



WB - PSC

Pre & Mains

WEST BENGAL PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Paper 3 – Volume I

Indian History



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Ancient & Medieval History

Chapter 1. Importance of Studying Ancient and Medieval Indian History

From Exam Perspective: History has been one of the consistent subjects from where the questions are being repeatedly asked in UPSC. Studying ancient history has got overlapping with Art and Culture too. Over the years there have been 10-12 questions each year on average from ancient history including those having relation with art and culture.

Conventionally, there are certain areas like Philosophies in ancient India, about Jainism and Buddhism, Bhakti and Sufi etc., from where the questions have been repeatedly asked. This is one thing which should be grabbed by students by both hands and a little effort and ensure 6-8 questions on exam day. Also, a special attention should be given to various historic places and events that shaped course of Indian history.

The study of ancient Indian history tells us how and when people developed earliest cultures and civilizations in our country, how they settled and how they continued to grow thereafter.

Many of the languages we speak today have derived its roots from ancient times itself. Study of ancient history gives us an idea about the writings of the early age.

Chapter 2: The Ancient Land of Bharatavarsha:

There has been a debate prevailing as to India was a divided land from very beginning or the united one. However, most of them has agreed to the existing cultural, ethnic, religious diversity of India but they emphasize on territorial unity of India and they sum up India as a land of “Unity in diversity”.

India has been crucible of various ethnic groups like Pre-Aryans, the Indo-Aryans, the Greeks, the Huns, the Turks etc. and each of them has contributed to the creation of varied Indian culture, architecture, literature etc. Ancient Indian culture can be characterized by commingling (blending) of various cultural elements from North to South, from East to West. Presence of various terms peculiar to Sangam literature of south has been found in Sanskrit literature of North and vice versa.

During ancient time the Indian subcontinent was looked as unified one and name ‘Bharatavarsha’ gives an account for the same. This was name given to entire country and people living this place were called ‘Bharatasantati’. The name Bharatavarsha is given after an ancient tribe which inhabited this place named ‘Bharata’ tribe. There were kings who established their rule throughout the Bharatavarsha and they were called as ‘Chakravartins’. This kind of political unity was attained at least twice in ancient India: During 3rd Century BC when Ahsoka ruled the Mauryan empire and 4th Century AD when Samudragupta was ruling. Let’s see a map of ancient India and find out some important places:



Some Important Places in the Map include:

- **Sulaiman and Kirthar Ranges:** Where humans first began to grow crops like wheat and barley about 8000 years ago.
- **Vindhya Range:** Places in north of Vindhya, where rice was grown first.
- **Indus river and its Tributaries:** Where one of the oldest Urban Civilizations (Harrapan) flourished.
- **On the Banks of River Ganga:** 2500 years ago, mighty empires like Magadha grew.

Source which tells about History:

1. **Material Remains:** A major portion of ancient history remains buried under earth in form of 'Mounds' which are scattered throughout the Country. There are three kinds of mounds:

- **Single Culture Mounds:** Which represents only one culture thought-out.
- **Major Culture Mounds:** One culture is dominant and others are not so dominant.
- **Multi Culture Mounds:** Which represent multiple culture which overlap with one another.

Excavation of these mounds brings about various discoveries like evidence of ancient cities like Harappa, Cultures that developed in Gangetic plains. The dates of the material so discovered are fixed by Carbon Dating process.

Megaliths:

A megalith is a large pre-historic stone that has been used to construct a structure or monument, either alone or together with other stones.

2. **Coins:** Study of Coins is called 'numismatics'. While excavation, a good number of coins have been unearthed. Coins throw considerable light on the economic history of the period. Ancient coins were made of metals like Copper, Silver, Gold, Lead. They portrayed kings and gods and contained religious symbols, legends etc.

Guptas issued the largest number of gold coins. Though number of coins reduced from Post-Gupta period which indicates that the trade and commerce declined during that period.

3. **Inscriptions:** The study of inscriptions is called 'epigraphy' and the study of old writing used on inscriptions is called 'paleography'. During ancient time inscriptions were carved on seals, stones, pillars, rocks, copper plates, temple walls. The earliest inscriptions were written in Prakrit language in third century BC.

