

# Exploring Society: India and Beyond

**Social Science Textbook for Grade 6**



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NCERT

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## Foreword

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages a system of education in the country that is rooted in Indian ethos and its civilisational accomplishments in all domains of human endeavour and knowledge while at the same time preparing the students to constructively engage with the prospects and challenges of the twenty-first century. The basis for this aspirational vision has been well laid out by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 across curricular areas at all stages. Having nurtured the students' inherent abilities touching upon all the five planes of human existence, the *pañchakośhas*, in the Foundational and the Preparatory Stages has paved the way for the progression of their learning further at the Middle Stage. Thus, the Middle Stage acts as a bridge between the Preparatory and the Secondary Stages, spanning three years from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

This framework, at the Middle Stage, aims to equip students with the skills that are needed to grow, as they advance in their lives. It endeavours to enhance their analytical, descriptive, and narrative capabilities, and to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities that await them. A diverse curriculum, covering nine subjects ranging from three languages — including at least two languages native to India — to Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Art Education, Physical Education and Well-Being, and Vocational Education promotes their holistic development.

Such a transformative learning culture requires certain essential conditions. One of them is to have appropriate textbooks in different curricular areas as these textbooks will play a central role in mediating between content and pedagogy — a role that will strike a judicious balance between direct instruction and opportunities for exploration and inquiry. Among the other conditions, classroom arrangement and teacher preparation are crucial to establish conceptual connections both within and across curricular areas.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training, on its part, is committed to providing students with such high-quality



textbooks. Various Curricular Area Groups, which were constituted for this purpose, comprising notable subject-experts, pedagogues, and practising teachers as their members, have made all possible efforts to develop such textbooks. This textbook of Social Science closely follows the vision of the NCFSE 2023. It innovates in minimizing the text by focusing on core concepts and major developments. These are also conveyed through abundant pictures, drawings, maps and other graphics, which are brought to life by a pleasant and attractive overall design. The textbook seeks to keep students engaged through a variety of exercises, occasions for reflection, activities and projects, all of which invite them to explore and discover by themselves. The selection of five themes takes care of the important requirement of maintaining a multidisciplinary perspective. Cultural rootedness, another requirement, is thus not limited to the theme ‘Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions’, but pervades the other themes as well. It is hoped that students and teachers alike will find using this textbook an enjoyable and enriching experience.

However, in addition to this textbook, students at this stage should also be encouraged to explore various other learning resources. School libraries play a crucial role in making such resources available. Besides, the role of parents and teachers will also be invaluable in guiding and encouraging students to do so.

With this, I express my gratitude to all those who have been involved in the development of this textbook and hope that it will meet the expectations of all stakeholders. At the same time, I also invite suggestions and feedback from all its users for further improvement in the coming years.

31 May 2024  
New Delhi

Dinesh Prasad Saklani  
*Director,*  
National Council of  
Educational Research and Training

# Constitution of India

Part III (Articles 12 – 35)  
(Subject to certain conditions, some exceptions  
and reasonable restrictions)  
guarantees these

## Fundamental Rights

### Right to Equality

- before law and equal protection of laws;
- irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
- of opportunity in public employment;
- by abolition of untouchability and titles.

### Right to Freedom

- of expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and profession;
- of certain protections in respect of conviction for offences;
- of protection of life and personal liberty;
- of free and compulsory education for children between the age of six and fourteen years;
- of protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

### Right against Exploitation

- for prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour;
- for prohibition of employment of children in hazardous jobs.

### Right to Freedom of Religion

- freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion;
- freedom to manage religious affairs;
- freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion;
- freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained by the State.

### Cultural and Educational Rights

- for protection of interests of minorities to conserve their language, script and culture;
- for minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

### Right to Constitutional Remedies

- by issuance of directions or orders or writs by the Supreme Court and High Courts for enforcement of these Fundamental Rights.

# Constitution of India

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

## Fundamental Duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;
- \*(k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.**

*Note: The Article 51A containing Fundamental Duties was inserted by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 (with effect from 3 January 1977).*

*\*(k) was inserted by the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 (with effect from 1 April 2010).*



