

The Great Transformation from Indus Valley Civilization to Vedic Period

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the data represents how the organized urban life of “Indus Valley Civilization” changed drastically to a rural life of Vedic period (beginning around 1500 BCE) ¹. The Indus Valley Civilization flourished during (2600-1900 BCE) forming a systematic urban planning, a long-distance trade and an efficient economy². Further which began to disappear due to environmental issues like “drying of rivers” i.e. Saraswati and shift in monsoon. Due to the decline of Indus cities people migrated towards east and south³.

Furthermore, over time, people started a “rural pastoral-lifestyle” ⁴. “Early Vedic people” were mostly herders who lived in “small tribes (Jana)” and were unaware of the use of iron and used to do graze animals and do not have a specific place to live. Later when iron was discovered they used it for cleaning forest land, making tools with iron which was helpful for agriculture on large scale. Later iron was used in many ways.

I also studied about how the caste system i.e. “Varna system” came into vogue. During the Early Vedic age, social stratification was flexible and based on occupation rather than hereditary factors⁵. By looking at “old ruins” (archaeology) and “ancient religious texts” (Vedas), we concluded that even though the lifestyle changed, the religious traditions and ideas continued. In the end, this transformation created the two main pillars of the Indian history, “advanced city life” and a “spiritual tradition”.

KEYWORDS

Urbanization, Varna system, Pastoral-lifestyle, Religious texts, Archaeology, Religious traditions, Monsoonal shift, Saraswati, Small tribes (Jana), Iron Age, grid-pattern streets, burnt bricks, Mahajanapadas, Bronze Age, Indo-Aryans, Pastoralists, Deciphered, Spindle whorls,

Before the transformation took place, Indus valley was a well-structured model of planned cities. The houses were built in a 'grid-based pattern'. 'Kiln-burnt bricks' were used to make the large buildings. Between [2600-1900BCE] Various sites found, Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal, Surkotada showed the grid -pattern streets and we find the remains of a large granary, the great bath, a dockyard, a drainage system and an assembly hall⁶. Harappa being the first site to be excavated therefore the civilization named as 'Harappan Culture'.

Large scale trade emerged with Mesopotamia and a fine craftsmanship in beads and metals. 'Seals of bulls and elephants' were found, which was helpful for the economic exchange. Most seals were found in Mohenjo-Daro. However, after 1900 BCE Indus Valley Civilization started to decline. The archaeological evidence shows that the quality of houses declined, trade became silent which marked the beginning to an end of this era. The shift was seen because of these key reasons; *first* the environmental issues and *second* the social factors. The major reasons for the shift were of, drying of Saraswati River and monsoonal shift which was not sufficient to grow crops for such large city population⁷. Other than this an interesting fact, new group emerged during this time called 'Indo-Aryans' who started to settle in northwest regions of Indus. They bring with them a new lifestyle which differs to that of the people of Indus. They brought Sanskrit language and a horse which was not known to the Indus valley civilization. This environmental change and cultural arrivals give a turn to an urban Indus valley civilization life in the rural Vedic world.

As the cities of brick lacked behind, Early Vedic period emerged [1500- 1000 BCE] with a simple village life. Indus people were the merchants unlikely the Vedic people were the pastoralists. Asset/wealth for the people of this era was their land and Cattles⁸. Instead of making houses with baked bricks it was made up to mud and thatch.

Society was organized into small tribes which were called Jana. And later these were called Mahajanapadas when it begun to settle on large scale. This was the time when the hymns of Rig Veda were composed to honor the nature gods like Agni (Fire), Indra (Rain) and many more. Vedic period people were nature lovers so they worship what is representation of nature. Gandharvas and Apsaras were also worshipped.

The most significant change we saw was due to the discovery and the use of iron in the later Vedic age 1000 `BCE'. This was helpful for them to cut the dense forests of the Gangetic plain, which was quite difficult with the use of bronze at the time of Indus valley. It leads to a massive expansion of agriculture.

People started to settle permanently in small tribes (Jana) which were later formed to a large kingdom called the 'Mahajanapadas'. In this era we also came to see that the society was more organized but rigid means it was hard to change. Varna system (Caste) was seen, which was divided in four parts according to birth and the profession i.e. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishayas, and Shudras. Religion became more complex, and the hymns composed earlier, but now the yajnas (fire sacrifice) were performed by the priest to show the power of the king.

The Indus Civilization and the Vedic Civilization, comparison between both is both interesting and instructive: These were the animals which were familiar to both the eras; Sheep, cows, bulls and dogs. Horse was not known to Indus valley. These animals were hunted by Vedic people - Antelopes, buffaloes, horse lions, and elephants.

Gold ornaments like earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, garlands and jewels for the neck- used by Vedic people Necklaces, finger-rings, armlets and filets for both man and woman. Both Indus Valley and Vedic Aryans know how to make clothes. Vedic texts mention many weaving tools also at Mohenjo-Daro archaeologists have found 'spindle whorls' which is used for spinning thread¹⁰. Both were familiar to cotton and wool. All Indus people were not aware about the iron, but Vedic people were. Indus valley: worship tree, animals, Siva, Mother-Goddess

Vedic people worship God which represents nature i.e. Varuna (Sky), Indra (Rain), Agni (Fire) ¹¹. Indus people preferred indoor games like Dice, but the Vedic people took interest in hunting and chariot racing.

Indus people were more advanced than Vedic people in the art of writing. It is evident that Indus people had a unique script which is not deciphered yet. Also, this shows that they were way far from Vedic Aryans in the art of Writing.

CONCLUSION:

The Great Transformation from the Indus valley civilization to the Vedic period is the story of how the Indian society adapted to this changing world. It was the journey from planned, burnt-bricks cities of the west to the spiritual, iron using kingdoms of the east.

Although the great cities like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro are devastated but had not completely disappeared what remained was their influence. Many religious symbols and farming techniques continued which shows that the Indus valley and Vedic period was somewhere merged¹².

This period of change also called “The Great Transformation” created the two main pillars i.e. a well-planned urban lifestyle society for the Indus valley and a rural society full of spirituality, traditions, connected to Vedas. “This merger is considered to be the most important part of the beginning of the new Indian Civilization”.

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