

## **Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials**

**Programme: Bachelor of Arts (First Year)**

**Subject: History**

**Paper Code: HSC 102**

**Paper Title: History of India (From Earliest Times up to 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E)**

**Unit I:**

**Module Name: Harappan Culture: Religion**

**Module No: 06**

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### **Notes**

#### **Introduction:**

Religion has played a crucial role in molding the beliefs and social life of different civilizations. No definite religious relics, or buildings have been found in Indus Valley which may be considered as temples. Information regarding religious ideas, beliefs and practices of the Indus people can be gained from seals, sealings, figurines, stone images etc.

#### **Mother-Goddess:**

Various terra-cotta female figures have been found at Indus sites which are considered to be the representations of the Mother-Goddess. This female figure can be seen in a standing posture which is wearing a band round her loins. She wears an elaborate head dress and collar along with neck ornaments, and ear ornaments like caps suspended on either side of the head.

Sealings have been found at Harappa which depicts a female figure standing on the branch of a Pipal tree. It also shows a worshipper with a goat and many people standing in the lower register. It looks like the people are standing to witness sacrifice of the goat.

## **Siva**

According to Sir John Marshall and Dr. E.J.H Mackay, the Cult of the Mother Goddess did not dominate the Indus religion. Male deities and *Pipal* god were considered as supreme amongst all.

Seals have been found depicting male deity with three faces, who is seated in yogic posture and is surrounded by animals like Elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and buffalo. This deity can be seen decked up with bangles from shoulder to wrist. He is considered to be as *Pasupati* (Lord of animals).

Three epithets of Siva can be found in Indus valley: *Trimukha* (Three faced), *Pasupati* (Lord of animals), *Yogisvara* or *Mahayogi* (Deity seated in cross legged posture).

We learn about Siva from worship of *Linga* (polished stones) and *yonis* symbols (pierced stones) found on the seals of Mohenjo-Daro. *Linga* is the conical and cylindrical stone which signifies fertility. *Yoni* is considered as female symbol of generation.

## **Animal Worship**

Indus people domesticated animals such as elephant, pig, camel, sheep, buffalo, humped bull, horse, dogs etc. Remains of animals have been found such as deer, black rat and mongoose. Animal figures of monkey, hare, bison, bear, rhinoceros and tiger have been found.

Animal figurines have been found on the seals. One such seal shows a buffalo who is standing amidst victims. It is interpreted as a deity who is standing victorious amongst its enemies. Seals have been found which depicts image of many beasts merged into one and also some seals depict three different heads on one body. For example, in one seal heads of short horned bull, an Urus-bull and an antelope are combined together.

Zoolatry means religious worship of Animals which was practiced by the Indus people. Images of animals can be found on seals, sealings, terracotta, faience and stone figurines which are found in the Indus Valley.

Animals worshipped may be divided in three categories:

- i. Mythical animals- Semi-human creature, intricate animals (heads of different animals). Ex. Seal found at Mohenjodaro- heads of bison, unicorn and ibex (species of wild goat).
- ii. Ambiguous animals- not fully mythical (Ex. Unicorn)
- iii. Actual animals- Elephants, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo, humped bull or zebra, bison and short-horned bull.

**Naga Worship:** Images of seated deity with a hooded cobra over his head, worshipper on the either side have been found on a faience tablet.

### **Tree Worship**

Tree worship was being practiced by the Indus people. Depiction of *Pipal* and Acacia trees on seals and painted pottery of Indus Valley. These plants were regarded as holy plants and were supposed to be inhabited by divine spirits. *Pipal* tree signified creation and knowledge. The *Sami* tree was considered as abode of gods. Images of Acacia tree has been seen on sealings wherein it can be seen guarded by buffalo headed goat.

Tree worship is an ancient practice in India. This tree worship later has been adapted in Hindu religious system.

### **Disposal of the dead**

#### **Types of burials have been found at Mohenjo-Daro:**

- **Complete Burial-** burial of the body with offerings useful in after-life.
- **Fractional Burial-** Exposure of the dead body to wild animals and vultures- burial of bones; Urns containing skull, scrappy bones, earthenware, small pots, small objects- shell, beads, spoon, bits of ivory etc.)
- **Post-cremation Burials-** Large mouthed urns- small vessels, animal, fish, birds' bones, bangles, beads etc.

### **Conclusion**

Harappan civilization has left behind ancient symbols of Hinduism. The religion practiced today has evolved through varied cultures. Growth of Harappan Civilization is of utmost importance in this evolution process.