with bangles
4. Cowrie shell necklace around the neck
5. Right hand on the hip and the left hand in a traditional Indian dancing gesture
6. Large eyes and a flat nose
7. Found from Mohenjodaro.

Terracotta

- Terracotta images were also created but they were less refined as compared to the stone statues.
- Most important terracotta images are those of the mother goddess.
- Male figures are also found with similar features and positioning in all the figures indicating perhaps the image of a god.
- Terracotta toys have also been found (wheels, whistles, rattles, gamesmen, discs, birds and animals).

Seals

- Thousands of seals have been discovered.
- They were mostly made of steatite (a kind of soft stone).
- Some seals were also made using chert, agate, copper, terracotta, faience, gold and ivory.
- Standard Harappan seals were square plaques with 2X2 dimension.
- Purpose of the seals: chiefly commercial.
- Some seals were carried in the form of amulets, perhaps as identity cards.
- Every seal has a picture of an animal and some writings in a pictographic script (which is not yet deciphered).
- Animals represented include tigers, bulls, elephants, goats, bison, etc.
- **Pashupati Seal:** A seal with a figure seated cross-legged in the centre with animals around; an elephant and a tiger to the right of the figure and a rhino and a buffalo to its left.
- Copper tablets, square or rectangular in shape have been found which were used as amulets.

Pottery

- A lot of pottery has been excavated.
- Plain and painted pottery are found – plain is more common.
- Plain pottery: generally made of red clay, with or without a fine red or grey slip.
- Black painted pottery: has a fine coating of red slip with painted geometric and animal designs.
- Perforated pottery was also found, perhaps to use as a sieve.
- Pottery of various sizes has been excavated.

Beads and ornaments

- A variety of ornaments have been found which were used by both men and women.
- Made from precious metals, gemstones, bone and baked clay.
- Ornaments worn by men and women: fillets, necklaces, finger-rings, armlets.
- Ornaments worn by women: earrings, girdles, anklets.
- Well-crafted ornaments have been found including necklaces of gold and semi-precious stones, copper bracelets and beads, head ornaments and earrings made of gold, steatite and gemstone beads, faience pendants and buttons.
- Cemetery found in Farmana (Haryana) – where dead bodies were buried with ornaments.
- Bead factories at Lothal and Chanhudaro.
- Beads made from cornelian, amethyst, lapis lazuli, quartz, crystal, jasper, turquoise, steatite, etc. Metals were also used like gold, bronze and copper. Beads were also made from shells and terracotta.
- Beads were of various shapes disc-shaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, and segmented.