4. Literary Sources: Most ancient form of writing recorded in India is in form of inscriptions and they are found to be written on birch bark or palm leaves while in central Asia they are found to be written on sheep leather or wooden tablets.

Most of ancient books contain religious themes. The religious literary sources like Ramayana and Mahabharata throw light on socio-cultural order of ancient times.

Brahmana: A

Brahmana is a book which tells the meaning of Vedic Mantras and their use.

Rig Veda is the oldest of Vedic literature dated around 1500-1000 BCE, while three other Vedas namely Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, along with Brahmanas, and Aranyakas are dated around 1000-1500 BCE.

Ramayana, Mahabharata and Major Puranas are believed to be compiled during 400 AD. Mahabharata has been compiled by Vyasa and in its original form it contained 8800 verses (known as Jaya) while later on it was raised to 2400 and came to be known as 'Bharata'. The final compilation consists of 1,00,000 verses and thus came to be known as 'Mahabharata' or 'Satasahasri Samhita'.

Srautasutras:

Book which contains big public sacrifices meant for princes or men of substances.

Similarly, Ramayana as composed originally by Valmiki consisted of 6000 verses but raised to 12,000 and finally 24,000 verses.

The earliest Buddhist text were compiled in Pali language which was spoken in Magadha and present-day areas of Bihar. The Jain texts were written in the Prakrit and were finally compiled in sixth century AD in Vallabhi (Gujarat). However, they contain many information about political history of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the age of Mahavira.

Grihya sutra:

Book which contains domestic rituals like birth, naming ceremony, sacred thread, marriage.

Influence of Geography over History of Indian Subcontinent:

Indian subcontinent is a large area as big as Europe without Russia, consisting of 5 countries- India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan. It lies mostly in tropical zone having great natural diversity from Mountains to oceans, from rivers to plateaus, from oceans to deserts. These have played an important role in shaping up the life on this land and has big influence on the historical setting.

Role of Monsoon:

In ancient times irrigation was not so common and rains played the crucial role in agriculture. The kharif crops in north India depended primarily in ancient times on south-west monsoon.

Once the direction of the monsoon was discovered sometime around the first century A.D, traders sailed with the south-west monsoon from western Asia and the Mediterranean area and came to India and South-East Asia. They returned with the advent of the northeast monsoon westward. The discovery of the monsoon enabled India to carry on trade and establish cultural contacts with western Asia and the Mediterranean area as well as with South-East Asia.

The Mountains:

The Himalayas protect the country against the cold arctic winds blowing from Siberia through Central Asia. This keeps the climate of northern India fairly warm throughout the year. Since the cold is not so severe in the plains, people do not need heavy clothing and can live in the open for longer period. Secondly, the Himalayas are high enough to shield the country against invasions from the north.

The Suliman ranges are joined southward Baluchistan by the Kirthar ranges which could be crossed through the Bolan pass. Through these passes two-way traffic between India and central Asia has been going on from pre-historic times. Various people from Iran, Afghanistan and central Asia came to India as invaders and immigrants, and vice versa.

The passes facilitated trade and cultural contacts between India on the one hand, and Central Asia and West Asia on the other.

The Rivers:

The heart of historical India is formed by its important rivers which are swollen by the tropical monsoon rains. These consist of the plains of the Indus system, the Indo-Gangetic Divide, the Gangetic basin and the Brahmaputra basin.

The Harappan culture originated and flourished in the Indus valley, the Vedic culture originated in the North-West Frontier Province and Punjab, and flourished in the western Gangetic basin: the post-Vedic culture, mainly based on the use of iron, thrived in the middle Gangetic basin. The lower Gangetic valley and north Bengal really came into limelight in the age of the Guptas; and finally, the Brahmaputra valley covering Assam gained importance in early medieval times.

The rivers served as important medium of commerce and communication. In ancient times it was difficult to make roads, so men and material were moved by boats. The river routes, therefore, helped military and commercial transport. The stone pillars made by Ashoka were carried to different parts of the country by boats.

Furthermore, rivers and mountains formed the cultural and physical boundaries as well. A major part of Tamil Nadu was situated between the Krishna on the north and the Kaveri on the south.

