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History

When, Where and How

How Important are Dates

History is certainly about changes that occur over time. It is about finding out how things were in the past and how things have changed. As soon as we compare the past with present we refer to time, we talk before or after e.g. 319 BC or 1857 AD.

Sources of History

- **Literary Sources** : Literary sources are books like Vedas, Buddhist and Jaina literature. Besides religious literature, some books, like Mudrasakshas, Harshcharita, Rajtarangini and Kirti Kaumudi are also important from historical point of view.
- **Archaeological Evidence** : These evidences are obtained after excavations, which are mostly done by Archaeological Survey of India e.g. Harappa, Mohanjodaro etc. A historian can make a conclusion if any historical evidence is also supported by archaeological evidence.
- **Inscriptions** : Study of inscriptions is epigraphy. Inscriptions are mostly carved on gold, silver, iron, copper or bronze plates or stone pillars, rocks temple walls etc. Inscriptions of Ashoka give us a lot of information about different conditions of that age.
- **Coins** : The study of coins is called numismatics. Coins give us idea about the contemporary economic condition, currency systems and development of metallurgy.
- **Accounts of the foreigners** : A great deal of our knowledge of History is enriched by the writings of foreigners like, Fa-Hian, I-tsing, Pliny etc.

The Earliest Societies

- It was basically a hunting and food-gathering culture which is also known as PALAEOLITHIC AGE.
- Palaeo means old and lithic means stone.
- Man used mostly hand-axe, choppers and cleavers.
- Later on, the principal tools were variety of blades, points and scrappers.
- 40000–10000 BC marks the appearance of Homo Sapiens and new flint industries, widespread appearance of figurines and other artifacts reflecting art and rituals.
- Rock paintings and carvings have been found in Bhimbetaka.

- Animals depicted on these paintings are mostly bisons, elephants, tigers, boars etc. were based on their hunting, fishing and food-gathering.
- Dancing, running, hunting, playing games and quarrelling were commonly depicted scenes in paintings.
- Domestication of animals was started.

The First Farmers and Herders

- Farming and domestication of animals appeared in 6000–1000 BC which is known as Neolithic age.
- Four characteristics of Neolithic culture were (i) Animal domestication (ii) Agricultural practice (iii) Grinded and polished stone tools and (iv) Pottery manufacture.
- Man had a settled life in this age. They practised agriculture and grew fruits and corns.
- Animals such as the cow, dog, ox, goat etc. were domesticated. The art of producing fire by the friction of pieces of stone was known.
- Instead of eating uncooked flesh of various animals they now started roasting it.
- Bows and arrows were invented and used for the purpose of hunting.
- They had learnt art of pottery, art of spinning and weaving.
- Practice of burial was started
- Neolithic settlers were cattle herders and agriculturists.
- They produced ragi, wheat, barley, masoor, kulthi etc.
- Tool-making was also an important occupation.
- Later on, their economy was converted into subsistence agriculture, stock-raising, hunting and fishing.

The First Cities

- The first cities appeared in Indus Valley Civilisation.
- Broadly between 3000 B.C. and 1500 B.C., there was a highly developed civilisation with well-planned and populous cities in the valley of the Indus, popularly known as the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- Also called the Harappan Civilisation because it was first discovered in 1921 at Harappa, situated in Sahiwal district of Punjab province of Pakistan.
- It belongs to the Bronze Age.
- The most striking feature of the Indus Valley Civilisation is town planning.
- Indus people didn't know the use of iron.

Town-Planning of Indus Valley Civilisation

Streets : The towns of the Indus Valley Civilization were well-planned. All roads and lanes were straight from north to south or from east to west.

Drainage System : The drains were made of mortar, lime and gypsum. They were further covered with loose bricks which could be lifted easily to clean the drains.

Great Bath : The actual bathing pool measures 39 feet with a depth of 8 feet and is situated in the middle of a quadrangle having *verandahs* on all sides.

Bricks : Burnt bricks were lavishly used in building walls, pavements, bath-rooms, drains, wells etc. The bricks were made of alluvial soil. The colour of the bricks ranged from straw to bright red.

Major Harappan Sites and Their Excavators

Name of Sites	Region/River	Importance
Harappa	Montgomery district of Punjab (Now in Pak) on the left bank of Ravi.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City followed grid planning. Row of six granaries. Only place having evidences of coffin burial.
Mohenjodaro	Larkana district in Sind on the right bank of Indus. (Now in Pak).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City followed grid planning. A large granary and Great Bath, a college. Human skeletons showing invasion and massacre. A piece of woven cotton. A bearded man in steatite and a bronze dancing girl are found. Town was flooded more than seven times.
Chanhodaro	Situated in Sind on the bank of Indus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The city has no citadel. Famous for bead-makers shop. A small pot possibly an inkpot
Kalibanga	Situated in Rajasthan on the bank of Ghaggar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows both Pre-Harappan and Harappan phase. Evidence of fire altar and camel bones. Many houses had their own well. Kalibanga stands for black bangles.
Lothal	Situated in Gujarat on Bhogava river near	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First man-made port in the world and a dock. Yard made of burnt bricks. Other findings include a bead-makers factory, rice husk, fire altars, a measuring scale, chess playing, terracotta figurines of a horse and a ship etc.

