

Sculptures and Buildings



Archaeologists digging the ancient cities of Indus Valley found some very nice stone and bronze sculptures besides seals carved on stones and baked clay figurines. These were made some 4000 years ago. You can see some of their pictures here. You can see that these depict everything in a natural manner. We don't know what they were used for.



Fig. 20.1: A small bust of a male person of importance – was he a priest or a king?



Fig. 20.3: A bronze statue of a girl standing



Fig. 20.2: A beautiful Harappan Seal showing a bull



Fig. 20.4: A mother goddess figurine of terracotta

Harappan Cities – The first cities of the subcontinent

In chapter 6, you read that humans led a migrant or nomadic life as hunter gathers for a very long time. It was only 10,000 years ago that people began agriculture and animal herding in modern Syria and Palestine. In the Indian sub-continent, some of the earliest villages are found in the North west, in Baluchistan dating from seven to eight thousand years ago. People in different regions took to agriculture and village life very slowly and most people still practiced hunting and gathering. But when did the first cities emerge? In the Indian sub-continent, it happened some 5000 years ago again in the Northwestern parts in Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab and Gujarat. Archaeologists have excavated remains of large cities. Though we do not know the actual names of those cities, we call them by the modern names of the villages in which the remains have been found. You may have heard of famous cities like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan and Lothal. These are among the most ancient cities of our subcontinent. These cities were spread from Afghanistan in the North to Gujarat in the south and Punjab and Haryana in the east and Baluchistan in the west and had many common features. Archaeologists use a common name “Harappan Culture” to denote this phase of our history. Sometimes, it is also called ‘The Indus Valley Civilisation’ as most of the important sites of this culture were situated in the plains watered by River Indus and its tributaries.

- ♦ Find out the names of rivers that flow in these regions. Locate these

places on a map and see how far are they from Hyderabad.

- ♦ Do you think Telangana was part of the Harappan culture? Would the people living in Telangana have known about the Harappan people? How?
- ♦ If you visit a place, how will you decide if it is a village or a town?
- ♦ What kind of activities go on in a city that are different from a village?
- ♦ How do you think archaeologists figure out from remains of ancient ruins if a place was a village or a city? Can you think of the special features in the remains of a city which will not be there in the remains of a village?



What are cities?

By ‘cities’, we mean a place where a large number of people live who do not depend on either agriculture or hunting gathering for their livelihoods. Cities primarily have people from three or four kinds of professions: artisans like potters, metal smiths, carpenters, masons, stone cutters etc.; traders who buy and sell things made by other people both in the city and outside of it; rulers like kings, nobles, priests and administrators; and finally, poor labourers or soldiers who serve others. Most of these people would not cultivate land or grow crops and therefore, depended upon the grains produced by farmers or milk and meat etc. produced by herders. Cities would procure these grains through taxes on the farmers or in exchange for artisanal products. Thus, like today, even in those early times most people probably lived in villages or in forests.

- ♦ Do you think the ruins of the houses of rulers and houses of artisans would look similar or different? How?
- ♦ Do you think it is possible to find out if there were traders in a city and where they lived by just studying the ruins?
- ♦ Why do you think would the farmers have agreed to give their produce to city dwellers?

Features of the cities

The Harappan cities emerged very rapidly some four thousand six hundred years ago and flourished for about seven

hundred years and eventually disappeared about three thousand nine hundred years ago. Buildings in the Harappan cities were built with good baked bricks of a standard size and shape. This is a remarkable feature of these cities. Most of the important cities show carefully planned development of towns as they have a clear lay out with straight roads which intersect each other like in a chess board. The roads had drains to carry dirty water from houses and rain water. Most of the cities were divided into two clear sections, one, a high citadel in which there were some important public buildings like granaries, halls and large buildings; second, a lower part which seemed to have had residential blocks for artisans, traders, and other ordinary people. It appears that the rulers lived or worked in the citadel and wanted to distinguish themselves from the ordinary people.

- ♦ Do you see any difference in the lay out of areas where powerful people live or work and where ordinary people live in today’s towns? Why is there a difference?

What kind of artisans lived in the Harappan cities? You can guess one kind of artisans from the bricks and buildings – the brick makers or probably potters and masons. Harappan potters produced some of the finest pots made in Indian history, and made a large variety of clay pots and toys. People of Harappan cities extensively used objects made of different kinds of metals like copper, silver, tin etc and mixed metals like bronze. However, they did not



Fig. 20.5: Dockyard of Lothal - Imagine, the size of the boat that can fit here.(Dimensions 37m east-west, 22m north-south)

use iron which came into use in India much later. Copper being a rare metal had limited use. Harappans continued to use stone and wood for most of their daily needs. They used very fine and long stone blades for cutting, finely carved stone seals for trading, beautiful and colourful polished stone beads for ornaments, and stone weights and measures for trading. They wove cotton and woollen clothes and some small fragments of these have survived. They also used sea shells to make objects of daily use like ladles, spoons and bangles.

