

Ancient Indian History

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

The Discoverers of Indus Valley Civilization:

- *Alexander Cunningham – He was the first Director-General of ASI. He Began excavations around mid nineteenth century.*
- *John Marshall – He was the DG of ASI in 1927 and first professional Archaeologist of India. But he excavated horizontally and all finds were grouped together even when they were found at different stratigraphic layers. This caused loss of very valuable information regarding.*
- *R.E.M. Wheeler – He followed the stratigraphy of excavations rather than just excavating horizontally.*

Basic features of Indus Valley Civilization:

- *The Indus Valley civilization is the first known Urban Culture in India.*
- *Majority of the sites developed on the banks of river Indus, Ghaggar and its tributaries.*
- *This civilisation is credited for building cities complete with : town planning, sanitation, drainage system and broad well-laid roads.*
- *They also built double storied houses of burnt-bricks complete with bathroom , kitchen, and a well.*
- *Their Walled cities had important buildings such as, the Great Bath, Granaries and the Assembly Halls.*
- *Their Agriculture was considered major occupation for rural areas. While the City residents were involved in internal & external trade which led to developed contacts with other civilizations (e.g. Mesopotamia).*
- *Harappans were excellent potters as is evident by their artifacts.*
- *Harappans also had technical knowledge of metals & process of alloying (e.g. bronze sculpture of dancing girl found in Mohenjodaro).*
- *Also, Shell, ivory, bone and faience were used as material for different crafts.*
- *Here, Lothal deserves special mention as the site for dockyard. It is situated in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.*



- Lothal was a well planned walled city which was an important centre of sea trade with the western world.
- Other important cities were- Dhaulavira (Guj.) & Kalibangam (Rajasthan).
- Harappans used to worship plants, animals and the forces of nature.
- They also worshipped male god resembling Lord Shiva of later times and a mother goddess.
- They also probably believed in life after death and also in charms and spells.
- Their Seals were engraved with animal figures (e.g. humped bull, elephant and rhinoceros). This suggests that these animals were considered sacred.
- The image of 'Peepal' tree is found depicted on many seals.
- Harappan script is yet to be deciphered. Hence, our knowledge of Harappan civilization is solely based on archaeological evidence alone.
- Harappans were the first people to cultivate cotton. They knew the art of spinning & weaving.

Important sites of Indus Valley Civilisations

Firstly, let's look at major sites:

1. Harappa was an urban center. It is in Punjab Province of Pakistan, located on an old river-bed of River Ravi.
2. Mohenjo Daro is located in Sindh province of Pakistan, which is next to the river Indus.
3. Dholavira is situated on 'Khadir Beyt', which is an island in Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, India.
4. Lothal is located near the Sabarmati river and Arabian sea, in the Gulf of Khambhat, Gujarat, India.
5. Rakhigarhi was discovered in Haryana, India only in 1990.
6. Ganeriwala is located in Punjab province of Pakistan and is very near to the Indian border.

BUDDHISM

Life of Gautama Buddha:

- The founder of Buddhism was **Gautam Buddha**, was born as **Siddhartha**.
- Siddhartha was **born in 566 BC at Lumbini** (now falls in territory of Nepal) in the **Sakya clan of Kshatriya**. That is why Buddha is also known as **Sakyamuni**.
- He died at 80 years of age in 486 BC at **Kushinagar** (near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh).
- The mother of Siddhartha was 'Mahamaya' who died after giving birth to him. Thereafter, he was brought up by 'Prajapati Gautami' his maternal aunt. Therefore, he was also called **Gautam**.
- The name of his father was **Siddhodhana**. He was the only son of his father.
- Siddhartha was married to **Yashodhara**. He also had a son named **Rahul**. But neither his wife nor his son were able to tie him to the worldly life.
- He then left his home and became an ascetic at the age of 29 in search of truth and end of sorrows. This event in Buddha's life is known as "**Mahabhisikramana**".
- Buddha's teachers were - **Alara and Udarak**.
- After seven years of roaming around, at the age of 35, Siddhartha got enlightenment at **Uruvela** while meditating on the bank of river **Niranjana** under a **Peepal (Banyan) tree**. This tree is called the **Bodhi Tree**. The place is known as **Bodhi Gaya**.
- Buddha attained the knowledge on the **Purnima of Vaishakha month**.
- He then gave his first sermon at **Sarnath (Varanasi)**. This historic event in Buddha's life is known as "**Dhammachakra Parivartan**".
- As mentioned above, Buddha passed away in 486 BC under a **Sal tree** in **Kushinagar** (Kushinagar was under **Licchhavi Kingdom**).
- Various notable rulers of his time were Buddha's disciples such as **Prasenjit, Bimbisara, and Ajatsatru**.
- Some famous **Bhikkhus** of Buddhism were **Sariputra, Ananda, Mahakassapa, Annuradha, Upali, and Rahul**.
- **Vardhman Mahavir (Jainism)** was a contemporary of **Gautam Buddha (Buddhism)**.

Buddhist Philosophy:

- The Buddhist philosophy is based on **Madhyama marga** or the **middle path**.