Social and Economic Conditions

The anthropologists have divided the racial groups into four types viz., (i) Proto-Australoid (ii) Mediterranean; (iii) Mongoloid and (iv) Alpinoid.

Foods : Besides wheat, barley and rice, milk too must have been an important item of food, and doubtless vegetables and fruits besides the date were included in the diet. Harappans cultivated peas and sesamum. In addition, animal food was eaten.

Animals : Animals were both domesticated and wild. Actual skeletal remains of the Indian humped bull, the buffalo, the sheep, the elephant, the pig and the camel have been recovered. The cow was known, and so probably was the lion.

Household Articles : These were made of pottery, stone, shell, faience, ivory, and metal. Copper and bronze appear to have replaced stone as the material for household implements.

There were needles, awls, axes, saws, sickles, knives, fish-hooks, chisels etc. Made of bronze or copper.

Burial Practices : Three forms of burial have been found at Mohenjodaro : (i) Complete burials; (ii) Fractional burials; and (iii) Post-cremation burials.

Pottery

- Harappan pottery is bright or dark red and is uniformly sturdy and well-baked.
- It is chiefly wheel-made, and consists of both plain and painted ware, the plain variety being more common.
- Harappan people used different types of pottery such as glazed, polychrome, incised, perforated and knobbed. The glazed harappan pottery is the earliest example of its kind in the ancient world.
- Most commonly made of steatite (soft stone).
- The technique of cutting and polishing these seals with white luster was a unique invention of the Harappans.

- The majority of the seals have an animal engraved on them with a short inscription.
- Unicorn is the animals most frequently represented on the seals.
- Main type—(a) the square type with a carved animal and inscription, (b) the rectangular types with inscription only.

Religion : The chief male deity was the Pashupati Mahadeve (Proto-Siva), represented in seals as sitting in a yogic posture on a low throne and having three faces and two horns. He is surrounded by four animals (elephant, tiger, rhino and buffalo), each facing a different direction, and two deer appear at his feet. Other highlights are as follows :

- The chief female deity was the Mother Goddess.
- The worship of fire is proved by the discovery of the fire altars at Lothal, Kalibangan and Harappa.
- Indus people also worshipped gods in the form of *trees* (peepal etc.) and *animals* (unicorn etc.).

Script : The script of the Harappan people had 400 to 500 signs.

The script was written from right to left. These scripts have been found on various seals, pottery copper tablets, tools.

Sources of Materials

Gold	: Afghanistan, Persia, Kanataka
Silver	: Afghanistan, Iran
Copper	: Afghanistan, Central Asia
Lead	: Rajasthan, South India, Iran, Afghanistan,
Lapis Lazuli	: Bada Khashan and Kashmir

Decline of Indus Valley Civilisation

There were various reasons responsible for the decay and destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization. These may be listed as follows : (i) Floods in Indus River, (ii) Infertility of land due to change in the course of the river, (iii) Deficient rainfall; (iv) Earthquake and (v) Aryan invasions.

Early States

- The administrative machinery of the Aryans in the Vedic period worked with the Tribal Chief in the centre. The head of the tribe was called *Rajan*. His post was hereditary.
- Several tribal assemblies such as the Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha, Gana have been mentioned in the 'Rig Veda'. The tribal assembly was called the 'Samiti'. Even women attended the Sabha and Vidatha in Rig Vedic times.
- In day-to-day administration, the king was assisted by a few functionaries. The most important functionary seems to have been the Purohita.

Social Organisation

- Kinship was the basis of social structure. People gave their primary loyalty to the tribe which was called *jana*. The term for family (*kula*) is mentioned rarely in the Rig Veda.
- The institution of marriage was established, although symbols of primitive practices survived. The status of women was equal to men and they received Upanayana and education, studied Vedas and some of them even rose to the rank of seers composing Vedic hymns. Monogamy was established, though polygamy and polyandry were also known. Levirate and widow remarriage prevailed in society.

Vedic Culture

- Aryans developed Vedic Culture based on Vedas. The meaning of the word Veda is "knowledge".
- It is a collection of hymns, prayers, charms, litanies and sacrificial rites.
- There are four Vedas name.y : (a) Rig Veda—a collection of 1028 hymns. It is the oldest of the Vedic literature; (b) Sama Veda—a collection of 1873 songs mostly taken from Rig Veda Samhita; (c) Yajur Veda—a book of sacrificial prayers; (d) Atharva Veda—a collection of spell and incantations for the cure of disease, the restoration of harmony and exorcism of evil spirits etc.

