

NCERT Solutions Class 6 Social Science

(Exploring Society India and Beyond)

Chapter 6 The Beginning of Indian Civilisation

The Big Questions (Page 85)

Question 1. What is a civilisation?

Answer: A Civilisation is a large and complex society that has developed advanced forms of culture, government, and technology. It includes several key features:

Cities: Civilisations have large, organized communities or cities where people live and work together.

Government: They have systems of leadership and rules to help manage and organize the society.

Writing: Civilisations often have writing systems to record important information and communicate.

Technology: They use advanced tools and techniques to make life easier and more productive.

Culture: Civilisations have rich traditions, art, and beliefs that are shared among their people.

Question 2. What was the earliest civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent?

Answer: The earliest Civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent was the Indus Valley Civilisation. It flourished in the northwestern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, particularly in areas that are now parts of Pakistan and northwest India. This Civilisation is known for its well-planned cities, advanced drainage systems, and impressive architecture, including the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The people of the Indus Valley Civilisation engaged in trade, had a system of writing, and developed various crafts and technologies. It was one of the world's earliest urban cultures.

Question 3. What were its major achievements?

Answer: The Indus Valley Civilisation had several major achievements that made it one of the most advanced ancient cultures:

Urban Planning and Architecture: The Indus Valley Civilisation is known for its well-planned cities with a grid-like layout. Cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro had streets laid out in a precise pattern and houses made of baked bricks. They also had advanced drainage systems with covered drains and private bathrooms.



Advanced Drainage Systems: One of their most remarkable achievements was their sophisticated drainage system. The cities had a network of covered drains and sewers that helped manage waste and prevent flooding.

Writing System: The civilisation developed a writing system with symbols, although it remains undeciphered. This writing was used for trade, administration, and possibly religious purposes.

Trade and Commerce: The Indus Valley people engaged in extensive trade with neighbouring regions. They traded goods such as beads, metals, and textiles. Evidence of trade has been found as far away as Mesopotamia.

Art and Craftsmanship: The Indus Valley Civilisation was known for its high-quality craftsmanship. They created beautiful pottery, jewelry, and seals made from materials like clay, stone, and metal. The seals often had animal motifs and were used for trade and administrative purposes.

Agriculture: They developed advanced agricultural techniques, including irrigation systems to grow crops like wheat, barley, and cotton. They also domesticated animals for farming and transport.

Let's Explore:

Question 1. For each characteristic in the list above, can you make a list of professions or occupations that might exist in such a society? (Page 87)

Answer: The list of professions or occupations that might exist in such a society is as follows:

- Fisherman
- Animal Herder
- Potter
- Stone Carver
- Jeweler

Construction and Engineering:

- Mason
- Carpenter
- Architect
- Brick Maker
- Canal Builder
- Road Builder
- House Builder

- Drainage Engineer
- Wall Painter

Trade and Commerce:

- Merchant
- Trader
- Caravan Leader
- Market Vendor
- Moneylender
- Warehouse Keeper
- Scribe
- Accountant
- Transporter
- Shipbuilder

Administrative and Religious Roles:

- City Planner
- Priest
- Astrologer
- Healer
- Chieftain
- Tax Collector
- Law Enforcer
- Record Keeper
- Council Member

These occupations reflect the diverse and complex nature of the Harappan Civilisation, which was known for its advanced urban planning, trade networks, and craft specialisation.

Question 2. Some of the important cities of this civilisation are marked in the map. As a class activity, can you try to match these cities with the modern states or regions in the table?