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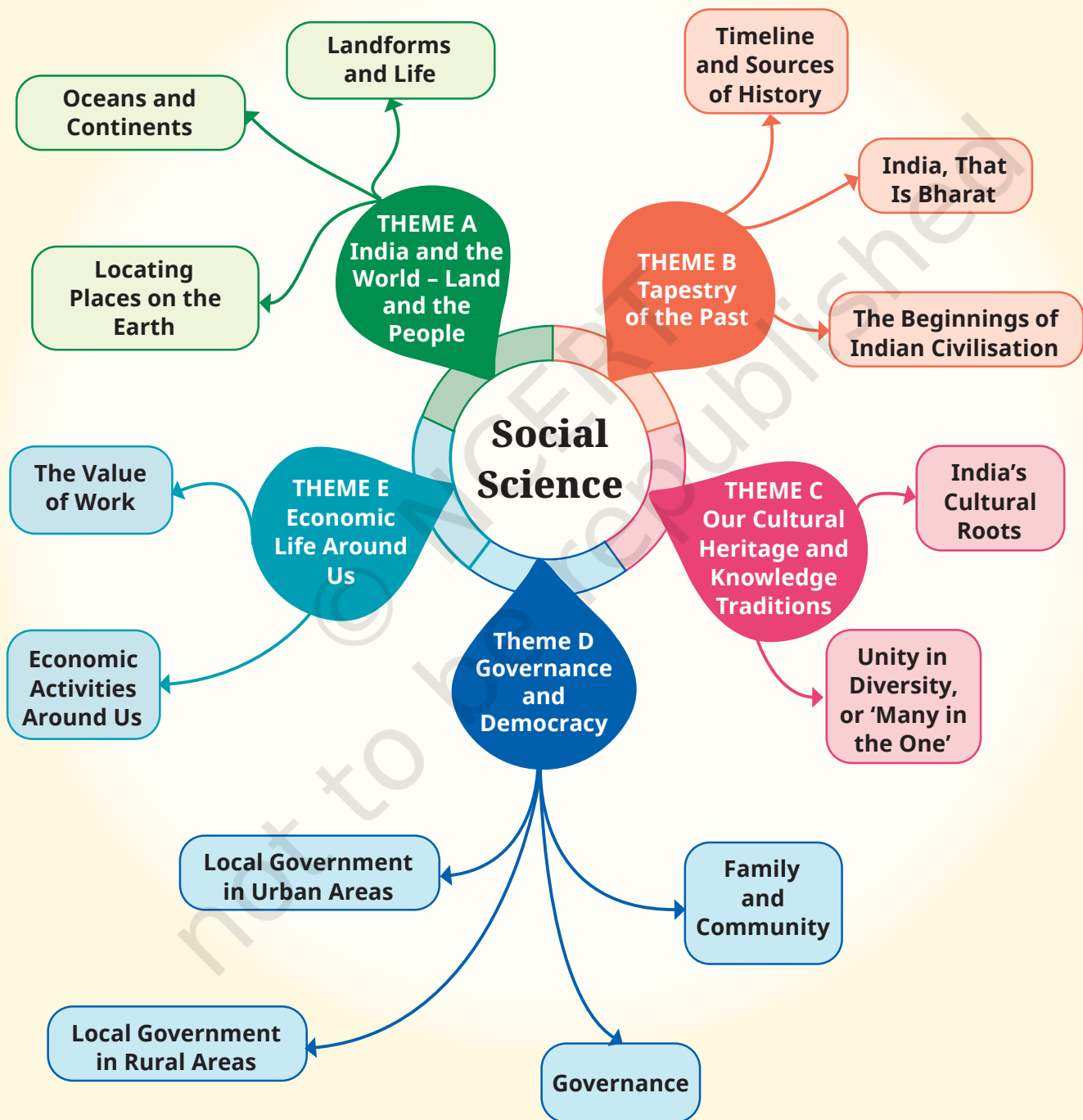


*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam:*  
The whole world is a family



# Introduction

## Why Social Science?





## LET'S EXPLORE



- Observe the picture above. What do you notice?
  - Where does the water in the lake come from?
  - Who made the road and why?
  - What could be the activities of people living in the small house? What could be their history? Their future?
- Write down your answers and discuss them with your classmates.
- Now, looking at the picture on the facing page, what questions come to your mind? Write them down.
- How do you propose to find answers to the questions related to these two images?

How are our questions above relevant to Social Science?

We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (if you do not know what this figure really means, you will soon learn about it). Everyone agrees that it is a particularly challenging time for humanity. On



the one hand, there is rapid progress in technology, which is changing our lives in many ways. On the other hand, the world is witnessing multiple wars, armed conflicts and rising social tensions, and our planet's natural environment is under great stress. We live in an age of great possibilities but also great challenges.

The world over, more and more people wonder, “How do we solve the problems facing humanity? How can our societies learn to live in peace and harmony? How can we protect this beautiful Earth which we all share — and protect it not only for ourselves but also for all the species that live on it?”

These fundamental questions are simple, but the answers are not. They cannot be simple, because human societies are very diverse and complex. If we wish to find answers to such questions and help build a better future, we first need to understand our world, and human societies in particular. That is what Social Science is all about.

You may wonder whether this is a ‘science’ like, say, physics or chemistry. It is not. The discipline does use scientific

methods wherever possible (you will see a few examples in this textbook), but its focus — human society — is, again, too diverse to allow the kind of set procedures and fixed results the sciences come up with.

