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## **Urbanisation in Pre-historical Era in India**

These cultural and technological developments led to the emergence of urban characteristics, particularly in the larger village settlements. This resulted in the beginning era of urbanization. There is no consensus about the manner in which the earliest cities in the Indus Valley region originated. The archeological studies mainly by the western scholars suggest that the idea of the urban way of life came to the Indus Valley from Mesopotamia.

The Salient features of the civilization of the Mesopotamia and in the Harappan cities are same. These common features include:

- a) Wheel-turned pottery
- b) The art of writing
- c) The practice of agriculture
- d) The location of urban settlements on the banks of rivers etc.

The Harappan were primarily an agricultural people. They settled on fertile plains where flood waters provided a means of natural irrigation. They did not develop an elaborate system of irrigation. The plough was not known to the Harappans , instead they used harrow to till the soil. Barley, wheat, peas and sesame were the main crops. In addition cotton and rice were also grown. Domesticated animals were sheep, cattle, buffaloes, pigs, dogs and camels. Among the metals, copper and bronze were used for tool making. Moreover, gold and silver were used for making items of jewellery and vessels, stone and bronze sculptures, terracotta animals, birds, snakes, fish, toys,

etc. indicate high degree of artistic development, cotton textiles were important industry to Harappans.

The art of writing was known and a script using about 250 characters on sign was in use. A system of weights and measures based on binary and decimal modes existed. The figures on the seals reveal the worship of a deities of both sexes. The Harappan culture has all the attributes of a fully developed urban society. The city proper supported a class of non-farmers. The head of the society was high priest a king.

The urban planning was highly developed and the two cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa represented the climate of urban development. Both the cities are now in Pakistan. However, there were other cities in this region which do not show the same degree of development. These towns were smaller and perhaps functioned as regional centres.

Lothal the third major city of this period was a major port town. The other cities and towns were located at Kalibangan and Banawali respectively.

The city proper consists of two component parts:

1. A citadel built on high ground
2. Low city where the vast majority of the population lived

The citadel was always located on the Western side of the city. It consisted of number of large structures and whole area was fortified by walls. Thus, the Citadel stood apart from the other parts of the city. Within the citadel were buildings with large halls palatial residences for the nobles and high priest and here the rulers of Harappa people resided.

Lower city: The lower city or the city proper was built on gridiron pattern where the streets were aligned east-west and north-south

The city had an elaborate drainage system where the main drainage channels along the main streets were fully covered with man-holes to facilitate periodic cleaning. Pipes of earth were connected the houses to the street drains and ultimately the sewage was a drain into the river after partial purification in Soak pits. The city also had a separate stone water drainage system. Water supply for the city population was available from brick walls/wells inside the large residences. The residential structures were built with fixed bricks of uniform size indicating standardization.

### **The decline of Harappan cities**

The Harappan cities began to decline after 1900 B.C. The urban settlements became smaller and their general conditions deteriorated till about 700 B.C. The decline and eventual disappearance of Harappan civilization was due to either natural disaster or deliberate destruction by an invading army. The most probable natural cause for the disappearance of Harappan culture would be floods droughts, etc. Most Harappan cities were located on banks of major rivers and highly vulnerable to devastation by floods

The increase in pressure of population in cities resulting in overcrowding and poor sanitary condition must have produce devastating pestilence. This must have taken away a heavy toll of the cities' population.