

**HIS3B04 INDIAN HISTORY 1- STATE AND SOCIETY
IN EARLY INDIA**

**MODULE-1 TOWARDS CIVILIZATION
TOPIC- DEBATE ON DECLINE OF INDUS
CIVILIZATION**



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DEBATES ON DECLINE OF INDUS CIVILIZATION



- The archaeological evidences show gradual decline of Harappan civilization in the later phase
- Decline is set in at Mohenjodaro by 2200 BCE & settlement had come to an end by 2000 BCE
- In some places civilization continued till 1800 BCE
- Apart from dates, the pace of decline also varied
- Mohenjodaro & Dholavira gave a gradual decline
- Kalibangan & Banawali- city life ended all of a sudden

Aryan Invasion Theory



- One of the most popular explanations & least evidence to prove it was the idea that the civilization was destroyed by Aryan invaders
- Put forward by Ramprasad Chanda in 1926- later he changed his mind
- Later elaborated by Mortimer Wheeler-1947
- Wheeler argued that references in Rig Veda to various kinds of forts, attacks on walled cities & the epithet 'Purandara'(fort destroyer) given to god Indra must have a historical basis & reflect an Aryan invasion of the Harappan cities



- He identified a place called Hariyupiya in the Rig Veda with Harappa
- Also pointed to certain skeletal remains found at Mohenjodaro as proof of the Aryan massacre
- Subsequently he modified his hypothesis, to the extent that he acknowledged that other factors such as floods, decline in trade & over- utilization of natural resources may have had role to play
- He insisted that ultimate blow was given by Aryan invasion



- P .V.Kane, George Dales, B.B.Lal- refuted Aryan Invasion theory
- evidence from Rigveda is far from conclusive
- if there had been an invasion, it should have left some traces in the archaeological record
- No evidence of any kind of military assault or conflict at any Harappan site
- 37 groups of skeletal remains at Mohenjodaro do not belong to same cultural phase



- K.A.R.Kennedy's analysis of skeletal remains does not show any discontinuity in the skeletal record in the north-west at this point of time, making it clear that there was no major influx of new settlers with a different physiognomy
- Harappan civilization was not destroyed by an Indo-Aryan invasion

Natural Disasters



- Several layers of silt at Mohenjodaro give evidence of city being affected by repeated episodes of Indus floods
- M.R.Sahni, Robert L.Raikes & George F.Dales argued that floods at Mohenjodaro were results of tectonic movts
- Dales – these may have occurred at a place called Sehwan, about 90 miles downstream from Mohenjodaro, where there is evidence of rock faulting



- The theory is that tectonic movts led to the creation of a gigantic natural dam that prevented the Indus from flowing towards the sea, turning the area around Mohenjodaro into a huge lake
- But it was also not convincing
- H.T.Lambricks hypothesis based on what he himself describes as purely circumstantial evidence, that the Indus changed its course, moving some 30 miles eastwards , starving Mohenjodaro & its inhabitants of water



- Mohenjodaro may have got worn out due to repeated episodes of naturally occurring floods
- Harappan sites in the Ghaggar-Hakra valley were affected by gradual desiccation
- Sutlej or Yamuna once flowed into the Ghaggar
- Tectonic movts led to river capture- either Yamuna joined up with the Ganga system or Sutlej was captured by Indus, drastically reducing the water flowing into the Ghaggar
- M.R.Mughal's study of settlements in this region shows a drastic reduction in the number of sites as the river dried up



- A sudden rise in the Arabian sea coastline of west Pakistan could have caused floods & a rise in soil salinity
- such an uplift along the coast & in the lower Indus valley could also have seriously disrupted the coastal communications & trade of the Harappans
- Reference has already been made to the debate on the nature of the climate, especially rainfall, in protohistoric times
- On the basis of his study of pollen from Rajasthan lakes, Gurdip Singh suggests a connection b/w the onset of a drier climate & the decline of the Harappan civilization



- A study of the sediments of the Lunkaransar lake indicates that the onset of drier conditions in this area may have happened well before the emergence of Harappan civilization
- Whether climatic change played a role in the decline of Harappan civilization therefore remains unclear
- Issue of environmental change can be connected to the ways in which the Harappans were treating their environment
- They were over-exploiting it through over-cultivation, over-grazing, excessive cutting of trees for fuel & farming



- This would have resulted in decreasing fertility of soil, floods & increasing soil salinity
- Making estimates of population, land, food, & fodder requirements on the basis of modern data, Fairervis suggests that the civilization declined because the growing population of people & cattle could not be supported from resources within the Harappan culture zone
- Shereen Ratnagar- argued that the decline in the lapis lazuli trade with Mesopotamia was a factor in the decline of the Harappan civilization



- Whether this trade was particularly important for the Harappans is, debatable, consequently this could not have been a factor responsible for the decline
- Archaeological evidences does not give direct access to the possible social & political dimensions of the decline of the Harappan civilization
- What it does clearly indicate very clearly is that the Harappan culture underwent a gradual process of de-urbanization
- The mature Harappan phase was followed by a post-urban phase, known as late Harappan phase