Minerals and Resources:

The earliest human settlements are naturally found in India in the hilly areas and in those river valleys which are situated between the hill. Copper is widely distributed in the country. The richest copper mines are found in the Chota Nagpur plateau, particularly in the district of Singhbhum.

The earliest people who used copper implements in Bihar exploited the copper mines of Singhbhum and Hazaribagh, and many copper tools have been discovered in south Bihar and parts of Madhya Pradesh.

Even today, country has less production of Tin, the way it was in ancient times. Since Bronze is made by mixing copper with tin, we do not find much use of Bronze in prehistoric times. Though Harappa was a bronze age civilization, their number compared with those found in western Asia, Egypt and Crete is very small and their tools carry a smaller percentage of tin. Therefore, the major portion of India has no proper access to Bronze.

India has been rich in iron ore which are found particularly in south Bihar, eastern Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Once the art of smelting using bellows (making steel) was learnt, iron could be used for war, and more usefully for the clearance of forests and for deep and regular cultivation. The formation of the great empire in Magadha in the sixth to fourth centuries B.C. owed much to the availability of iron just south to it.

Andhra possesses resources in lead, which explains the large number of lead coins in the kingdom of the Satavahanas who ruled over Andhra and Maharashtra in the first two centuries of the Christian era.

Large quantities of gold dust, which were carried by river streams from the Himalayas, were collected from the deposits of river channels in the plains. These deposits are called placers. Gold is found in the Kolar gold fields of Karnataka.

- ANCIENT INDIA: 2500 BCE - 7th Century A.D
- MEDIEVAL INDIA: 7th A.D - 707 A.D
- MODERN INDIA: 1707 AD - 1947 A.D

(The year of Death of Aurangzeb, the last strongest ruler of India, however some people take coming of British as advent of Modern India, but the widely accepted year remains 1707 AD.)

- Contemporary History: 1947 AD Onwards

ANCIENT INDIA – 2500 BCE- 7th A.D

(Before 9000 BCE) - PRE-History:

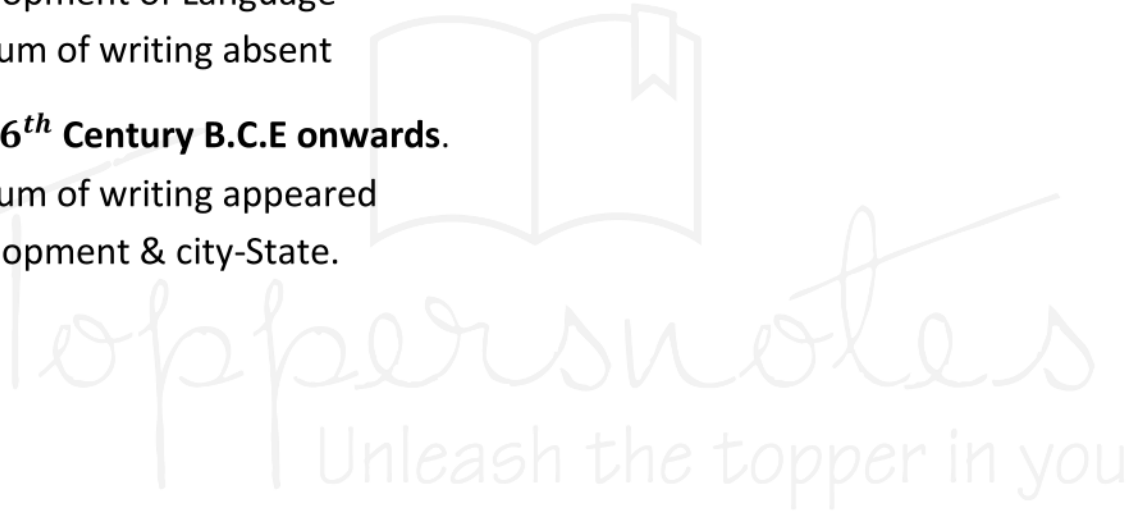
- No development of language
- No Human development

(9000 BCE- 1000 BCE)- PROTO-History:

- Development of Language
- Medium of writing absent

History: 6th Century B.C.E onwards.

- Medium of writing appeared
- Development & city-State.