The use of seals and weights indicate that the Harappan cities had a large number of traders who took merchandise from one place to another. In fact, they also went by ships to trade in distant lands like Iraq where too many cities had developed. They must have used bullock carts and boats to transport their goods.

- ♦ Do you think that the same artisans can make all these goods or different artisans were needed for making different kinds of things? Why do you think so?

Language

We do not have any books written by the Harappan people ; we do have some small inscriptions on seals etc. but we don't know how to read them. Hence, we do not know what language they spoke and if they spoke any common language at all. We also don't know what names they called themselves,



Fig. 20.6: Citadel of Mohenjodaro



*Fig. 20.7: Great Bath of Mohenjodaro
(Dimensions 11.8x7metres)*

or their rulers and gods and even their cities. You will also read about their religious beliefs in a later chapter.

Rulers

We don't know who ruled these cities. Since most of the cities were spread over such a large area and had so many features in common, it has been suggested by some that there must have been one central authority regulating all these things. However, was it a king or a priest or a group of elected leaders, we do not know. They probably lived in the citadels and regulated the life of all city-dwellers from there.

Change in livelihood

It appears that some seven hundred years after the great Harappan cities developed, the towns declined. Trade and artisanal production declined and people moved out of these cities to villages. In fact, some historians believe that many rivers which flowed through this area dried up and people shifted further eastwards towards Ganga river. They mingled with other

farming and herding people. However, the great cities of the Harappan culture gradually disappeared forever, to be buried under mud. They were discovered in the early twentieth century when archaeologists began a systematic study of this lost civilisation.

- ♦ Do you know of people who have changed their livelihood – from being farmers to factory workers or office workers or shopkeepers? Or factory workers who take to odd jobs in the market? Or people who have to leave their ancestral place and go to new places in search of work? Describe their life and the problems and challenges faced by them.



Fig. 20.8: Drainage system in a street in Mohenjodaro

Sculpture after Indus Valley Civilisation

A little later, the art of casting metal figures spread to Maharashtra. Some very exquisite bronze figures were found during digging. These were probably made some 3000 years ago. Do you think they could have been toys?



Fig. 20. 9. Daimabad Bronzes

The next important phase of sculpture belongs to the Mauryan period, that is around 2200 years ago. King Ashoka set up some tall, smoothly polished pillars in many places. They were usually made of one piece of stone. Ashoka's messages were carved on them. They also had some figures of animals at their top. These are called capitals. The most famous among them is the Lion Capital of Sarnath set up by Ashoka in the place where Buddha first preached his teachings. These four majestic lions facing the four directions hold the Wheel of Dharma on their pedestal.

- ♦ Do you feel that the lions look natural or do they look artificial, posing for the sculpture?
- ♦ You must have seen these often. Where do you see pictures of these lions?

These pillars and the Lion Capital represent the power and majesty of the Mauryan emperors. Compare this capital with the Bull capital in Rampurva. Here you can see that the bull looks more natural and quite similar to the Harappan seal's bull.



Fig. 20.10: Sarnath Lion Capital



Fig. 20.11: Rampurva Bull

Buddhist Stupas and Viharas

Given below is the picture of one of the most famous stupas in India – the Sanchi Stupa. Look at the photo. You can see that it is like a hemisphere (half ball) – just the way the sky looks when you look up.

A stupa is built on a platform. In the centre of a stupa relics of Buddha or other important monks (relics are remains of the body like teeth, bone, hair etc) were buried. The hemisphere is fully packed and you cannot enter it like a temple. Above it there is a pillar topped by umbrella. The stupa is usually surrounded by a stone fence with decorated gateways. Initially, in Ashoka's times they were built with mud, brick and wood but later they were made with stones.

The stupa has many meanings – it is supposed to represent the Buddha. At the same time, it is believed that the dome of

the stupa represents the universe and the central pillar being the axis around which the earth revolves and which connects the world below, the earth and the heavens. Pilgrims worship the stupa by offering flowers etc., and going round it in *pradakshina* and meditating in front of it.

- ♦ Can you compare a stupa with a temple and point out the similarities and differences between them and how do people worship them?

Archeologists have found remains of stupas from very early times in several places in Andhra Pradesh like Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Ramatirtham, Salihundam etc. A crystal casket containing the relics of the Buddha was found at Bhattiprolu Stupa.