- According to madhyam marga philosophy, both the extremes of the world- indulgence and strict abstinence both are avoided and a middle path between them is followed.
- The main teachings of Buddha are summarised in **four noble truths**(Arya satya) of Buddhism:
 - The world is full of sorrow(Dukkha)
 - Desire is the cause of sorrow(Dukha samudya)
 - If desire is conquered all sorrow is won over(Dukha nirodha)
 - Desire can be conquered by following eight fold paths (Ashtangirka Marg)
- To conquer the desire, Eight Fold Path has to be followed:
 - **Samyak Drist:** Right Understanding
 - **Samyak Sankalpa:** Right Resolve
 - **Samyak Vani:** Right Speech
 - **Samyak Karma:** Right Action
 - **Samyak Ajiv:** Right Living
 - **Samyak Vyayam:** Right Efforts
 - **Samyak Smriti:** Right Mindfulness/thought
 - **Samyak Samadhi:** Right Self-Concentration
- There are three base Pillars known as Tri-ratnas in Buddhism: **Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.**
- Buddha means the highest spiritual potential in every human being.
- Dhamma refers to the teachings of Buddha.
- Sangha is the organization of the monks practicing Buddhism.

Buddhist Works:

- One of the reasons of spread of Buddhism across the subcontinent was its use of Pali. Pali was the language of common people, unlike sanskrit which had become restricted to the elite Brahamans.
- The literary sources of Buddhism are the three "Tripitaka" written in Pali - Sutta Pitak, Vinaya Pitak, and Abhidhamma Pitak.
- **Dhammapad** is known as the Gita of Buddhism. It is basically canonical text of Buddhism.
- **Aswaghosa**, the buddhist monk was the writer of **Buddhacharita**.

- **MilindaPanho** is a Buddhist Treatise about a dialogue between the Indo-greek king **Menander** and Buddhist monk **Nagasena**.
- **Sunyavada** or the theory of void is propagated by a south Indian Buddhism Philosopher, **Nagarjuna**. he wrote **Mulamadhyamakarikā**, where he wrote that **sunyata** is the nature of all things.

JAINISM

In the sixth century BC, India witnessed the rise of two new religions – Jainism and Buddhism. The primary reason for the rise of these religions was the religious unrest at that time in the country. This unrest was attributed to the rituals and sacrifices advocated by the Later Vedic period which were not understood by a larger section of people. The Rise of Jainism in India was a result of a mixture these factors.

The Jain Tradition:

- The Jain tradition had a succession of **tirthankars**(religious leader).
- The first Tirthankar was **Rishabha Dev**.
- The 23rd Tirthankar was **Parshavanath** who founded Jainism.
- According to the Jain tradition, time is infinite and constituted by upward and downward movements. The tirthankars appear in succession in time, to teach the about the way of release of soul from material entanglements of this world.

Vardhaman Mahavira (539- 467 B.C.)

- **Vardhamana Mahavira** was the **24th Tirthankar** of the Jain tradition. He is considered the last tirthankar.
- He was born at **Kundagrama** near **Vaisali** in about **546 BC**.
- He was born to **Kshatriya** parents **Siddhartha** and **Trisala**.
- He was married to **Yasoda** and had a daughter from his marriage named **Anojja** or **Priyadarsana**.
- He renounced the world at the age of thirty to become an ascetic and wandered for twelve years. He also practiced self-mortification for these years.
- In the 13th year of his penance, he attained the highest spiritual knowledge by triumphing over himself. This knowledge is called **Kevala Gnan**.
- Thereafter, he was called **Mahavira**, **Jina**, **Kevalin**.



- His followers were called the Jains and this religion came to be known as Jainism.
- From this time till his death, he preached his doctrines for 30 years.
- He **died** at the age of 72 at **Pava** near Rajagriha(now in Patna district).

Teachings of Mahavira:

- Jainism rejects the authority of Vedas and Vedic rituals.
- It discards the belief in God.
- Therefore, Jains don't worship God, but instead worship their tirthankars(their souls have attained salvation).
- The 3 principles of Jainism are also known as **TriRatnas** (three gems) are:- - right faith, right knowledge, right conduct.
- **Right faith** - It is the belief in the teachings and wisdom of Mahavira. Followers of Jainism are expected to have right faith.
- **Right Knowledge** - It is the acceptance of theory which says there is no God and that the world has been existing without a creator, all objects possess a soul.
- **Right conduct** - It refers to the observance of the five great vows:- not to injure life, not to lie, not to steal, not to acquire property, not to lead immoral life.
- Everyone had to strictly follow the doctrine of Ahimsa.
- Mahavira considered all objects, both animate and inanimate, to have souls and different degrees of consciousness.
- He considered all objects to possess life and feel pain when they are injured.
- Mahavira advocated a very holy and ethical code of life.
- He considered even the practice of agriculture as sinful because it causes injury to the earth, worms and animals.
- The doctrine of asceticism and renunciation was considered the shortest path to salvation by going to extreme lengths for the practice of starvation, nudity and other forms of self-torture.