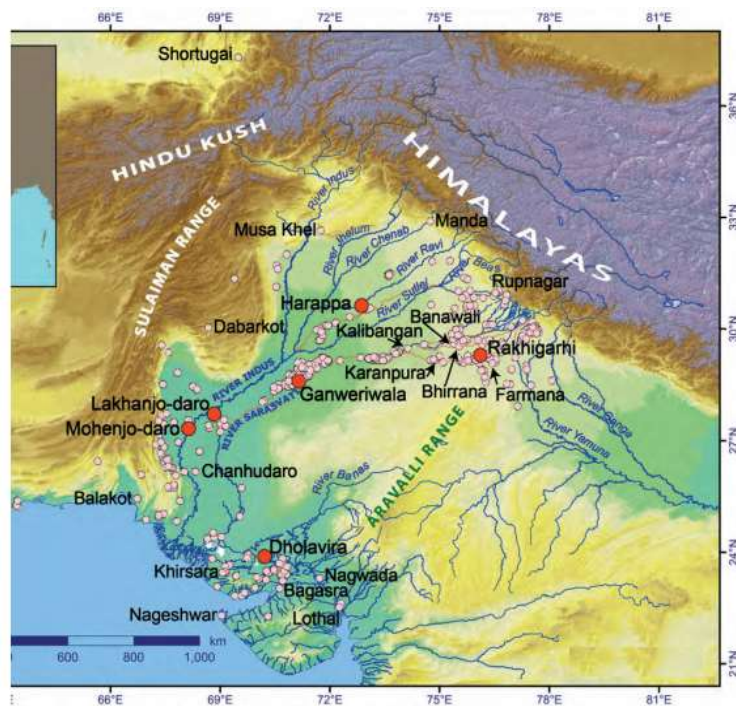


Fig. 6.3. Map of some of the main settlements of the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation. Notice the natural boundaries formed by the mountain ranges (in brown colour).

| Harappan city | Modern state / region |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Dholavira | Punjab |
| Harappa | Gujarat |
| Kalibangan | Sindh |
| Mohenjo-daro | Haryana |
| Rakhigarhi | Rajasthan |

Answer:

| Harappan City | Modern State/Region |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Dholavira | Gujarat |
| Harappa | Punjab |
| Kalibangan | Rajasthan |

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| Mohenjo-daro | Sindh |
| Rakhigarhi | Haryana |

Question 3. Have a debate in class about the last two interpretations. Can you think of any others? Remember that in this case, we do not have any other source of history-no inscription, no text, no traveller's account. (Page 93)

Answer: Do it yourself.

Question 4. As a class activity, measure the length of your classroom, a school corridor or a playground with the help of any measuring tape. Compare these lengths with the length of the largest reservoir in Dholavira.

Answer: Do it yourself

Question 5. Imagine the large number of workers required to build such a network of reservoirs. Who do you think organised their work and gave them precise instructions? How do you think they were paid for their labour? (Hint: there was no money at that time in the way we have today.) Since the reservoirs needed to be cleaned from time to time, was there some local authority to manage their maintenance? What clues do we get from all this about this city's ruler and municipal administration? Use your imagination and discuss with your teacher. Archaeologists also discuss these questions, and the answers are not always final!

Answer: (i) Organising Workers: The construction of large reservoirs would likely have been managed by a ruler or high-ranking officials. They would have had the authority and power to organise and direct the workers. Further, the work might have been completed by skilled managers, engineers and architects who had the proper skills and knowledge required to complete and plan the whole project and these details were forwarded to the workers.

(ii) Payments: Instead of money, workers might have been paid in goods or services, such as food, clothing, or housing and they could have also received benefits like better living conditions or higher status in society.

(iii) Maintenance: There might have been local officials or a municipal authority who further hired workers responsible for maintaining the reservoirs. The officials might have made regular inspections to ensure that the reservoirs were cleaned and kept in good condition. In smaller communities, maintenance might have been a communal responsibility, shared among the local residents.

(iv) Clues about ruler and municipal administration: The organisation of such extensive projects and the regular maintenance indicate a well-structured, organised and centralised administration. The ruler or governing body had the ability and power to mobilise large numbers of people, manage resources effectively, and ensure the regular upkeep of important infrastructure. This reflects a well-developed and organised system of governance and administration with specified roles and responsibilities. (Any other points can also be added.)