Social Science has many subdisciplines: geography, history, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, psychology and a few more. You need not feel intimidated by all these terms! While you will study some of these subdisciplines in the Secondary Stage, in the Middle Stage we have avoided this classification. Instead, we have opted for five broad themes. Let us briefly look at them. *(Note that the mind map at the start of this Introduction includes chapters of both parts of this textbook.)*

## **Theme A – India and the World: Land and the People**

This first theme includes the basics of the geographical world around us — some of the main features of our planet and the way to represent them on a map. Why is this theme important, when today we can get excellent maps on a mobile phone? Because it deals with much more than maps. It also asks how geographical features — oceans, mountains, rivers, etc. — have shaped entire civilisations throughout their histories. It is also, in India's case, about how its natural setting has contributed to giving this ancient civilisation a unique identity.

## **Theme B – Tapestry of the Past**

A tapestry is a large piece of canvas-like cloth usually kept as a wall hanging, with pictures and designs on it — sometimes a historical narrative. Our tapestry is where we will be painting scenes from the past, beginning with India's past. But why should we be at all concerned with the past? Because it is the key to understanding the present, and the chapters in this theme will often make this connection

clear. The past is a major source for our identities — it helps us understand who we are and where we come from. The past is still with us, in other words. And since history is unfortunately not all about happy developments, it is useful to understand where people, governments or rulers went wrong, and why. Only then can we hope to avoid repeating those errors.

### **Theme C – Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions**

It has often been said that India has a rich and ancient culture. True, but what are its main characteristics? Its guiding principles? How has it manifested itself in India's history? And how can it help us to deal with issues of our times? These are some of the questions that this theme is exploring, with the objective that every student should understand some of the cultural foundations of our civilization and learn to appreciate their value.

### **Theme D – Governance and Democracy**

Citizens of any country should know how their political system functions. India, as the world's largest democracy, has an elaborate system working at different levels. What are its chief characteristics and components? How do the citizens participate in the overall governance? What are their rights and also their duties or dharma? Are there different systems in other countries, and, if so, of what type? How are different countries supposed to interact? By studying this theme, we can become more responsible citizens, understand how the organs of the government function, and learn to have a say in the policies that affect us all, whether locally or nationally.

### **Theme E – Economic Life Around Us**

No family can be happy without the essentials of daily living — at least food, clothing, shelter, access to water in a

first stage; in a second, livelihood for adults and access to education for the younger ones. Similarly, no country can develop harmoniously without a sound economy. But how does an economy work, especially in a huge country like India? What exactly is money? Where does it come from? How can it be increased? What economic activities can people engage themselves in? How are natural and human resources best managed? This theme will lay down some of the important concepts and practices that will enable us to answer these questions.



You will notice that there are many questions in the preceding paragraphs. This is as it should be — Social Science is also about the art of asking the right questions. Only then can we start looking for the right answers. This also explains the presence of ‘Big Questions’ at the start of each chapter in this book.

You may also be intrigued to find a game of chess and some ancient Tamil poetry in chapters that apparently deal with geography; a discussion on the uses of the sari in a chapter on cultural heritage; the concept of *sevā* and the mention of festivals in chapters focusing on economics. This is deliberate. We believe in bringing elements from diverse fields together (you will learn later that this is called ‘multidisciplinarity’). This enriches our perspective. Indeed, life constantly mixes numerous elements together, so why should we not?

By now, it should be clear that although Social Science makes constant use of the past, it seeks to make sense of the present so as to help us prepare a better future. It is an exploration and an adventure.

# The Beginnings of Indian Civilisation

*The most ancient civilisation of India, known variously as the Harappan, Indus or Indus-Sarasvatī Civilisation, was indeed remarkable in many ways. ... [It showed how] a well-balanced community lives — in which the differences between the rich and the poor are not glaring. ... In essence, the Harappan societal scenario was not that of ‘exploitation’, but of mutual ‘accommodation’.*

— B.B. Lal

## The Big Questions ?

1. What is a civilisation?
2. What was the earliest civilisation of the Indian Subcontinent?
3. What were its major achievements?



Fig. 6.1. The North Gate entrance to Dholavira's 'Castle' area.



**Metallurgy:** Includes the techniques of extracting metals from nature, purifying or combining them, as well as the scientific study of metals and their properties.

## What Is a Civilisation?

At the end of Chapter 4, we saw the first human groups settling down, practising agriculture, developing some technologies (such as construction, **metallurgy**, transport) and moving towards ‘civilisation’.

