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Notes

Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

The Harappan Civilization or the 'Indus Valley Civilization' was a fascinating urban civilization in the world that flourished in the vast plains created by the River Indus and its tributaries. The Harappan Civilization thrived between 2600 – 1900 BC in the region that is now in Pakistan and India. With a population of over five million, this civilization had a well-developed trade system, cities, sewerage system, metallurgy techniques with many other mathematical and scientific achievements.

But with time, there was shrinkage in the Harappan Civilization. For instance, Mohenjodaro, one of the major cities of this civilization, earlier flourished on about eighty-five hectares of land but later on got confined to just three hectares. Due to some reason, the population from the Harappa started moving to the nearby and outer cities and places like Punjab, Upper Doab, Haryana, etc. But what leads to the decline of the Harappan Civilization is still a mystery.

Proposed theories regarding the decline of the Harappan Civilization

The definite reason that led to the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization is not known, as no reliable resource of that period is available at present. Every conclusion regarding the decline is based upon speculations of historians. Though the reason for the decline is not known, through excavations it is clear that the fall of the Harappan Civilization occurred between 1800 BC to 1700 BC.

It is commonly believed that the 'Aryans' were the next settlers. They were skilled fighters, so their attack might have led to the destruction of the Harappan Civilization. The epics of the Aryans mentioned about their victory over the great cities. The human remains found during the excavation of Indus valley point towards some violent cause of their death. Now many historians, who do not believe this theory, say that the Aryans might not be involved in any such attack.

Owing to this conflict, the theory of a *huge climatic change* or natural disaster gained credibility. It has been found out that around 2000 BC some major climatic changes started occurring in the Indus Valley. These changes had led to floods in the plains and cities. Historians have found evidence to prove this theory as well. Most of the cities in the Harappan Civilization have been found in a condition as if these had been first abandoned and then rebuilt.

Cities, for instance, were initially built with great care but the reconstruction of the same was done with broken bricks and no attention was paid to the proper sewage system during reconstruction. Proper sewage system was one of the major characteristics of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Then, there was a *fall in the average rainfall* in the cities leading to the formation of desert-like condition. This led to the decline in agriculture on which most of the trade was dependent. Owing to this, people of the Indus Valley started shifting to some other location leading to the decline in the entire civilization. As per some scholars, the reason for the decline is the change in the course of River Ghaggar-Hakra that had led to an increase in the *aridity* of the place. Around 2000 BC, there was found an increase in arid conditions. The location where the Indus valley civilization once flourished is a desert today.

Many theories have been formulated and provided, but all the theories met with one or another form of criticism. Archeological evidence does prove that there was no sudden collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization but it declined over a period of time and got mingled with other civilizations of that period.