Question 6. Looking at three Harappan seals (on page 99) with some writing signs, what goes through your mind? Would you like to suggest any interpretations? Let your imagination run! (Page 99)

Answer: The Harappan seals featuring a unicorn, a bull, and a horned tiger, along with writing signs, offer intriguing insights into the symbolism and possible religious or cultural practices of the Harappan Civilisation. Here are some interpretations and thoughts that might come to mind:

Symbolism and Religious Beliefs:

Unicorn Seal: The unicorn on a Harappan seal is a unique and enigmatic symbol. It might represent a mythical or sacred animal, possibly associated with fertility, prosperity, or divine protection. The unicorn could symbolize a revered deity or a protective spirit in Harappan culture.

Bull Seal: Bulls were commonly associated with strength and fertility in many ancient cultures. In the context of the Harappan Civilisation, the bull might signify agricultural prosperity, as bulls were crucial for farming and plowing. It could also represent a deity or a totemic animal linked to agricultural and pastoral activities.

Horned Tiger Seal: The horned tiger is another fascinating symbol, potentially representing power and ferocity. It might be linked to hunting, protection, or a deity associated with strength and courage. The horn could signify a supernatural or divine quality.

Writing Signs:

The presence of writing signs on these seals suggests that they were used for administrative, economic, or ritualistic purposes. The writing might indicate ownership, convey messages, or be part of a complex system of record-keeping.

The combination of imagery and writing could imply that these seals were used for identification or authentication, possibly in trade, religious ceremonies, or governance.

Cultural and Social Insights:

The variety of symbols on the seals suggests a rich cultural and religious life. The Harappans likely had a complex system of beliefs and practices that included reverence for specific animals and deities.

These seals might also reflect the trade and interaction between different regions, as symbols and writing could serve as a form of communication or branding.

Question 7. Complete the story found on the Lothal pot (on page 101). How was such a story remembered for more than 4,000 years, in your opinion? (Page 102)

Answer: Once, a thirsty crow found a pot with a little water at the bottom. The crow couldn't reach the water by just dipping its beak. Cleverly, it dropped pebbles into the pot one by one. As the pebbles piled up, the water level rose until the crow could drink. Happy and refreshed, the crow flew away.

The story was remembered for over 4,000 years in the following ways:

- **Moral Lessons:** The story teaches cleverness and problem-solving, important lessons that people remembered and shared.
- **Oral Tradition;** People passed the story down by telling it to others, helping it stay alive through generations.
- **Art on Pottery:** The story was depicted on pottery, making it easier for people to remember and recognize.
- **Educational Value:** The story was used to teach values and skills, which made it popular and widely told.
- **Archaeological Finds:** Discovering artifacts like the Lothal pot keeps the story alive, connecting us with the past.

Question 8. Consider the 'Dancing Girl' figurine (on page 101). What do you make of the attitude the figurine expresses? Observe her bangles covering an entire arm, a practice still visible in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Where else in this chapter can you spot bangles worn in this manner? What conclusion should we draw from this? (Page 102)

Answer: The bronze Dancing Girl figurine from the Indus Valley Civilisation is a remarkable artefact that provides insight into the culture and aesthetics of the time. Here's a closer look at what the figurine expresses and the significance of the bangles:

Attitude of the Figurine

Pose and Expression: The Dancing Girl is depicted in a confident and graceful pose, suggesting that dance and physical expression were important aspects of her culture. The posture indicates a sense of poise and self-assurance.

Detailed Features: The figurine is highly detailed, with attention to features like the curves and the intricacy of the jewelry, indicating a sophisticated understanding of art and body aesthetics.

Bangles on the Figurine

Bangles: The figurine's arm is adorned with numerous bangles covering an entire arm, a practice that emphasizes the significance of jewelry in their society. This style of wearing



bangles is still observed in modern Gujarat and Rajasthan, highlighting the continuity of certain cultural practices over millennia.