What, then, is civilisation? In general, the term is used for an advanced stage of human societies. To be precise, we will consider here that a ‘civilisation’ should have at least the following characteristics:

- some form of **government and administration** — to manage a more complex society and its many activities
- **urbanism** — town-planning, the growth of cities and their management, which generally includes water management and a drainage system
- a variety of **crafts** — including the management of raw materials (such as stone or metal) and the production of finished goods (such as ornaments and tools)
- **trade** both internal (within a city or a region) and external (with distant regions or other parts of the world) — to exchange all sorts of goods
- some form of **writing** — needed to keep records and to communicate
- **cultural ideas** about life and the world, expressed through art, architecture, literature, oral traditions or social customs
- a productive **agriculture** — enough to feed not just the villages, but also the cities.



### THINK ABOUT IT

Which of the above characteristics do you think is the most fundamental — that is, a characteristic essential to the development of all others?



## LET'S EXPLORE

For each characteristic in the list above, can you make a list of professions or occupations that might exist in such a society?



It is easy enough to see that all these characteristics are present in most societies in the world today. But when did civilisation begin, in the sense we have now defined?

Civilisation began at different times in different parts of the world. In the region known as Mesopotamia (modern Iraq and Syria), that happened about 6,000 years ago, and the civilisation in ancient Egypt followed a few centuries later. You will learn about these and a few more civilisations in a later grade. In many ways, humanity would not have reached its present stage without the enormous contributions and advances of those ancient civilisations.

For now, however, we will only look at the Indian Subcontinent, and its northwest region is where our story begins.

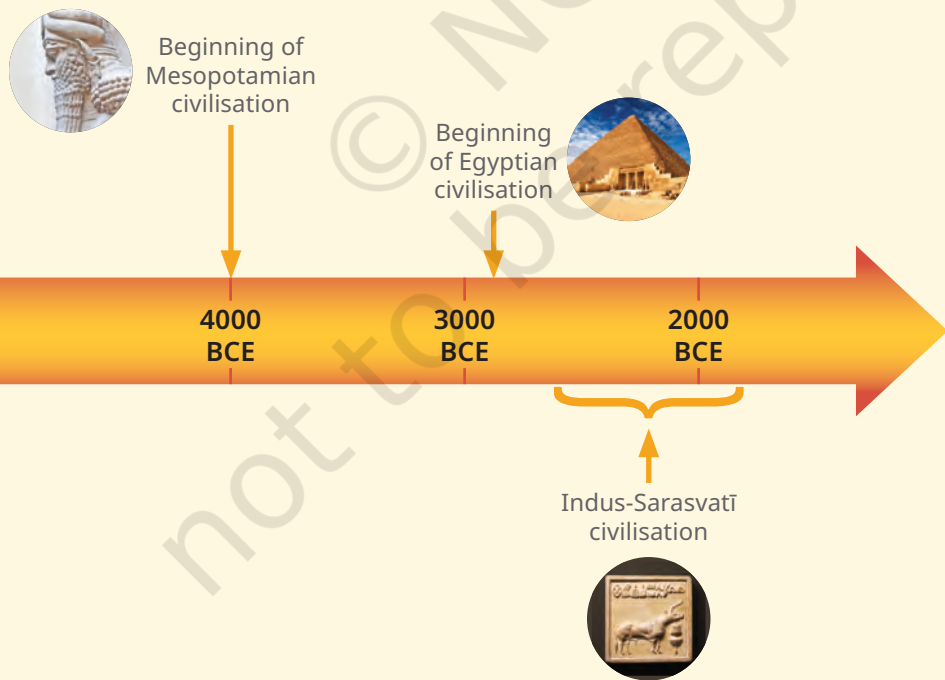


Fig. 6.2. Timeline showing the period of the Indus-Sarasvatī civilisation, from about 2600 to 1900 BCE.

**Tributary:**  
A river that flows into a larger river (or lake). For instance, the Yamuna is a tributary of the Ganga.

## From Village to City

The vast plains of the Punjab (today divided between India and Pakistan) and Sindh (now in Pakistan) are watered by the Indus River and its **tributaries**. This made those plains fertile and, therefore, favourable to agriculture. A little further east, a few millennia ago, another river, the Sarasvatī, used to flow from the foothills of the Himalayas through Haryana, Punjab, parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat (see Fig. 6.3). In this whole region, from about 3500 BCE, villages grew into towns, and with increasing trade and other exchanges, those towns further grew into cities. This transition happened around 2600 BCE.

