



CLASS: VI
SUBJECT: SOCIAL
SCIENCE
CHAPTER: 6 THE
BEGINNINGS OF
INDIAN CIVILISATION
BOOK: EXPLORING
SOCIETY: INDIA AND
BEYOND

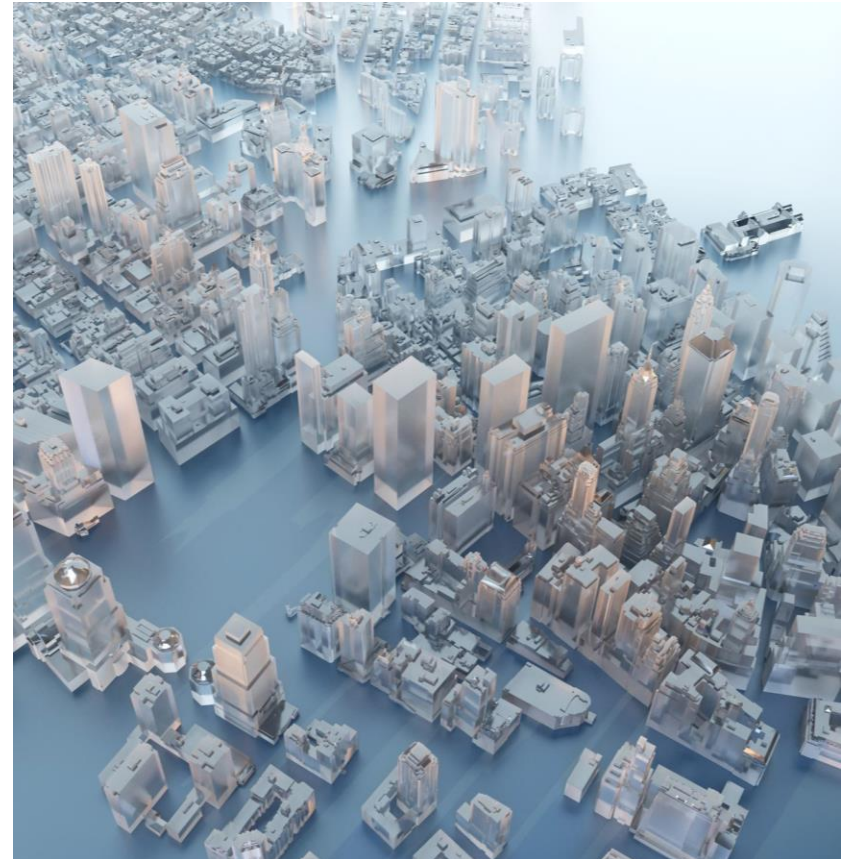
The Big Questions?

- What is a civilisation?
- What was the earliest civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent?
- What were its major achievements?



Civilisation is generally understood as an advanced stage of human society. Key characteristics of a civilisation include:

