

INDUS VALLEY CHALLENGES

Mr. Anil Trambak Ghandat,
Photographer Cum Artist,
General Surgery Department,
Sir J. J. Group Of Hospitals, Mumbai – 400 008.

Abstract :

In the past few years, several teams of archaeologists have been working at Mohenjo-daro. From these excavations, archaeologists have developed interesting ideas about the use and purpose of different areas of the city as well as the role played by the city of Mohenjo-daro within the Indus Valley framework of cities. Modern excavations have also helped us to understand more about the meaning of what was found by the first excavators at the site.

Key Words : Indus Valley, Challenges

Introduction :

Archaeologists have been excavating ancient cities of the Indus Valley and studying their finds for the past 150 years. This Explore offers information about the ancient city of Mohenjo-daro.

Indus Valley



Indus Valley figurine

Around five thousand years ago, an important civilization developed on the Indus River floodplain. From about 2600 B.C. to 1700 B.C. a vast number of settlements were built on the banks of the Indus River and surrounding areas. These settlements cover a remarkable region, almost 1.25 million kilometres of land which is today part of Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-western India.



Pot sherd from Harappa

The cities of the Indus Valley Civilization were well-organised and solidly built out of brick and stone. Their drainage systems, wells and water storage systems were the most sophisticated in the ancient world. They also developed systems of weights and trade. They made jewellery and game pieces and toys for their children. From looking at the structures and objects which survive we are able to learn about the people who lived and worked in these cities so long ago.



Stamp seal depicting a rhinoceros from Mohenjo-daro

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization also developed a writing system which was used for several hundred years. However, unlike some other ancient civilizations, we are still unable to read the words that they wrote.

Indus Challenge

Archaeologists find many objects at the sites where they excavate. The most common finds are different types of pottery. However, pots, jars, plates and other ordinary types of pottery are often found broken into many pieces. The pieces of broken pottery are called sherds.

Sherds are important for many reasons. The decoration, type of clay and method of manufacture can tell us about the type of object the sherd came from and the culture which produced it.

You are a young archaeologist working at a site which was once an Indus Valley city. Every day you are given boxes of pot sherds to sort through. Look through your pile of sherds and try to match them with known pottery types by reading the clues and looking at the profiles of the pots and sherds.

Archaeologists have been excavating ancient cities of the Indus Valley and studying their finds for the past 150 years. This Explore offers information about the ancient city of Mohenjo-daro.

Discovering Mohenjo-daro

By the beginning of the twentieth century, archaeologists and historians in India were becoming familiar with an ancient city located in the Indus Valley which was known as Harappa. However, people did not know who had built and lived in the city or when it had been built.

About 600 kilometres away from Harappa was the site of another ruined city. Local people knew of these ruins which were close to the modern town of Dokri. However, the site was not thought to be very old.

In about 1910-11, archaeologists from the Archaeological Survey of India visited the site near Dokri. They examined a stupa from the second century B.C. which stood high on a mound of bricks and earth. The archaeologists also noted many large mounds of earth covering a large area of ground. Several years later, an archaeologist named Rakhil Das Banerji visited the site. Banerji believed that buried beneath the mounds of earth were the ruins of an old city. In the next few years, Banerji visited Mohenjo-daro several times and began to believe that it was in fact a very ancient site.

Early excavations at Mohenjo-daro

In about 1920 there was enough interest in the site of Mohenjo-daro for the archaeologist Rakhil Das Banerji to excavate there. In the 1921-22 season Banerji began his excavations.

In this first season Banerji's team found the remains of a large city built mainly from baked brick. However, they did not know when it might have been built or who might have built it.

Banerji's team found objects such as weights, beads and finely painted pottery. Perhaps the most important finds were small square seals like the ones found at Harappa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In 1924 the objects found at Mohenjo-daro were compared with some found at Harappa. Many objects were so similar in material and construction that the archaeologists believed they might have been made by people sharing the same culture.

The work at Mohenjo-daro was successful. The possibility that objects from the site might be related to those from Harappa was exciting for the archaeologists. The next step was to explore the site more completely. So large-scale excavations were planned for Mohenjo-daro under the guidance of Sir John Marshall who was the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Excavations continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s with several teams of excavators. During this period, the site was divided into different areas. Each area was given a 'title' based on the name of the archaeologist working there.

HR Area = Harold Hargreaves

DK Area = Kashinath Narayan Dikshit

L Area = Ernest J.H. Mackay

VS Area = Madho Sarup Vats

SD Area = A.D. Siddiqi

Later excavations at Mohenjo-daro

Ernest J.H. Mackay followed Sir John Marshall as the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. He continued working at Mohenjo-daro until about 1934. For several years afterwards, he worked on writing a report of the excavations at Mohenjo-daro.

Around 1935 excavation stopped at Mohenjo-daro. However, Sir Mortimer Wheeler began excavations at the site again in 1950. Wheeler was able to build upon the work of the previous excavators and bring modern archaeological methods to the study of the site and objects found there.

References :

1. www.mohanjodaro/cvs.23987
2. www.mohindia.civili/indexied/cultinor56743