

Decline of the Civilisation

We can not state with certainty as to how and when the Harappan civilisation met its decline. Undoubtedly, such an extensive and developed civilisation could neither meet its decline suddenly nor could there be a single reason responsible for its downfall. (On the basis of the archaeological remains, it seems that the Harappan civilisation did not meet its end suddenly; it declined gradually. The process of its decline took almost 600 years (1900 to 1300 B.C.).)

In the opinion of scholars some Harappan sites continued to be occupied even after 1900 B.C.,

① Floods and Earthquakes

Some scholars opine that floods and earthquakes played a vital role in the decline of the Harappan civilisation. The evidences found at various excavated sites suggest that the area was heavily flooded frequently.) R.L. Raikes, the renowned hydrologist also confirms this view. He believes that the Harappan civilisation declined because of catastrophic flooding. The flood waters raised the water level to 30 feet above ground and the towns of the Indus valley remained submerged in water for a long time. Because of being a disturbed seismic zone the area was ravaged by earthquakes besides floods. The violent earthquakes which damned rivers and burnt the towns caused the destruction of the Harappan civilisation.

② Shifting away of the Indus

H.T. Lambrick opines that changes in the course of the river Indus caused the destruction of the important town like Mohenjodaro. Because of the shortage of water, the people of the surrounding food producing villages deserted the area. It happened many a times. As a result, all those areas whose fertility and prosperity depended on river water, started becoming deserted and barren.) However, the changing of course of Indus could be regarded as the cause of becoming Mohenjodaro deserted but it can not be accepted as the sole factor for the destruction of the Harappan civilisation.

3. Increased Aridity and Drying Up of the Ghaggar

The scholars like D.P. Agrawal believe that the decline of the Harappan civilisation was caused by increasing aridity and drying up the river Ghaggar-Hakra. In their opinion there was a sharp increase in the arid condition by the middle of 2000 B.C. Such a condition must have affected semi-arid region like that of Harappa much. It affected the agricultural production which resulted in destabilization of the city economies.

4. Barbarian Invasions

In the opinion of R.E.M. Wheeler¹⁶, the Harappan civilisation met its decline because of the Aryan invasions¹⁷. He puts forward some reasons in order to strengthen his viewpoint. (i) Evidences of massacre have been found in the late phase of occupation at Harappa. Human skeletons have been found on the streets and in the houses. (ii) The Rig Veda mentions the Vedic god Indra as 'Purandara', that is 'the destroyer of forts.' Since there are no remains of other cultural groups having forts in this region in this historical phase, Wheeler believes that it was Harappan cities that were being mentioned in the Rig Veda. (iii) Punjab and Ghaggar-Hakra region was a

5. Ecological Imbalance

Several scholars believe that ecological imbalance caused for the destruction of the Harappan civilisation. The growing human and cattle population gave birth to food problem. Due to the cutting of forests for agricultural land and timber for fuel and over-exploitation of water resources, the land became barren and the rivers were full of silts. The ecological imbalance gave birth to the recurring problems of flood, drought and famine. It seems that being compelled by the circumstances, people started to move away gradually to areas which offered better subsistence possibilities. That is why the Harappan