

Economic Life: Means of Subsistence

The Harappan civilisation was a prosperous civilisation. Its prosperous villages and towns strengthen the view that this tract was very fertile in ancient times. It received much rainfall and was rich in natural vegetation. The economic life of the Harappans can be studied under following heads:

① Agriculture

(Agriculture was the main occupation of the Harappans. Remains of the large granaries found in cities like Harappa and Mohenjodaro suggest that production was more than the requirements. Grains like wheat, barley, lentil, chick pea and sesame have been found from various Harappan sites. Millets have been found from various sites in Gujarat. Finds of rice are relatively rare. However, remains of rice found from the Harappan sites in Gujarat and Haryana, suggest that rice was also grown. It seems that rice was grown at Lothal in Gujarat even in 1800 BC. Ragi, kodon, sesame, mustard, sanwa, jowar and beans were also grown. Cotton was an important product of Sindhu tract. The Harappans were the first to grow cotton.) Cotton has been found at Mehargarh at least 2000 years before the mature phase of the Harappan civilisation which is the oldest evidence of cotton growing in the whole world.

① Domestication of Animals

(Domestication of animals was another important occupation of the Harappans. Depiction of animals on seals found in the excavation suggest that the Harappans domesticated bull, cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, pig etc. Dogs and cats too, were pet animals. Humped bull was their favourite animal. They probably domesticated camel and ass also, which were used as beasts of burden. Bones of camel have been found in large numbers from many sites but no depiction of camel have been found on any seal. The Harappans in Gujarat also reared elephant, but it can not be said with certainty whether they knew horse or not. Bones of horses have been reported from Lothal, Surkotada, Kalibangan and some other places. Terracotta figurines of the horse have been found at Nausharo and Lothal.) However no unambiguous depiction of horse on any seal has been found till date.

③ Crafts and Industries

The Harappans were gifted with high talent regarding crafts and industries. Making of pottery, metal vessels, tools and weapons, spinning of cotton and wool, weaving and dyeing, making of ornaments and wooden articles especially implements related to agriculture, bullock carts and boats etc.) were important industries of the Harappans.

Identification of Crafts Production Centres

The archaeologists usually identify the centres of craft production by raw material such as stone nodules, whole shells, copper ore tools, unfinished objects, rejects and waste material. For example, pieces of shell or stone cut to make objects were discarded as waste at the place of production. Similarly, when larger waste pieces were used up to make smaller objects, the minuscule bits were usually left in the work area. The finding of such materials, in heaps at various sites help the archaeologists identify them as the centres of production. Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Lothal, Dholavira, Nageshwar, Balakot etc. were the important centres of crafts production. Chanhudaro, a tiny settlement of less than seven hectares, was almost exclusively devoted to crafts production. (Nageshwar and Balakot were specialised centres for making shell objects—including bangles, ladles and inlay. Beautiful and artistic pots were made with the help of potter's wheel by the Harappans. Pots were painted in red and black. Perhaps in no other contemporary civilisation, so beautiful clay ware was made as in the Harappan civilisation. Manufacturing of cloth was a significant occupation of this civilisation. Cotton and woollen clothes with bright and fast colours were manufactured on large scale. Printed clothes were also manufactured.) A large number of spindles of various sizes which have been found among the remains, suggest that weaving was done not a large scale.

(Although the people of this bronze-age civilisation used several tools and implements made of stone but they were also well aware of gold, silver, copper, lead and bronze.) The metallurgists made bronze alloying tin in copper. Since neither of these

(Ornament making was a noteworthy occupation of the Harappans. Very beautiful and artistic ornaments were made of gold, silver and precious stones etc. Beads making was a favourite occupation of the Harappans. A fairly large number of Harappans were engaged in this craft at Mohenjodaro, Chanhodaro and Lothal. Since a variety of precious stones such as Carnelian, Lapis Lazuli, Agate and Jasper were used for making beads, it is likely that there were specialized bead makers for each type of stone. Shell-working was another flourishing industry of the Harappan civilisation. The artisans in coastal settlements manufactured ornaments like pendants, rings, bracelets, inlays, beads etc. from shells. Objects like bowls, ladles and gamesman were also made from shells.

4 (Trade and Commerce: Strategies for Procuring Materials

The archaeological remains like large granaries, a large number of clay seals, a uniform script and regulated weights and measurements etc., found in the cities like Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Lothal confirm the view that trade and commerce of the Harappan civilisation was in a flourishing state. (A variety of raw materials was needed for craft production.) Raw material such as clay was locally available but the materials like stone, timber and metal had to be acquired from outside the alluvial plain.

(The business community enjoyed a very important place in society. The internal trade was carried on mainly by water routes. Existence of wide roads in almost all the Harappan cities testifies the fact that internal trade was carried on a large scale. There were a number of small and big shops on the sides of streets and roads. Terracotta toy-models of bullock-carts suggest that bullock-carts served as an important means of transportation across land routes. They were used for carrying goods from one place to another. It seems that riverine routes along the Indus and its tributaries and coastal routes were also used for transportation. Grains, clothes and animals were the main items of internal trade.)