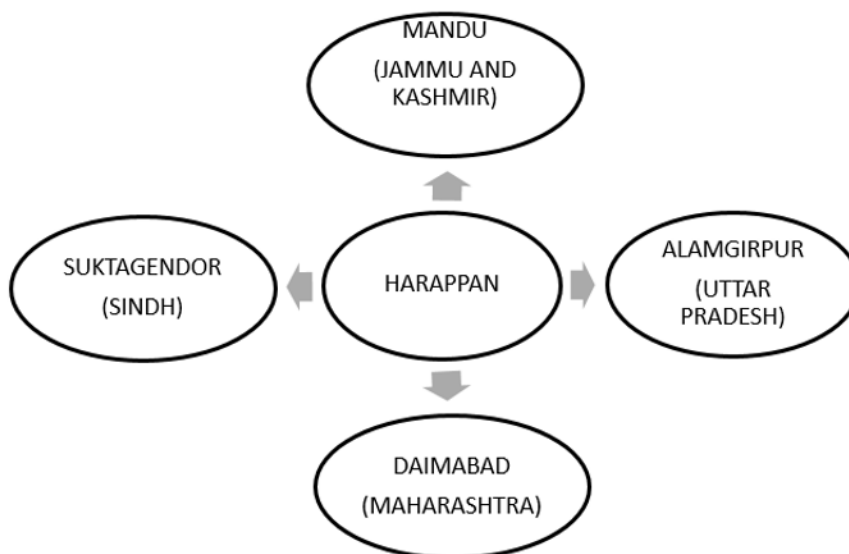
Chapter 3: HAPAPPAN CULTURE OR INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

(2500 BCE - 1750 BCE.)

- ONLY Civilization which emerged and completely destroyed
- Civilization found in 7 rivers- Chain of North- western India also known as Sapta-Sindhu
- First city to be excavated in 1921 was HARAPPA on the banks of Indus valley system by archeologist Dayaram Sahni because of this the civilization is named Harappan culture.
- Most of the cities discovered were situated around Indus valley system there by the name is given Indus valley civilization.
- Almost around 25 cites haven been discovered but only a few are big.

Harappa	Pakistan	1921	D.R. Sahni
Mohenjo-Daro	Pakistan	1922	R.D. Banerji
Lothal	Gujarat, India	1957	S.R. Rau
Dhaulavira	Gujarat, India	1991	J.P. Joshi and R.S. Bisht

Geographical Spread of Harappan city

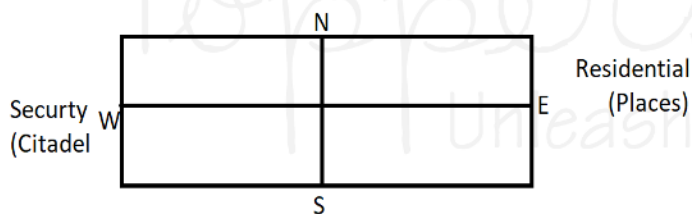


- **Because of vast spread, it has been termed 1st urban civilization of India.**
- Looking at vast stretch of IVC (Indus Valley Civilization) it would be unfair to attribute one cause (Solo) for entire destruction of IVC.
- **Origin of the people** –Both Indian and Foreign.
- **Simultaneous Causes of Destruction:** FLOOD, Earthquake, Climate change, Aryan Invasion.
 - One of theories claimed is that foreign invasion destroyed IVC, but it is highly sceptical, though attacks may destroy humans but how could they bury the structure. => **Uniform Life style.**
 - Observing the recent studies, **most immediate cause of destruction of IVC is taken as. “Climate change -:**

Now let’s study some of the characteristic features of IVC as a whole and then we will see features of each cities individually.

Town Planning

Cities were in rectangular shapes.



- In the eastern part of city existed residential places, in the western part there were Security platform called CITADEL.
- CITADEL existed in every city except Chanhudaro.
- City planning was on grid Pattern i.e. Roads cut across on 90 degrees, and thus it is also called as Chess Board System.
- Most Significant characteristic of Harappan civilization is its drainage system.
- The people of IVC knew the use of wheels but not Spokes.
- Most efficient drainage was found in Mohenjo-Daro, but one city which didn't have drainage system was Kalibangan.
- They were poor in stone works but profound art in Pottery.
- House were constructed of Mud bricks.
- This civilization was a Bronze age Civilization.