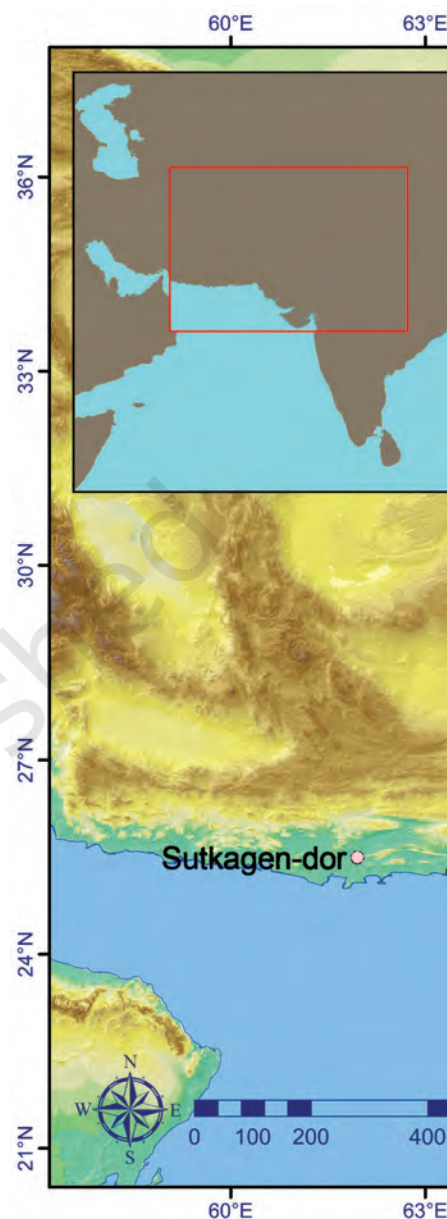
Archaeologists gave this civilisation several names — ‘Indus’, ‘Harappan’, ‘Indus-Sarasvatī’ or ‘Sindhu-Sarasvatī’ civilisation. We will use all these terms. Its inhabitants are called ‘Harappans’. It is one of the oldest civilisations in the world.



### DON'T MISS OUT

Why are the inhabitants of this civilisation called ‘Harappans’ today? That is simply because the city of Harappa (today in Pakistan’s Punjab) was the first of this civilisation to be excavated, way back in 1920–21, over a century ago.

This development is also called the ‘First Urbanisation of India’.