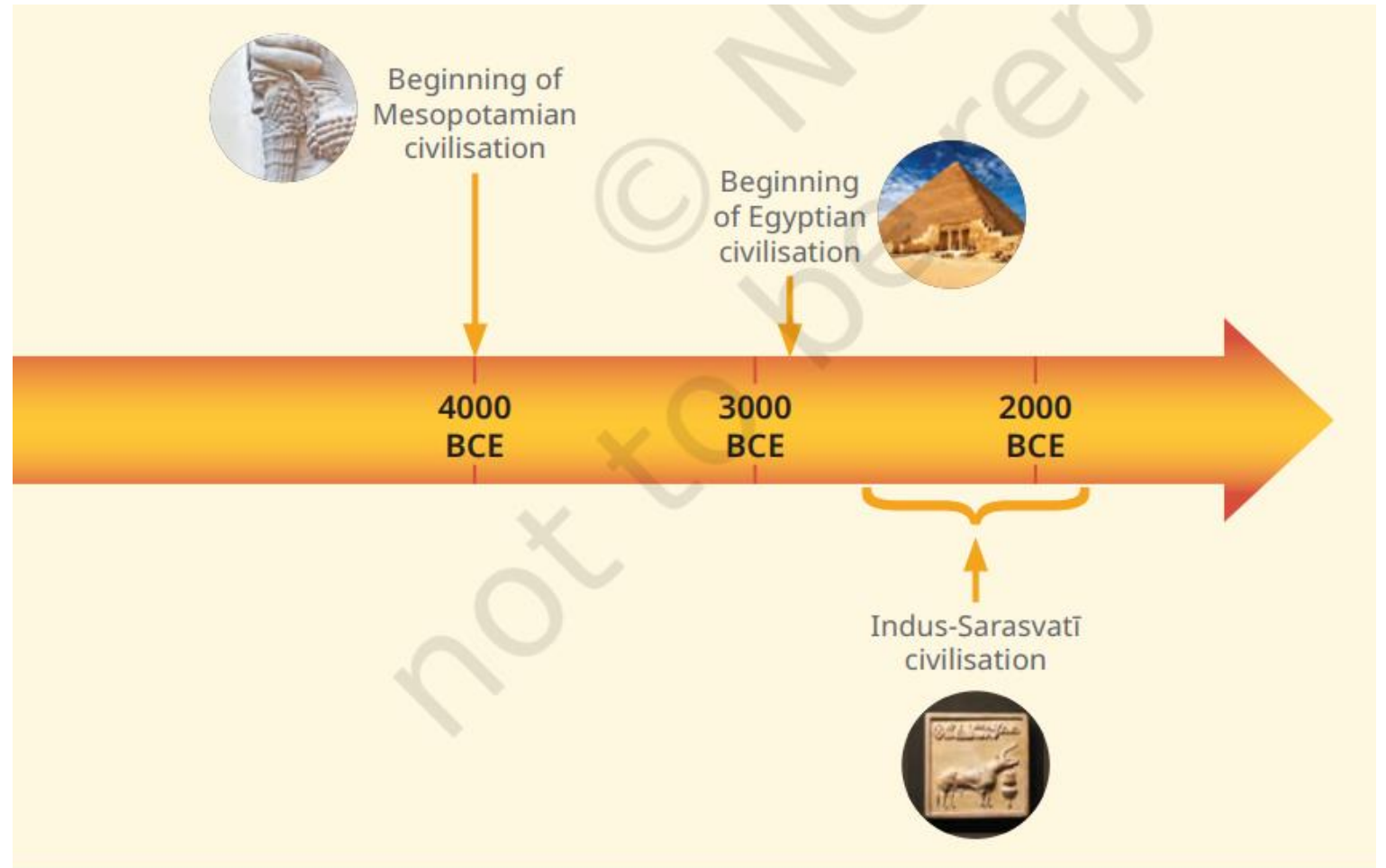
- **Government and Administration** – To manage the complexity of society.
- **Urbanism** – Town planning, city growth, and infrastructure like water and drainage systems.
- **Craftsmanship** – Management of raw materials and production of goods like tools and ornaments.
- **Trade** – Both internal (within regions) and external (with distant areas) to exchange goods.
- **Writing** – For record-keeping and communication.
- **Cultural Expressions** – Through art, architecture, literature, oral traditions, and social customs.
- **Productive Agriculture** – Sufficient to feed both villages and cities.
- These elements combined contribute to the development of a civilisation.



Civilisation, as we understand it today, began at different times in different parts of the world.

- In **Mesopotamia** (modern Iraq and Syria), civilisation emerged around 6,000 years ago, followed by ancient Egypt a few centuries later.
- These early civilisations made significant contributions to humanity's development.
- For now, the focus is on the **Indian Subcontinent**, specifically its northwest region, where the story of civilisation in India begins.

Timeline showing
the period of the
Indus-Sarasvatī
civilisation, from
about 2600 to
1900 BCE.



From Village to City

- The fertile plains of **Punjab** and **Sindh** (now divided between India and Pakistan) were watered by the **Indus River**, making the region ideal for agriculture.
- To the east, the **Sarasvatī River** once flowed through areas like **Haryana**, **Punjab**, **Rajasthan**, and **Gujarat**.
- Around **3500 BCE**, villages in this region began to grow into towns. By **2600 BCE**, these towns evolved into cities, driven by increasing trade and other exchanges.