Fig. 20.12: Sanchi stupa in Madhya Pradesh. It is one of the most important stupas built by King Ashoka. Can you identify the hemisphere, the platform, the umbrella and the fence?



Fig. 20.13: Bhuddist Stupa from Nelakondapally, Khammam District. Can you identify nicely stacked bricks

Amaravati Stupa in Guntur district is the most famous one in Andhra Pradesh. This was built during the rule of Satavahanas about 1900 years ago.

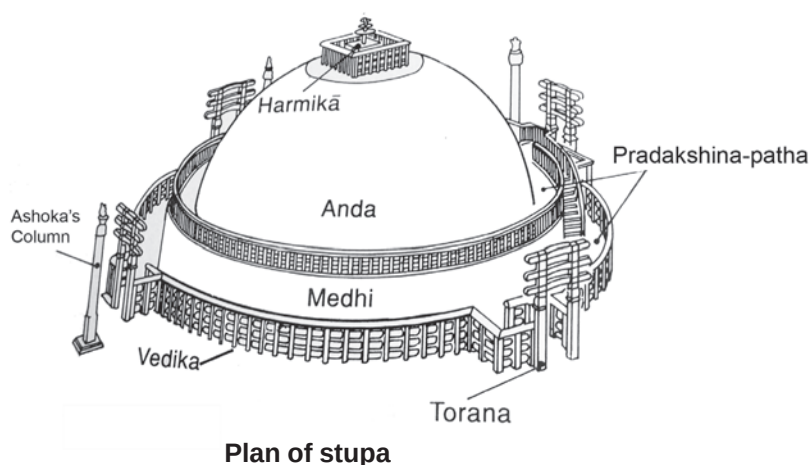
Fig.20.15 shows a sculpture panel depicting the stupa. Can you see some flying figures on the top? These are supposed to be gods from heavens who came to worship the Buddha. At the bottom, you can see some men and women bowing down and worshipping. You can also see the four lions on the gateway. What do you think they signify?

Today, the Amaravathi stupa is just a mound of rubble. All that we can do is imagine how this great stupa was in the past. The panels help us to imagine how it must have looked 1900 years ago. As you can see from the picture, the stupa was covered with panels of sculptures depicting the Buddha and his teachings.



Fig. 20.14: Amaravathi stupa in Andhra Pradesh

These panels were found by the British and were taken away to London. Some of the panels that could not be transported were kept in Madras Museum. Based on these panels, people have tried to imagine how the stupa would have looked. See the picture of reconstruction and compare it with the panel.



Plan of stupa

Fig. 20.15: Reconstruction of Amaravathi stupa

Another important stupa was the Nagarjunakonda stupa. It was a part of Vijayapuri, the capital city of Ikshvaku kings. It was situated on the banks of Krishna River. Vijayapuri had a large number of stupas, viharas and palaces. It also had a beautifully designed amphitheatre and ghats leading to the river. Unfortunately, today the entire city lies under water – submerged in the Nagarjunasagar dam. A large number of sculptures and other remains have been removed and kept in a museum nearby.

Look at some of the sculpture panels from Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati given below. These sculpture panels represent the earliest sculptural activity in South India. You can get a glimpse of the lives people of those times from them.



Fig. 20.16: A panel from Amaravati showing the calming of an elephant (Nalagiri) by the Buddha. The royal elephant went out of control and the people on the street were panic stricken. However, on seeing the Buddha, the elephant calmed down and bowed down to him. Do you notice how they have shown a story in a panel? What could be the message of the story?



Fig. 20.17: A panel from Nagarjunakonda showing the admission of six princes and the barber Upali into the Sangha. In order to teach humility to the princes, the Buddha admitted Upali first and the rest after him. You can see Upali seated on a low stool beside the Buddha



Fig. 20.18: Panel from Sanchi shows the daily life of villagers. It is a beautiful panel and shows the visit of the Buddha to a village. Can you make a list of activities being done by the people in this panel? Do you get to see similar scenes in today's villages?

As time went on, sculptors started making large and complete figures instead of just the reliefs shown above. Large statues of the Buddha gave people an idea of the peaceful, calm and serene personality of the Buddha. The most famous sculptures of the Buddha come from Gandhara in the Northwest, Mathura and Saranath in Uttar Pradesh (Fig: 17.11). We can see some of these sculptures in Nagarjunakonda too.

Viharas were the monasteries or living places of Buddhist monks where religious education was imparted. A vihara usually had small rooms around an open courtyard and had a small shrine containing a stupa or an image of the Buddha at one end. This shrine was called a *chaitya*, which was also a prayer hall for the monks.

There are cave viharas excavated on hill sides like in Nasik and Karle. These too have some beautiful sculptures carved on them. You will read about them in the next paragraph.