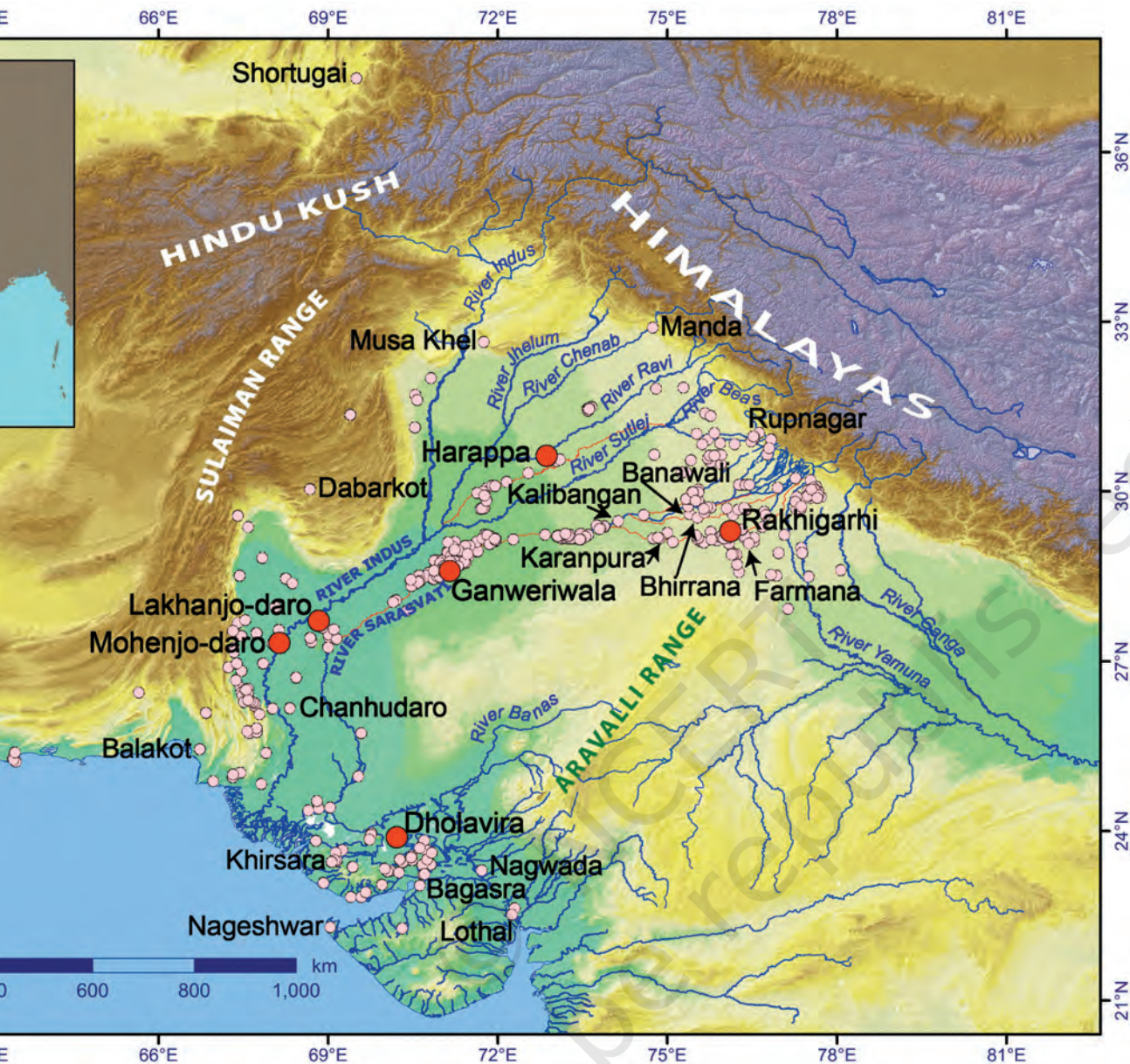


Fig. 6.3. Map of some of the main settlements of the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation. Notice the natural boundaries formed by the mountain ranges (in brown colour).

### LET'S EXPLORE

Some of the important cities of this civilisation are marked in the map (Fig. 6.3). As a class activity, can you try to match these cities with the modern states or regions in the table on the next page?



Harappan city	Modern state / region
Dholavira	Punjab
Harappa	Gujarat
Kalibangan	Sindh
Mohenjo-daro	Haryana
Rakhigarhi	Rajasthan

### The Sarasvatī River

The map (Fig. 6.3 on page 89) shows the Indus (or Sindhu) and its five main tributaries; important cities grew along those rivers, such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. But there are also many sites along the Sarasvatī River, which today goes by the name of ‘Ghaggar’ in India and ‘Hakra’ in Pakistan (hence the name ‘Ghaggar-Hakra River’). This river is now seasonal, because it flows only during the rainy season.

The Sarasvatī River is first mentioned in the R̥ig Veda, an ancient collection of prayers which we will read about in Chapter 7. In this text, Sarasvatī is worshipped both as a goddess and as a river flowing ‘from the mountain to the sea’. Later texts describe the river as drying up and eventually disappearing.

### Town-Planning

Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, now in Pakistan, were the first two cities of this civilisation to be discovered; their identification goes back to 1924, a century ago. Several sites followed in the Indus plains, which is why the civilisation was initially called ‘Indus Valley civilisation’.

Later on, other major cities, such as Dholavira (in Gujarat), Rakhigarhi (in Haryana), Ganweriwala (in the Cholistan desert of Pakistan), and hundreds of smaller sites (such



## THINK ABOUT IT

You may have come across the term 'Indus Valley civilisation' and noticed that we have not used it. A look at the map (Fig. 6.3 on page 89) explains why the term 'Valley' is obsolete, as we now know that the civilisation extended much beyond the Indus region.

as Lothal in Gujarat), were discovered, some of them excavated. Such discoveries continue even today! It is interesting to note that the Sarasvatī basin includes not only two major cities — Rakhigarhi and Ganweriwala — but also several smaller ones (Farmana in Haryana, Kalibangan in Rajasthan) and a few towns (Bhirrana and Banawali, both in Haryana); indeed, the map (Fig. 6.3 on page 89) makes clear the high density of sites in that region.

The larger Harappan cities were built according to precise plans. They had wide streets (Fig. 6.4 and 6.5 on page 92), which were often oriented to the cardinal directions. Most cities seem to have been surrounded by **fortifications** and had two distinct parts — the 'upper town', where the local **elite** probably lived, and the 'lower town', where common people lived.

Some large buildings seem to have been used for collective purposes — for instance, warehouses where goods to be transported were stored. Individual houses of various sizes lined the streets and smaller lanes. Interestingly, the quality of construction was the same for small and big houses. All those buildings were generally made of bricks.

The purpose of some of the structures remains a matter of debate. This is the case of the famous 'Great Bath' in Mohenjo-daro (Fig. 6.6 on page 93), a small but elaborate tank which measured about 12 x 7 metres and had waterproofing materials (such as natural bitumen, a form of tar) applied on top of carefully laid-out bricks. The tank

**Fortification:** A massive wall surrounding a settlement or city, generally for protective purposes.

**Elite:** Here, the word refers to the higher layers of the society, such as rulers, officials, administrators, and often priests.



(Top) Fig. 6.4. A wide street at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), in the lower town area.

(Right) Fig. 6.5. 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.



was surrounded by small rooms, one of which contained a well; there was a drain in one corner of the tank to empty it from time to time and refill it with freshwater.



*Fig. 6.6. Mohenjo-daro's Great Bath*

What was the purpose of such a structure? Archaeologists have proposed several possible interpretations — a public bath for people; a bath for the royal family only; or a tank used for religious rituals. The first interpretation is now ruled out because it turns out that in this city, most houses had individual bathrooms.