Archaeologists
gave this
civilisation
several names

—

‘Indus’

‘Harappan’

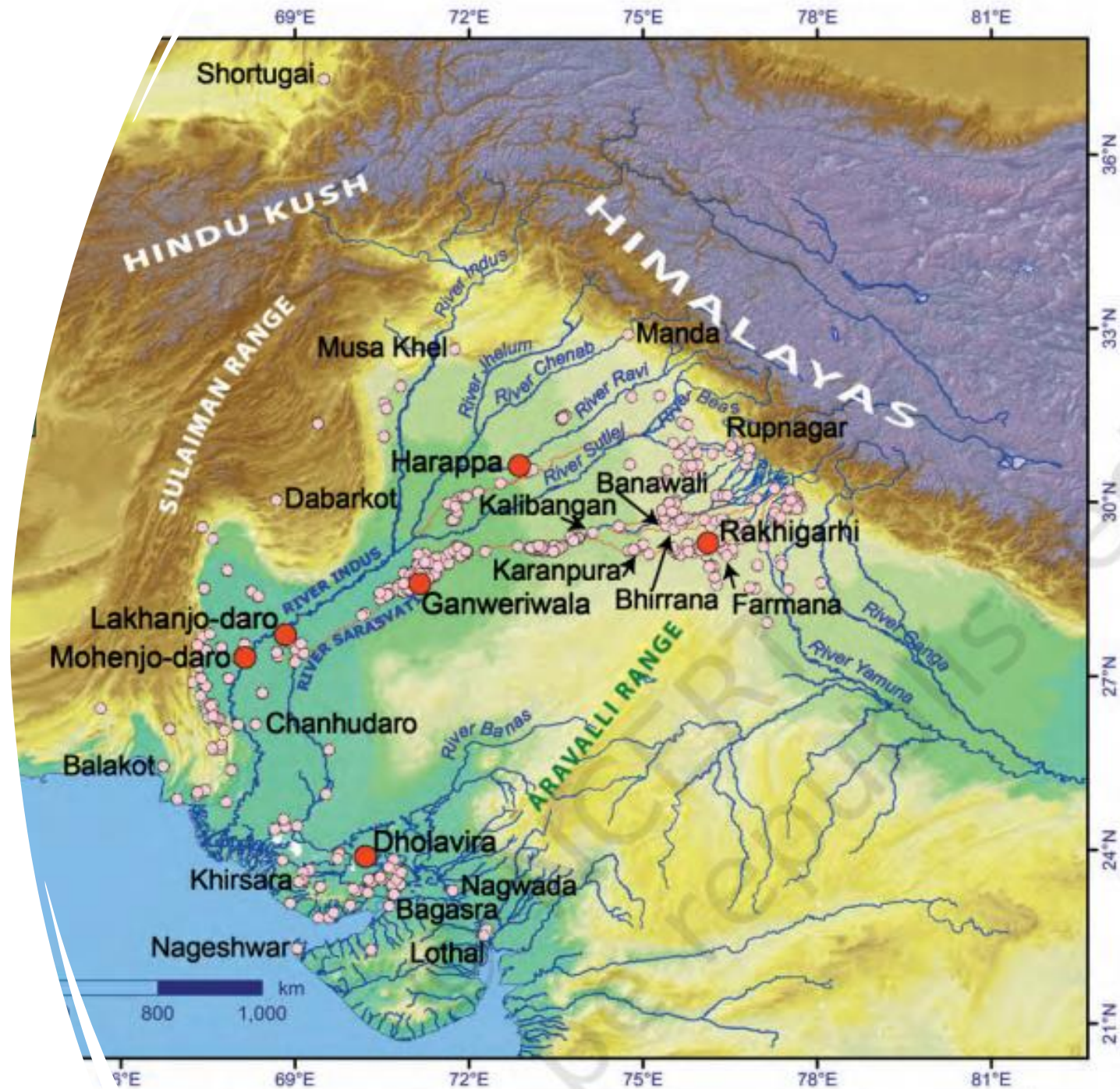
‘Indus-Sarasvatī’

‘Sindhu-Sarasvatī’ civilisation.