We can spot bangles in this chapter in Harappan seals which depicts figures with multiple bangles. Other artefacts and objects from the Indus Valley Civilisation also show jewellery styles that include elaborate bangle designs.

Conclusion:

Cultural Continuity: The presence of similar bangle styles in contemporary Gujarat and Rajasthan suggests a strong cultural continuity from ancient times to the present. Traditional practices in jewellery and adornment have persisted across thousands of years.

Cultural Significance: The detailed depiction of bangles and jewellery in the Dancing Girl figurine reflects the high value placed on personal adornment and aesthetics in Harappan society. It indicates that jewelry was not just ornamental but also held cultural and possibly symbolic meanings.

Artistic Sophistication: The intricate detailing on the figurine showcases the artistic skill and craftsmanship of the Indus Valley people, suggesting that they had a well-developed sense of style and artistry.

Question Answer (Exercise):

Question 1. Why does the civilisation studied in this chapter have several names? Discuss their significance.

Answer: The civilisation studied in this chapter, often referred to as the Indus Valley Civilisation, is known by several names due to various historical, geographical, and cultural reasons. These are as follows:

Indus Valley Civilisation this name is based on the civilisation's location along the Indus River and its tributaries. The Indus Valley Civilisation is one of the earliest known urban cultures, and the Indus River played a crucial role in its development. The Civilisation's reliance on the river for agriculture, trade, and daily life is reflected in this name.

Harappan Civilisation this was named after the site of Harappa, one of the first discovered and extensively excavated cities of this civilisation. Harappa is a key archaeological site that provided valuable insights into the urban planning, architecture, and artefacts of the civilisation. The term "Harappan" is often used to refer to the entire civilisation, emphasizing its historical significance.

Mohenjo-daro, another major city of the Civilisation, Mohenjo-daro, also gives its name to the culture. Mohenjo-daro is crucial for understanding the urban layout, drainage systems,



and daily life of the civilisation. Like Harappa, the name “Mohenjodaro” highlights the importance of this city in archaeological studies.

Sarasvati Civilisation, based on the reference to the Sarasvati River, mentioned in ancient texts and believed to have once flowed through the region. The Sarasvati River’s name connects the civilisation to the Vedic traditions and texts. This name reflects the cultural and religious significance of the river in ancient Indian history.

Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation, it combines references to both the Indus and Sarasvati rivers. This term acknowledges the geographical and cultural contributions of both rivers to the civilisation. It reflects a broader understanding of the civilisation’s extent and its connection to historical texts.

Question 2. Write a brief report (150 to 200 words) summing up some of the achievements of the Indus-Sarasvatī civilisation.

Answer:

The Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation, one of the earliest urban cultures, achieved remarkable advancements in various fields. Its sophisticated urban planning is evident from the well-organized cities of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, and Dholavira. These cities featured advanced drainage systems, grid-patterned streets, and standardised brick sizes, reflecting a high level of municipal administration and engineering expertise.

Agricultural innovation was a cornerstone of the civilisation. The Harappans cultivated a range of crops, including wheat, barley, and cotton-the latter being the earliest known instance of cotton cultivation in Eurasia. They employed tools such as the plough, which highlights their agricultural advancements.

Craftsmanship and trade were highly developed. Artisans produced intricate jewellery, pottery, and seals, many of which depict detailed animal motifs and writing signs. The civilisation engaged in extensive trade, evidenced by the exchange of goods with distant regions, including Mesopotamia.

The Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation’s contributions to urban planning, agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade underscore its significance as a pioneer of early complex societies.

Question 3. Imagine you have to travel from the city of Harappa to Kalibangan. What are your different options? Can you make a rough estimation of the amount of time each option might take?

Answer: If, I needed to travel from Harappa to Kalibangan, I could choose from a few different options such as:

I could walk or use a cart pulled by animals. It might take about 20-30 days because it’s a long distance and travel is slow.



I could travel with a caravan of camels or oxen, which could carry more and travel faster. This might take around 15-25 days, as caravans are faster and can carry more goods.