- Glossary and shining.
- In all cities, **houses were constructed in uniform Pattern.**
- At Mohenjo-Daro, there were floors constructed above ground floor. Might be used by priests of Harrapans.
- **Only at the city of Harappa, front door of the houses were on the North side.**
- One of the embarking Feature of IVC is that all the Cities were Uniformly **planned**

Economic Activities

- IVC was having **intra- as well as inter civilization economic activities.**

Contemporary Civilizations were: -

- Chinese Civilization
- Egyptian Civilization
- Mesopotamian "
- Harappans were having **larger contact with Mesopotamian** and evidence Found, suggest this (Seals found).

[Meluha]-Term given to Harappans by Mesopotamians

- There are seldom or no evidence of contact with other civilization.
- Mode of economy were primary Agriculture and certain elements were Traded like- Gold, Silver, Tin, Copper and Lapis lazuli.

[Lapis lazuli]

- [Lapis lazuli] was brought by Harappans from Afghanistan from place called (Bedaks khan)
- Connection with Mesopotamia was both via land and sea routes. Dockyards has been discovered at lothal (Guj)
- Stable food of harappans - [Wheat and Barley, rice]
Rice was also produced in Harappa. (At lothal)
- Harappans were the first to produce cotton
- First evidence of agriculture was found in Mehrgarh (Pakistan).
- Trading center of Harappa's for external trade was Shortugai.

RELIGION: -

[Henotheistic]=> (animism)-worshippers of Natural Elements or symbol worship. Mostly two symbols were worshiped "**Tree and Earth**"

- Idol of lord Shiva (Pashupati) - discovered at Mohen-jo-daro
 - It can be concluded that worship of lord Shiva started during IVC.
However, sole discovery of idea can't be attributed to conclude that harappans followed Hinduism in present form, rather it would be fair to say - that form of religion was not certain
(Female goddesses revered but not at par with male)
- Mother goddess (Shown as emerging tree from womb) discovered at [Harappa]

Society of Harappa:

- Nothing conclusively is known about social sinecure of IVC.
- Name of the script of Harappa: [BOUSTROPHEDON], a bidirectional text.
- It is written in form of picture and that is way also termed pictographic script.
- Around 400 different pictures are identified.

Places:

- Mohen-jo-Daro- Etymologically means "**Mound of Dead**"
- It was destroyed 7 times completely and re-constructed 7 times as well. And thenceforth (**7 layers have been formed** over remanence)

➤ **(Great Bath):**

(Assembly hall of priest), (weus)

Are found.

- **Great bath:** probably would have been used for religious purpose.
- **Granary:** where the food grains were stored.
- **Wells:** is the remarkable feature of Mohenjo-Daro, since it is absent from Harappa.
- Expected decline of city is due to temperature high.

HARAPPA: Grainery, Bearded Man male torso without head,

(R-37)



(Largest)

Double Burial found at Lothal.

↓
I.e. Men and women buried along with

Only one cemetery discovered with skulls } can't say about
Of men and women. That is inadequate to } conclude the existence of sati
Conclude the prevalence of sati pratha.

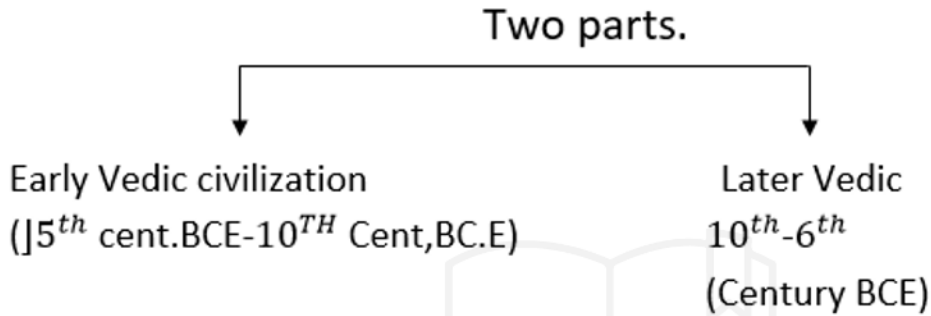
➤ Harappan civilization finally declined in 1750 BCE.