Its inhabitants are called ‘Harappans’.

It is one of the oldest civilisations in the world.

Map of some of the main settlements of the Indus-Sarasvatī civilisation. Notice the natural boundaries formed by the mountain ranges (in brown colour).



Discovery

The first two cities of the **Indus Valley Civilisation**, **Harappa** and **Mohenjo-daro**, were discovered in **1924**.

These cities, along with others in the **Indus plains**, were initially referred to as part of the **Indus Valley civilisation**.

Later discoveries revealed other major sites like **Dholavira** (in Gujarat), **Rakhigarhi** (in Haryana), and **Ganweriwala** (in the Cholistan desert, Pakistan), along with hundreds of smaller settlements.

These cities showcase the advanced town-planning of the civilisation.

Excavations

In addition to **Harappa** and **Mohenjo-daro**, other significant sites of the **Indus Valley Civilisation**, such as **Lothal** in Gujarat, **Rakhigarhi** and **Ganweriwala** in the **Sarasvatī basin**, and smaller towns like **Farmana**, **Kalibangan**, **Bhirrana**, and **Banawali**, have been discovered and excavated.

The map of the region shows a high density of these sites, reflecting the widespread settlement and urban development in the Sarasvatī basin and surrounding areas.

Excavations of these sites continue to this day.

Harappan cities



The larger **Harappan cities** were meticulously planned, with wide streets often aligned with the cardinal directions.



Most cities had two distinct sections: the **upper town**, likely inhabited by the elite, and the **lower town**, where common people lived.



Some large buildings served collective purposes, such as warehouses for storing goods. Individual houses of varying sizes lined the streets and smaller lanes, but the quality of construction was consistent across both small and large houses.



Most buildings were constructed using bricks.



A wide street at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), in the lower town area.



Housing area in Dholavira, with perpendicular streets, in the middle town (Dholavira had three distinct zones, not two as in other cities). Also, in this city, the foundations of most buildings were made with stones.



Great Bath

- One structure that remains debated in terms of its purpose is the '**Great Bath**' in **Mohenjo-daro**.
- This small, elaborate tank measured about 12 x 7 meters and was made waterproof with materials like natural bitumen (tar) applied over carefully laid bricks.
- The tank was surrounded by small rooms, one of which had a well.
- A drain in one corner allowed the tank to be emptied and refilled with fresh water periodically.
- The exact function of the **Great Bath** is still uncertain.