If there are rivers I can use, travelling by boat could be quicker. This option might take about 10-20 days, depending on how fast the boat travels and if you need to switch to land transport.

I have combined river travel and land transport for a quicker journey. This could take around 15-20 days, balancing both travel methods.

But, each option depends on the weather and the route.

Question 4. Let us imagine a Harappan man or woman being transported to an average kitchen in today's India. What are the four or five biggest surprises awaiting them?

Answer: The five surprises a Harappan man or woman might encounter in a modern kitchen in today's India are as follows:

- (i) Seeing electric appliances like refrigerators, ovens, and microwaves would be surprising, as they didn't have these in ancient times.
- (ii) The variety of packaged and processed foods, such as snacks and ready-to-eat meals, would be new to them.
- (iii) The use of gas or electric stoves for precise cooking would be different from their traditional open fire methods.
- (iv) The use of electric lights in the kitchen would be surprising compared to the oil lamps or candles they were used to.
- (v) The availability of many different spices and ingredients from around the world would be a big change from the local ingredients they were familiar with.

Question 5. Looking at all the pictures in this chapter, make a list of the ornaments/gestures/objects that still feel familiar in our 21st century.

Answer: Do it yourself.

Question 6. What mindset does the system of reservoirs at Dholavira reflect?

Answer: The system of reservoirs at Dholavira clearly reflects the following:

- **Advanced Planning and Engineering Skills:** The Harappans were able to develop and construct large and interconnected water reservoirs which actually gives us an idea of their smart and well developed engineering and planning skills.
- **Conservation of Water:** The construction of these water reservoirs also demonstrates their understanding towards the importance of water conservation.
- **Social Collaboration and Civic Sense:** Their combined effort to build such huge constructions proves that they had social sense of collaboration and civility.
- **Continuous and Stable Water Supply:** This also proves that how in collaboration they ensured a stable and continuous water supply for the whole society.



- **Sustainability of Resources:** This again highlights their deep understanding for maintaining a sustainable living conditions and to secure resources for the coming future generations.

Question 7. In Mohenjo-daro, about 700 wells built with bricks have been counted. They seem to have been regularly maintained and used for several centuries. Discuss the implications.

Answer: The presence of around 700 brick wells in Mohenjo-Daro, which were regularly maintained and used for several centuries, has several important implications, a few of which are mentioned below:

(i) Systematic Urban Planning: The extensive number of wells indicates great urban planning and infrastructure. The wells were placed throughout the city to ensure a reliable and accessible water supply for everyone.

(ii) Water Management System: The Harappans had effective methods for managing their water resources, as all the wells were regularly maintained. With regular inspection and maintenance, they were ensuring a sustainable water supply.

(iii) Public Health and Hygiene: Easy access to clean water is crucial for maintaining sanitation and preventing waterborne diseases, and the presence of numerous wells suggests that Harappans prioritised public health and hygiene.

(iv) Social Structure: Only a well-organised social structure can build and maintain such a large number of wells. Therefore, it can be suggested that there was centralised administration and a proper system of public works and maybe roles were even dedicated to overseeing water resources.

(v) Stability: Such extensive infrastructure requires a stable society capable of supporting and managing large-scale projects. Therefore, it is clear that there was economic and social stability back then.

Question 8. It is often said that the Harappans had a high civic sense. Discuss the significance of this statement. Do you agree with it? Compared with citizens in a large city of India today.

Answer: Yes, Harappans had a high civic sense. Some of the facts that support the statement are as follows

- They had a separate bathing area that was well connected to the network of drains.
- The waste used to flow through the drains.
- The houses were made of bricks only.
- People in Harappan cities were engaged in trading activities.



In today's large cities of India, the drainage system is not working very well due to overpopulation and pollution. There are slum areas around the large cities these days which were not the feature of Harappan cities. Hence, in these ways Harappan cities were more civic than modern cities in India.