The other *viharas* were built with brick or stone blocks like in Takshashila, Nagarjunakonda and Nalanda, which became great places of learning. In Viharas, monks taught Buddhist scriptures to disciples. Along with imparting education in Viharas, monks also treated the physical ailments of people. We find many inscriptions from these viharas, which tell us that ordinary men and women – farmers, traders, soldiers, and artisans – made liberal donations for building and the other expenses of these viharas.

Buddhist holy places of learning also attracted the pilgrims from many other countries. Chinese pilgrims Fa-hi-an, Itsing and Hu-en-Tsang came to visit places associated with the life of the Buddha as well as famous monasteries.

Pilgrims are people who take up journeys to holy places of worship.

Hu-En-Tsang, and others spent time studying in Nalanda (Bihar), the most famous Buddhist monastery of the period. This is how he describes it:

“The teachers are men of the highest ability and talent. They follow

the teachings of the Buddha in all sincerity. The rulers of the monastery are strict, and everyone has to follow them. Discussions are held throughout the day, and the old and the young mutually help one another. Learned men from different cities come here to clear their doubts. The gate keeper asks new entrants difficult questions. They are allowed to enter only after they have answered them. Seven or eight out of every ten are not able to answer.”

Rock cut Chaityas and Early Temples

Traders, artisans and kings of the times of the Satavahanas donated generously to build unique kinds of chaityas and viharas in several places in Maharashtra like Karle, Bhaja, Kanheri and Nasik. These were built like caves on hill sides. Stone workers, carved rocks and reproduced the structures made by the carpenters with wood. They made large prayer halls, stupas and small rooms for monks – all made in rock. They also carved beautiful images of people and animals and some times of the Buddha. Look at these pictures of the Karle chaitya, which was built about 2100 years ago.

- ♦ Do you think the man and the woman shown in the sculpture had equal status? Give reasons.
- ♦ Which part of the chaitya do you think was carved out first and which part was carved the last?



Fig. 20.19: Outside gate of Karle cave chaitya



Fig. 20.20: Inside a Chaitya

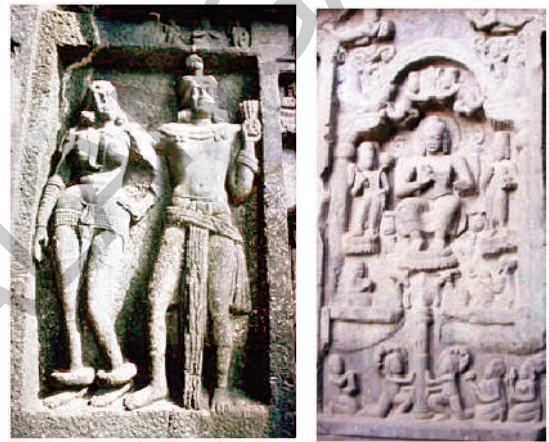


Fig. 20.21 & 20.22: Sculptures from Karle

Even then carpenters and masons made temples and chaityas with mud, wood and stones. Some of these temples were for gods like Krishna while others are for the Buddha. But they have not survived. At Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, we get to see one of the earliest surviving stone temples. It is a very simple structure, with just a small room (called *garbhagriha*) in which the idol of the Buddha was kept, and a small open porch or *mandapa* with no walls but only pillars. The door and the pillars are beautifully carved. However, the temple has a flat roof without any tower or *shikhara* on it. It was built around 1600 years ago. See the pictures.



Fig. 20.23: Early Buddhist temple from Sanchi

Keywords

Chaitya	Monks
Vihara	Stupa
Relics	Monastery

Improve your learning

1. Why do you think Ashoka chose lions and bulls for his pillars rather than cows or parrots? What animal would you have chosen if you were in his place? Give reasons for your choice.
2. Many stupas of Andhra Pradesh are on the banks of rivers (like Salihundam, Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati etc). Why do you think the monks selected these places to build stupas?
3. Look at the sculpture showing the calming of the elephant. Who are the people watching the event from a height?
4. Why do you think only the rock cut viharas and chaityas have survived till today?
5. Compare the features of a Chaitya and a temple. Do you think the mode of worship in a Chaitya and a temple would be different?
6. Why are the Buddhist Stupas and Chaityas sacred?
7. How did the Buddhist monks probably use the Viharas and Chaityas?
8. Locate Buddhist and Jain sites on the outline map of India.
9. Read the first para of page 178 (Vihara's were the for the monks) and comment on it.



Project:

Visit a place of worship in your village or town and draw a sketch of the structure. Try to get the name of each part, its meaning and use. Prepare a report about this place of worship and conduct an exhibition in your class.