The purpose of the **Great Bath**



A PUBLIC BATH,



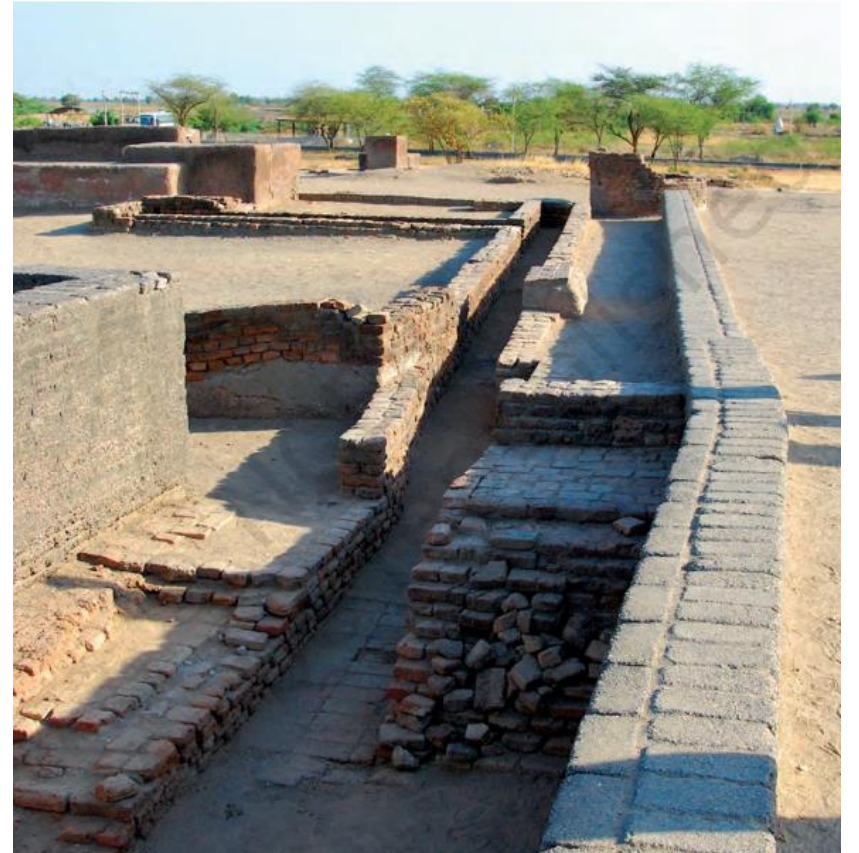
**A BATH FOR THE
ROYAL FAMILY,**



**A TANK FOR
RELIGIOUS RITUALS.**

Water management/Drainage system at Lothal (Gujarat)

- The **Harappans** placed great emphasis on **water management** and cleanliness.
- Many homes had **separate bathing areas**, which were connected to an advanced system of drains that ran beneath the streets.
- These drains efficiently carried away wastewater, reflecting the importance placed on sanitation and water management in Harappan cities.



Reservoirs

- At Dholavira, at least six large reservoirs were built with stones or even cut into the rock.
- Most of them were connected through underground drains for efficient water harvesting and distribution.



What Did the Harappans Eat?

- The **Harappans** established many of their settlements along the banks of rivers, a strategic choice that provided access to water and fertile soil for agriculture. They cultivated cereals like **barley**, **wheat**, and **millets**, along with **pulses** and vegetables. The Harappans were also the first in **Eurasia** to grow **cotton**, which they used to make clothes. They developed farming tools, including the **plough**, some of which are still used by modern-day farmers.



Fig. 6.9. A small clay model of a plough
(from Banawali in Haryana)

A Brisk Trade

The **Harappans** were actively involved in trade, both within their own civilisation and with other cultures in and outside of India.



They exported goods like **ornaments, timber, cotton**, and possibly **food items**. **Carnelian beads**, a reddish semiprecious stone from **Gujarat**, were especially prized, and Harappan craftsmen developed advanced techniques to drill and decorate them.



They also created beautiful **shell bangles** from conch shells, using sophisticated methods. While it's unclear exactly what the Harappans imported in exchange, it likely included **copper**, as it was not readily available in the region.

Trade routes

- The **Harappans** conducted trade using **land routes**, **rivers**, and **sea routes** for distant destinations, marking the first intensive maritime activity in India.
- Many Harappan settlements were located along the coast of **Gujarat** and **Sindh**. **Lothal**, a settlement in Gujarat, is notable for its large dockyard, which measures **217 meters long** and **36 meters wide**—about the length of two football fields.
- This dockyard was likely used for receiving and sending boats, facilitating the transportation of goods by sea.