Chapter 4: VEDIC CIVILIZATION

500 BCE -6th Century B.C.E Called Vedic civilization-because all Vedas were compiled during this phase.

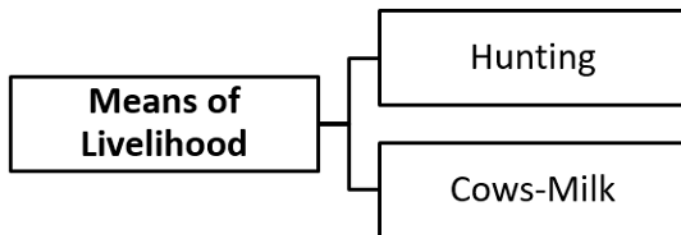
- Language used was Prakrit (easy form of Sanskrit)
 - Aryan came from central Asia. (Tribal)
 - Vedic civilization is divided into



- From Vedic period till now, Civilization has been a continuous one- never fully disappeared.

Early	Later
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formative stage ➤ Though Religious, And society present But in nascent Stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of society, Of society, economy and religion

1st Place of Settlement of Aryans-as mentioned in rig Vedas –Saptsindhava



- Aryans entered India in phase of groups of the individuals. Jana or vis
Most of the wars among the groups were fought for Cows.
- Battle fought Between Baharat-(tribe) and calculation of 10 other tribes caused battle of ten kings or Dasrajna on the banks of river Parushni (ravi)
- Beginning of 10th century- iron discovered

Aryans reached to ganga-Yamuna doab



Fertile land (become aware of Agriculture)



8th Century – work of iron increased.

(Agriculture became surplus)

1. Economy
2. Polity
3. Religion

All 3 diversified

- Basic reason behind the development of economy, Polity and religion in later Vedic age:
 - a) Use of iron
 - b) Agriculture becoming surplus.
 - c) Both
 - d) Neither

At the end of later Vedic period, agriculture materialism increased-India witnessed rise of a great preacher Siddhartha Gautam Buddha.

Society:

- When the Aryans started settling at one place-the society came into being.
- It was primitive Indian society.
- Society there upon was based on kinship
- Nalolri was common name given to peln.
- Polygamy– permitted.
- Marriage age-16 years (No child marriage)
- Varna SYSTEM DEVELOPED.

Four varnas. (By profession/occupation)

- **Brahmins:** - Priestly class and studies Vedas.
- **Kshatriya:** - Rule and administration.
- **Vaishya:** - Agriculture and trade.
- **Shudra:** - Service to all

- In literal sense it was not based on caste or Birth.
- It was the first social system of India.
- Only one textbook gives Kshatriyas, the Status highest in the Varna hierarchy-
“Aitareya Brahmana”
- In order to accommodate different individuals’ interests, society came into existence.

Polity of early Vedic:

➤ **Rajan** – Leader of the group on **non-Permanent basis**.

Kingship as an institution was absent in early Vedic period:

Kingship as an institution must include:

1. Permanent authority.
2. Permanent Revenue.
3. Army.

For political purpose- villages assemblies

Equal participation of women

- Executive → Sabha
- General Assembly (deliberative) → Samiti
- Resource & district. → Vidatha
- Lopata (war – Booty) gana.

(No legislative authority since law itself was absent)

(Early Vedic was only period where in gender equality in true sense was present)

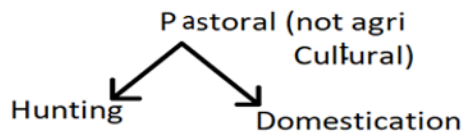
- Collection of the cows and agricultural product after winning the war as prizes.

Religion during early Vedic three types of gods were existing:-

1. Space Gods (heavenly)
2. Earthly Gods
3. Water Gods
 - Most prominent among the godhead was Indra (250 verses in rig veda)
 - Agni-Intermediary god-(200 verses)
 - Varuna- Ritsyagopa - (175 verses)
 - (Protector of Seasons)

- There was no existence of **karma kanda**
- Early Vedic religion was – **Henotheism**

Economy of early Vedic:



- Agricultural economy rose around the end of early Vedic age.
- No money economy and trade were present

↓
Only barter system