### LET'S EXPLORE

Have a debate in class about the last two interpretations. Can you think of any others? Remember that in this case, we do not have any other source of history — no inscription, no text, no traveller's account.



## Water Management

The Harappans gave much importance to water management and cleanliness. They often had separate areas for bathing in their homes; these were connected to a larger network of drains (Fig. 6.7), which generally ran below the streets and took the waste water away.



*Fig. 6.7. Drainage system at Lothal (Gujarat)*

In Mohenjo-daro, people drew water from hundreds of wells made of bricks. But in other regions, it may have been



from ponds, nearby streams or human-made **reservoirs**. In the case of Dholavira (in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat), the largest reservoir measured 73 metres in length!

**Reservoir:** A large natural or artificial place where water is stored.

### LET'S EXPLORE

As a class activity, measure the length of your classroom, a school corridor or a playground with the help of any measuring tape. Compare these lengths with the length of the largest reservoir in Dholavira.

At Dholavira, at least six large reservoirs were built with stones or even cut into the rock (Fig. 6.8). Most of them were connected through underground drains for efficient water harvesting and distribution.



*Fig. 6.8. A large reservoir cut in the rock at Dholavira, measuring 33 metres in length*



## THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine the large number of workers required to build such a network of reservoirs. Who do you think organised their work and gave them precise instructions? How do you think they were paid for their labour? (*Hint: there was no money at that time in the way we have today.*) Since the reservoirs needed to be cleaned from time to time, was there some local authority to manage their maintenance? What clues do we get from all this about this city's ruler and municipal administration?

Use your imagination and discuss with your teacher. Archaeologists also discuss these questions, and the answers are not always final!

## What Did the Harappans Eat?

The Harappans created many of their settlements along the banks of large or small rivers. This is a logical choice, not just for easy access to water, but also for agriculture, since rivers enrich the soil around them. Archaeological findings have shown that the Harappans grew cereals like barley, wheat, some millets, and sometimes rice, in addition to **pulses** and a variety of vegetables. They were also the first in Eurasia to grow cotton, which they used to weave into clothes. They made farming tools, including the plough (Fig. 6.9), some of which continue to be used by modern-day farmers.

**Pulses:**  
A category of crops that includes beans, peas and lentils (dal).



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

This intense agricultural activity was managed by hundreds of small rural sites or villages. Then as now, the cities could survive only if enough agricultural produce from rural areas reached them on a daily basis.

The Harappans also domesticated a number of animals for meat consumption and fished both in rivers and in the sea. This is known from the large numbers of animal and fish bones found during excavations.

What did Harappan cooking pots contain? Scientific examinations of clay pots have provided some answers, both expected ones (dairy products) and surprising ones — such as remains of turmeric, ginger and banana. Clearly, their diet was quite diverse!

### LET US EXPLORE

Imagine you cook a meal in a Harappan house. What dish or dishes would you prepare, based on the data given above?



## A Brisk Trade

The Harappans were engaged in active trade, not only within their own civilisation (other cities nearby or far away), but with other civilisations and cultures within and outside India. They exported ornaments, timber, some objects of daily use (Fig. 6.11 on page 98), probably also gold and cotton, and possibly some food items. The most favoured ornaments were beads of carnelian (Fig. 6.10 on page 98), a reddish semiprecious stone found mostly in Gujarat. Harappan craftspeople developed special techniques to drill them, so a string could pass through them, and to decorate them in various ways. They also worked conch shells into beautiful shell bangles, which requires sophisticated techniques as shell is a hard material.

What the Harappans imported in exchange of the exported goods is not so clear. It probably included copper, since this metal was not so common back home.



## DON'T MISS OUT

The Harappans mastered the art of working copper, a soft metal. If tin is added to copper, the resulting metal is bronze, which is harder than copper. The Harappans used bronze to make tools, pots and pans, and, as we will see later, some figurines.



*Fig. 6.10. Harappan beads of carnelian beads excavated at Susa (present-day Iran)*



*Fig. 6.11. Harappan ivory comb (about 7 cm long) found on the coast of Oman*

To conduct such a trade, they used land routes and rivers, and the sea for more distant destinations — this is the first intensive maritime activity in India. Indeed, quite a few Harappan settlements are located in the coastal regions of Gujarat and Sindh. Lothal, a small settlement in Gujarat, has

a surprisingly huge basin measuring 217 metres in length and 36 metres in width — the length is just a little more than that of two football grounds! This basin must have been a dockyard, that is, a structure used to receive and send boats for further transportation of goods.