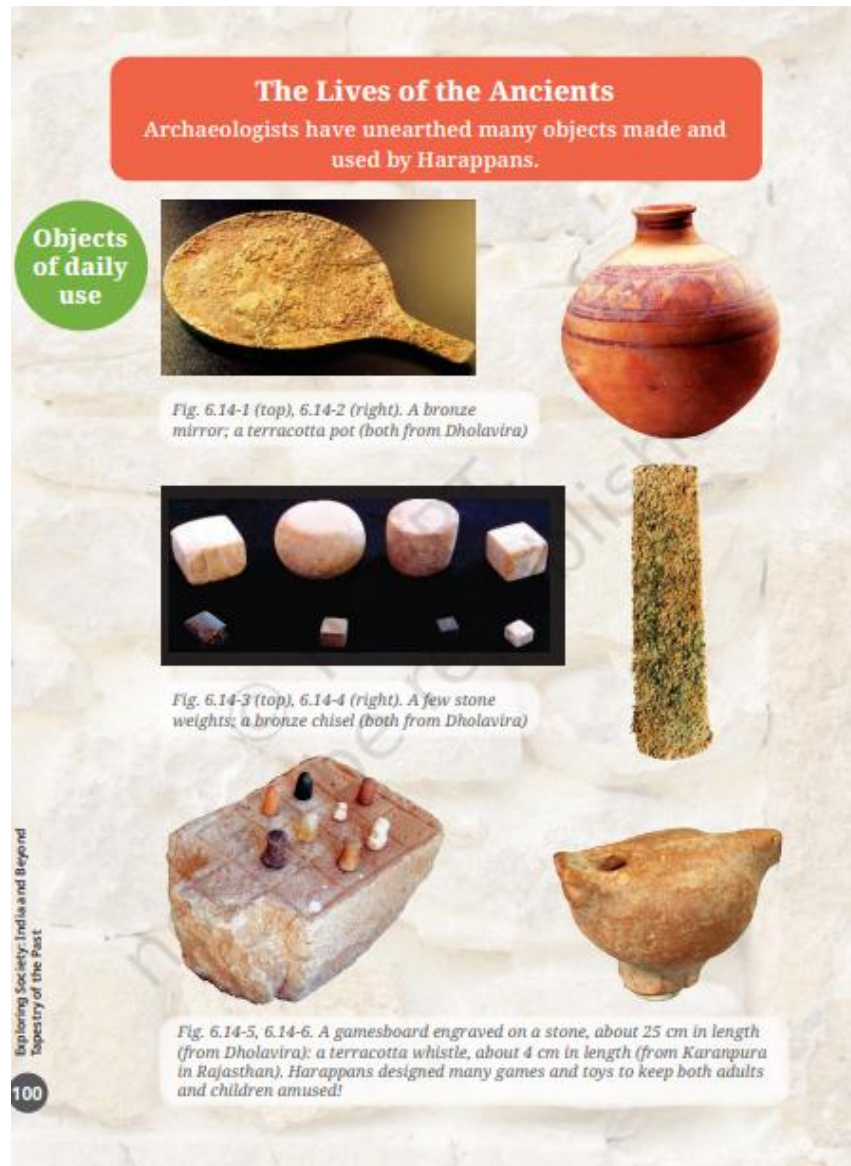


Seals



- The **Harappans** likely used thousands of small **seals** to identify their goods and traders, essential for conducting elaborate trade.
- These seals, made of **steatite** (a soft stone), typically depicted animal figures and had symbols that may be part of a writing system.
- Though the exact meaning of the symbols and animals is still unclear, it is certain that the seals were linked to **trade activities**, helping traders to mark and identify their goods.

The Lives of the Ancients



The End or a New Beginning?

AROUND **1900 BCE**, THE **SINDHU-SARASVATĪ CIVILISATION** BEGAN TO DECLINE DESPITE ITS MANY ACHIEVEMENTS.

THE **CITIES** WERE GRADUALLY ABANDONED, AND THOSE WHO REMAINED LIKELY ADOPTED A **RURAL LIFESTYLE** IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS.

IT SEEMS THAT THE EARLIER SYSTEMS OF **GOVERNMENT** AND **ADMINISTRATION** CEASED TO FUNCTION.

OVER TIME, THE HARAPPANS DISPERSED INTO **SMALL RURAL SETTLEMENTS** SCATTERED ACROSS THE REGION.

The decline of the **Harappan civilisation**

The decline of the **Harappan civilisation** around **1900 BCE** is attributed to two main factors. Initially, it was thought that **warfare or invasions** caused the collapse, but there is no evidence of either. The Harappans did not appear to have an army or weapons of war. Instead, two key factors are believed to have contributed to the decline:

Climate change: From around **2200 BCE**, a shift in climate caused reduced rainfall, leading to a drier phase. This would have made **agriculture more difficult**, potentially decreasing the food supply for the cities.

The drying up of the Sarasvatī River: The Sarasvatī River, vital for the region, dried up, leading to the abandonment of cities like **Kalibangan** and **Banawali**.

While the cities disappeared, much of the **Harappan culture** and **technology** survived and influenced the next phase of **Indian civilisation**.

THANK YOU
