

Hello students, In this presentation we will be discussing about religion that was practiced in the Harappan civilization. We shall be discussing about the worship of Mother Goddess, Lord Siva, the worship of animals, tree worship and how the Harappans disposed the dead. You shall learn about the deities worshipped and religion of the Indus people and you will also be able to analyze the religious practices of the Indus Valley people.

Religion has played an important role in shaping the beliefs and social life of different civilizations. We will be focusing about the religion that was practiced by the Harappan people.

No definite religious relics or buildings have been found in Indus valley civilisation which may be considered as temples. We get information about religious ideas, beliefs and practices of the Indus people from the seals, sealings, figurines, stone images etc.

The very first that we will be discussing about is the worship of the mother Goddess. Different Terracotta female figures have been found at Indus sites and these are considered to be the representation of the mother goddess. This female figure can be seen in a standing posture, wearing a girdle around her loins. She also wears intricate headdress and collar with Nishkar ornaments. She can also be seen wearing ear ornaments that is suspended on either side of the head. There are sealings that have been found in Harappa which depicts a female figure standing on the branch of a Pipal Tree. A worshipper can also be seen with a goat. And we can also see the people standing in the lower register.

We can also see the worship of Shiva by the by the Indus people. 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.

We can see the worship of animals by the Indus people, so the Indus people domesticated animals like elephant, pig, camel, sheep, buffalo, humped bull, horse, dogs etc. Remains of animals have been found such as deer, black rat and mangoose. 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:

Firstly, Mythical animals which are Semi-human creatures. They are intricate animals having heads of different animals. Ex. Seal found at Mohenjo-Daro- heads of bison, unicorn and ibex (species of wild goat).

Secondly, Ambiguous animals which are not fully mythical (Ex. Unicorn)

Thirdly, Actual animals like Elephants, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo, humped bull or zebra, bison and short-horned bull.

We can also notice *Naga* Worship being practiced by the Indus people. Evidences have been found. Images of seated deity with a hooded cobra over his head, worshipper on the either side have been found on a faience tablet.

We also see that tree worship was practiced on a wide scale. Seals have been found depicting *Pipal* and *Acacia* trees on seals and painted pottery of Indus Valley. These plants were regarded as holy plants and were supposed to be inherited 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.

The next, we are going to discuss about the disposal of the dead. We find different types of burials at Mohenjo-Daro:

The first is the Complete Burial where in dead bodies are buried with offerings that are useful in after-life.

Second, Fractional Burial wherein the dead body is exposed to wild animals and vultures. Urns have been found containing skull, scrappy bones, earthenware, small pots, small objects- shell, beads, spoon, bits of ivory etc.

Third, Post-cremation Burials have been found. Large mouthed urns have been found which are containing small vessels, animal, fish, birds' bones, bangles, beads etc.

So, we come to know that the the Harappans disposed the dead by the means of burials by exposing the body to the wild animals and also by the means of Cremation.

To conclude, 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.

These are the references.

Thank you.