Polity

- The Sabha and Samiti continued to hold the ground but their character changed.
- Women were no longer permitted to sit in the Sabha and it was now dominated by nobles and the Brahmanas.

Social Organisation

- The later Vedic society came to be divided into four varnas called the Brahmanas, Rajanyas or Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Sudras.
- The Brahmanas conducted rituals and sacrifices for their clients and for themselves and also officiated at the festivals associated with agricultural operations.
- The Kshatriyas were a warrior class attributed to fights for the safety of the nation and to provide service for a just ruling system.
- The Vaishyas constituted the common people and they were assigned the producing functions such as agriculture, cattle-breeding etc.
- All the three higher varnas shared one common feature, they were known as Dvijas (twice born).
- The fourth Varna was deprived of the sacred thread ceremony and with this began the imposition of disabilities on the Sudras.

Vedic Literature

1. **Vedas or Samhitas** : (i) Rigveda, (ii) Samaveda, (iii) Yajurveda and (iv) Atharvaveda.

2. **Brahmanas** : They explain the meaning of sacrifices and also the methods of performing them. Each Brahmana is connected with Samihitas.
3. **Aranyakas** : These are the books of instruction to be given in the forest meant for wood-dwelling hermits. It marks the transition from ritualistic to philosophical thought.
4. **Upanishads** : They contain deep speculations of a philosophical character which revolve around the two concepts of Brahma (god) and Atma (soul).

Rise of Magadha

- Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara (542 B.C.-493 B.C.) who belonged to the Hiranyanka Dynasty.
- The earliest capital of Magadha was at Rajgir which was called Girivraja at that time.
- Bimbisara was succeeded by his son Ajatshatru
- Ajatshatru was succeeded by Udayan.
- Udayan was succeeded by the dynasty of Shishunagas.
- The Shishunagas were succeeded by the Nandas who proved to be the most powerful rulers of Magadha.

Emergence Mahajanapadas (600-325 BC)

Mahajanapadas

In the later Vedic period, tribal organisations changed its identity and gradually shifted to the territorial identity, and the

area of settlement were now regarded as *janapadas* or states. In transition from tribe to monarchy, they lost the essential democratic pattern of the tribe but retained the idea of government through an assembly representing the tribes. These states consisted of either a single tribe such as the *Shakyas*, *Kolias*, *Mallas* etc. or a confederacy of tribes such as the *Vrijis*, *Yadavas*, *Panchalas* etc. The people in the lower Ganges Valley and Delta, which were outside the Aryans' pale, were not incorporated. There was therefore, a strong consciousness of the pure land of the Aryans called *Aryavarta*. Each *Janapada* tried to dominate and subjugate other *janapadas* to become *Mahajanapadas*.

According to *Anguttara Nikaya* there were about sixteen *Mahajanapadas* in the sixth century BC. Their capitals and locations are given in a table on the 16 *Mahajanapadas*.

Important Republics

The kings in these states had the supreme authority. The *Mahajanapadas* of Vriji, Malla, Kuru, Panchal and Kamboj were republican states and so were other smaller states like Lichavi, Shakyas, Koliyas, Bhaggas and Moriyas. These republican states had a *Gana-prishad* or an Assembly of senior and responsible citizens. This *Gana-Prishad* had the supreme authority in the state. All the administrative decisions were taken by this *Prishad*. Again, the republics were basically of two types; (a) the republics comprising a single tribe like those of the Sakyas, the Koliyas and the Mallas, and (b) the republics comprising a number of tribes or the republics of confederacy like the Vrijis.

THE 16 MAHAJANAPADAS

Mahajanapadas	Capitals	Locations
1. Gandhara	Taxila	Covering the region between Kabul and Rawalpindi in North Western Province
2. Kamboja	Rajpur	Covering the area around the Punch area in Kashmir
3. Asmaka	Potana	Covering modern Pathan in Maharashtra; on the bank of River Godavari
4. Vatsa	Kaushambi	Covering the modern districts of Allahabad and Mirzapur
5. Avanti	Ujjain	Covering modern Malwa (Ujjain) region of Madhya Pradesh
6. Surasena	Mathura	Located in the Mathura region at the junction of the Uttarapath & Dakshinapath
7. Chedi	Shuktimati	Covering the modern Bundelkhand area
8. Malla	Kushinara, Pawa	Modern districts of Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Later merged into Magadha Kingdom
9. Kurus	Hastinapur/	Covering the modern Haryana and Delhi area to the west of River Indraprastha Yamuna
10. Matsya	Virat Nagari	Covering the area of Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan
11. Vajjis	Vaishali	Located to the north of the River Ganga in Bihar. It was the seat of united republic of eight smaller kingdoms of which Lichavis, Janatriks and Videhas were also members
12. Anga	Champa	Covering the modern districts of Munger and Bhagalpur in Bihar. The kingdom were later merged by Bindusara into Magadha.