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Art of Indus Valley Civilization

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first discoveries of the Indus Valley Civilization were made at the site of Harappa near Sindh province (Now in Pakistan). Thus it is also known as Harappa Civilization. Later excavations prove that the civilization had far greater extension to Mohanjo-Daro and other cities.

Lot of art and craft objects have been discovered from these sites during excavations. These include statuettes, toys, seals, jewellery, pottery and tools. Most scholars believe this civilization had flourished between 2500 B.C. to 1750 B.C.

An attempt will be made to impart knowledge about the arts and crafts of this period by selecting four art works for the lessons.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson the learner will be able to:

- know about the date of Harappa civilization;
- name the artwork which are mentioned in this lesson;
- describe the site of finding, size, style, colour, and place of collection of the enlisted art objects;
- mention the main characteristics of the enlisted art objects of this period;
- differentiate and identify characteristics of the enlisted art works.



Mother Goddess

1.2 MOTHER GODDESS

Title	-	Mother Goddess
Medium	-	Terra cotta
Date	-	Harappa period circa 2500 B.C
Finding site	-	Mohanjo-Daro
Size	-	8.5X3.4.cm
Artist	-	Unknown
Collection	-	National Museum, New Delhi

General Description

This statue is made of clay and then baked in fire as per the terra cotta process. This figurine is one of the finest example of terra cotta. The baking is perfectly done to achieve an unblemished red colour. Some scholars have identified it as “*mother goddess*”.

The headgear of this statue, interestingly, comprises of two small bowl-like forms on both sides of the head. These were probably used as lamps. These are again balanced by another form in the middle of the head which is supposed to be an elaborate hair-style. The figure is wearing a miniskirt with a broad belt to hold it in place. The figure is adorned with all kinds of jewellery.

INTEXT QUESTION (1.2)

(1) Fill up the blanks

- (a) The Mother Goddess statue is made of “.....”.
- (b) This was found at the site of “.....”.
- (c) The figure is wearing a “.....”.



Seal with Bull Design

1.3 SEAL WITH BULL DESIGN

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Seal with Bull Design</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Steatite</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Harappa period circa 2500 B.C.</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Mohanjo-Daro</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>2.5X2.5X1.4.cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>National Museum, New Delhi</i>

General Description

The seal is made of steatite and has an elaborate intaglio design of a bull as a symbol of power and strength, which has been achieved by exaggerating the size of the hump and the horns. The diagonal linear motif of the neck express the youthful energy of the animal.

There are some writings on the upper part of the seal, which are not yet deciphered.

INTEXT QUESTIONS (1.3)

Choose the right answer.

- (a) The seal is made of
- (i) clay
 - (ii) stone dust
 - (iii) steatite
- (b) This seal was found at
- (i) Harappa
 - (ii) Mohanjo-Daro
 - (iii) Chanho-Daro



Painted Pottery

1.4 PAINTED POTTERY

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Storage Jar</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Clay</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Harappa period circa 2500 B.C.</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Mohanjo-Daro</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>Height 21¾"</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>National Museum, New Delhi</i>

General Description

This jar is made on a Potters wheel with clay. The shape was manipulated by the pressure of the crafty fingers of the Potter. After baking the clay model, it was painted with black colour. The motifs are of vegetals and geometric forms. Designs are simple but with a tendency towards abstraction. High polished is used as a finishing touch.

INTEXT QUESTION (1.4)

Choose the right answer:-

- (a) The Jar is made
- (i) with Tools
 - (ii) on Potter's wheel
 - (iii) with Chisel
- (b) The date of the Jar is
- (i) 1st C.A.D.
 - (ii) 6th C.A.D.
 - (iii) circa 2500 B.C
- (c) The size of the jar is
- (i) 24½"
 - (ii) 21¾"
 - (iii) 30¾"



Jewellery

1.5 JEWELLERY

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Jade Necklace</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Jade</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Harappa period circa 2500 B.C.</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Mohanjo-Daro</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>Diameter 5.5cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>National Museum, New Delhi</i>

General Description

Jewellery was found in great abundance and variety at Indus Valley sites. Lot of Gold, Silver or Jade Necklace, ear rings, pendants, belts and bangles were found.

This Jade Necklace is an excellent example of craftsmanship and designing. This is made of 30 round beads and six oval beads. Three lockets in the middle part of the Necklace enhance its beauty.

INTEXT QUESTIONS (1.5)

Choose the right answer

- (a) The necklace is made of
- Diamond
 - Ruby
 - Jade
- (b) The number of lockets are
- Two
 - Five
 - Three
- (c) Now it is in the collection of
- Indian Museum, Kolkata
 - National Museum, New Delhi
 - Lahore Museum, Pakistan

1.6 SUMMARY

The artists and craftsmen of Harappa culture were extremely skilled in handling all kinds of material like metal, stone carving terra cotta and painting pottery. These artists preferred to use simplified motifs of animals, birds and plants. It is very clear that they were influenced and motivated by their religious beliefs and the cult of Siva and Shakti is very prominent in all their artworks.

1.7 ANSWER OF INTEXT QUESTION

- 1.2 (a) Terracotta (b) Mohanjo-Daro (c) Mini-skirt
- 1.3 (a) Steatite (b) Mohanjo-Daro
- 1.4 (a) Potter's wheel (b) Ca. 2500 B.C
(c) 51 cm
- 1.5 (a) Jade (b) Three
(c) National Museum, New Delhi

1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write an appreciative note on any one artworks of Indus Valley civilization.
2. What do you know about terracotta?
3. Describe some features of Indus Valley Art.

1.9 GLOSSARY

Steatite	-	Soapstone
Intaglio	-	incised carving
Diagonal	-	going from corner to other corner.
Motif	-	form, shape, figures in a design
Deciphered	-	To read a new script
Baking	-	To give permanency to clay by the heat of fire
Jade	-	Dark green precious stone
Terracotta	-	Hard fired clay
Cult	-	Religious belief