Such elaborate trade requires traders to be able to identify their goods — and also each other! This seems to have been the chief purpose of thousands of small seals, which have been excavated from many settlements. These seals



Fig. 6.12. The huge dockyard at Lothal

were generally made of steatite, a soft stone that would be hardened through heating. They measure only a few centimetres and generally depict animal figures with, above them, a few signs that are part of a writing system. But that system and the symbolic meaning of the animal figures are yet to be understood. What is certain is that they somehow relate to trade activities.



Fig. 6.13-1, 6.13-2, 6.13-3. (Left to right) Harappan seal showing a unicorn; Harappan seal showing a bull; Harappan seal showing a horned tiger

### LET'S EXPLORE

Looking at these three Harappan seals with some writing signs, what goes through your mind? Would you like to suggest any interpretations? Let your imagination run!



## The Lives of the Ancients

Archaeologists have unearthed many objects made and used by Harappans.

Objects  
of daily  
use

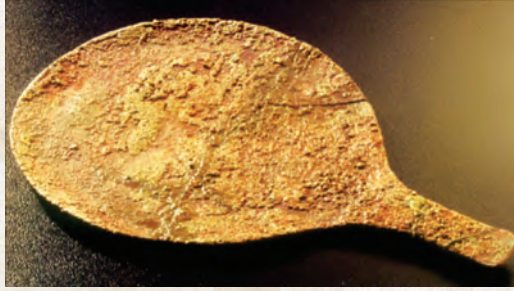


Fig. 6.14-1 (top), 6.14-2 (right). A bronze mirror; a terracotta pot (both from Dholavira)



Fig. 6.14-3 (top), 6.14-4 (right). A few stone weights; a bronze chisel (both from Dholavira)



Fig. 6.14-5, 6.14-6. A gamesboard engraved on a stone, about 25 cm in length (from Dholavira); a terracotta whistle, about 4 cm in length (from Karanpura in Rajasthan). Harappans designed many games and toys to keep both adults and children amused!

Cultural and symbolic objects



Fig. 6.15-1, 6.15-2, 6.15-3. A statuette of a figure often called 'Priest King' (although it is not known who this figure was); a seal showing a swastika; a seal depicting a three-faced deity seated on a raised platform, surrounded by powerful animals



Fig. 6.15-4, 6.15-5, 6.15-6. The 'Dancing Girl', a bronze figurine from Mohenjo-daro (it is 10.8 cm high); a terracotta figurine seated in a 'namaste'; a design on a pot which seems to tell the story of the thirsty crow, who finds a clever way to drink water at the bottom of the pot (from Lothal).



### THINK ABOUT IT

- ◇ Looking at the objects on pages 100 and 101 — or any other pictured in this chapter — can you make out what activities or aspects of life were important for the Harappans?



### LET'S EXPLORE

- Complete the story found on the Lothal pot. How was such a story remembered for more than 4,000 years, in your opinion?
- Consider the 'Dancing Girl' figurine. What do you make of the attitude the figurine expresses? Observe her bangles covering an entire arm, a practice still visible in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Where else in this chapter can you spot bangles worn in this manner. What conclusion should we draw from this?

## The End or a New Beginning?

Around 1900 BCE, this Sindhu-Sarasvatī civilisation, despite all its achievements, began to fall apart. The cities were abandoned one by one. If any inhabitants remained, they adopted a rural lifestyle in the changed environment — it appears that the earlier government or administration no longer existed. Gradually the Harappans scattered over hundreds, if not thousands, of small rural settlements.



### THINK ABOUT IT

The Harappans returned to rural settlements because a rural lifestyle gives easier access to food and water than an urban lifestyle. Then as now, cities depended on villages to provide food, and sometimes water.

What caused this decline? Archaeologists have proposed many factors. Long back, it was thought that warfare or



invasions may have destroyed the cities, but there is no trace of warfare or invasion. Indeed, the Harappans do not seem to have kept any army or weapons of war; as far as the evidence goes, it seems to have been a relatively peaceful civilization.

Two factors are currently agreed upon. First, a climatic change which affected much of the world from 2200 BCE onward, causing reduced rainfall and a drier phase. This would have made agriculture more difficult and could have reduced food supply to the cities. Second, the Sarasvatī River dried up in its central basin; suddenly, cities there, such as Kalibangan or Banawali were abandoned. There could have been other factors, but these two remind us of how much we depend on climate and the environment for our well-being.

Although the cities disappeared, much of the Harappan culture and technology survived and was passed on to the next phase of Indian civilisation, which we will explore in a future chapter.

### Before we move on ...

- The Indus, Harappan or Sindhu-Sarasvatī civilisation is one of the oldest of the world. Its inhabitants, the Harappans, created planned cities with efficient water management, diverse crafts and a brisk trade.
- A productive agriculture brought a variety of crops to the cities.
- The civilisation eventually declined, probably because of climatic and environmental changes; people returned to a rural lifestyle.

