

From

Mohenjo-Daro

to **Mumbai**

Merging Ancient Wisdom
of Town Planning With
Modern Solutions





A SEAL OF PASHUPATI
FOUND IN INDUS VALLEY

Table of Contents

01	Executive Summary	07
02	Rise of Indus Valley Civilization	09
03	Lesson 1: Plan First – The Power of an Integrated Urban Layout	11
04	Lesson 2: Build Sustainable Water and Sanitation Infrastructure	15
05	Lesson 3: Design High-Quality Community and Open Spaces	19
06	Lesson 4: Standardise and Regulate Urban Development	23
07	Lesson 5: Develop Climate Resilience in Cities	27
08	Conclusion	29

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STREET OF THE LOWER
CITY OF MOHENJO-DARO



Executive Summary

As India braces for an unprecedented wave of urbanisation, with over 600 million people projected to live in cities by 2036, its cities face mounting challenges, from infrastructure deficiencies and inadequate housing to climate change impacts. Amidst the informal and unplanned urban sprawl that characterises much of India's urban growth today, we can draw lessons from one of the world's earliest urban planners: the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC). While separated by millennia—spanning from approximately 3300 to 1300 BCE—the fundamental wisdom behind the IVC's approach to city planning still resonates today.

The IVC's meticulously planned cities, such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, housed tens of thousands and were organized into grid-based layouts that balanced residential, commercial, and public zones. This structured approach can guide modern Indian cities in managing unplanned sprawl. Their advanced water management systems, including water wells in Mohenjo-Daro, along with sophisticated drainage networks and reservoirs, underscore the importance of sustainable infrastructure—a critical need as India grapples with water scarcity and climate-induced flooding.

Harappan cities prioritized community spaces like the Great Bath and shared courtyards, fostering social cohesion and inclusivity. In contrast, modern Indian cities struggle with shrinking public spaces, where per capita green space falls well below the WHO-recommended nine square meters. Additionally, the standardization in construction techniques and early climate adaptation strategies, such as elevated platforms to mitigate flooding, highlight the importance of regulatory frameworks and resilience in urban planning.

Despite the lack of established governance mechanisms and varying climatic conditions from north to south, the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization were meticulously planned, featuring sophisticated systems and networks and a long-term vision that very few Indian cities can match even today with the technological advancements available.

By drawing lessons from the IVC's legacy, Indian policymakers and urban planners have the opportunity to create sustainable, inclusive, and resilient cities that can meet the needs of both present and future generations, positioning India's urban centres as global benchmarks of excellence to achieve Viksit Bharat 2047. From advanced urban planning to sustainable resource management, this document tried to outline timeless lessons from the IVC that could benefit the sustainable development of contemporary Indian cities. The dual approach of integrating modern technological advancements with the ancient wisdom of Indus Valley Civilisation can provide a sustainable roadmap for urban resilience, growth, and inclusion while navigating current challenges.



Harappan
Ceremonial Vessel,



Rise of Indus Valley Civilization

In 1856, workers building the Punjab Railway in British-controlled India discovered thousands of ancient fire-baked mud bricks buried in the earth. The engineers were excited about the building materials as resources were scarce, but the bricks' precise shape and ancient appearance sparked curiosity. This find would eventually lead to the remarkable discovery of the city of Harappa.

Harappa and its sister cities—Mohenjo-daro, Lothal, Dholavira—were part of the Indus Valley Civilization, which emerged along the Indus River around five thousand years ago. This monumental society, alongside Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, was one of the earliest centers of human civilization. Here, from modest beginnings, the Harappans developed vast, intricate cities that could accommodate tens of thousands, leaving a lasting legacy.

Between 3300 and 1300 BCE, for nearly two thousand years, the Indus Valley Civilization thrived. It was home to some of the world's first major urban centers. Mohenjo-daro alone covered 750 acres and housed up to 40,000 people at its peak—a metropolis in a world where cities were rare.

Harappa, became the namesake for the entire civilization. Situated along the fertile banks of the Ravi River, Harappa was ideally located for farming and trade. By 2200 BCE, it had grown into a bustling center with around 80,000 residents, a transition from village to city that left behind layers of artifacts, revealing a society on the rise.

Dholavira, the second-largest Indus Valley city in modern India, was renowned for its advanced water management system that collected and stored water from nearby streams, ensuring a steady supply during droughts.

Across these cities, the signs of a meticulously planned society were everywhere: baked brick houses, neatly organised streets, complex drainage systems, and clusters of public buildings. Both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa had grid layouts reminiscent of modern urban planning. But who orchestrated this uniformity—was it an elite council, a governing authority? The answer remains elusive, yet the careful design of these cities reveals a society deeply invested in order, hygiene, and progress.

In every home, water flowed and waste was managed through an ingenious network of drainage systems. Many houses were equipped with baths that channeled wastewater into main drains, keeping the streets clean and disease at bay. Public wells and water storage facilities further demonstrate the Harappans' commitment to health and sanitation.

In fields from architecture to mathematics, the Indus Valley people mastered techniques that allowed them to build with precision and consistency. With standardized units of measurement, they achieved levels of accuracy that would inspire even today's builders and architects.

Though five millennia have passed, the lessons of the Indus Valley Civilization endure. This report unveils five timeless principles of urbanization drawn from these ancient cities—principles that still resonate. Even as cities evolve, these foundational truths remain, a testament to the ingenuity and foresight of the Harappans. Their legacy reminds us that the essence of great urban planning and design is timeless, rooted in the wisdom of the ages.



Typical Indus Valley town : Visualization



Lesson 1: Plan First The Power of an Integrated Urban Layout

In the ancient cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, the principle of "Plan First" was not merely an ideal—it was the backbone of a flourishing society. Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, and other urban centers were not products of random expansion; they were built with a foresight that is impressive even by today's standards. These were among humanity's first organized cities, astonishingly advanced in their layout and planning, revealing timeless lessons that have withstood five millennia.

The Indus Valley was likely the first civilization in human history to introduce an organized city layout. Its cities were meticulously divided, with levels representing different social classes and distinct functional zones. At the heart of these cities lay a sophisticated grid system. Streets ran in perfect

alignment, parallel and perpendicular, creating blocks that mirrored the precision of modern urban planning. Corners connected with right angles, forming a calculated structure that efficiently utilized land—one of the most valuable resources in the Indus Valley. This division ensured that more people could access essential resources like businesses and water.

Equality was a subtle yet powerful element of this design. Most homes in each section of the city followed a similar size and style, promoting a sense of unity among the people. Higher elevations often featured larger homes for the wealthier, while smaller homes were positioned lower. Regardless of their social standing, most houses were built on levelled platforms, crafted by layering mud bricks or stones to create a stable foundation—a feat of engineering that levelled the ground in cities where elevation varied.



Plan of Houses and Streets, Mohenjo-Daro

Distinctive styles emerged in the city's eastern and western zones, with smaller homes to the east and larger ones to the west. It's remarkable to think that five thousand years ago, this vision of structured urban growth existed. While historians still debate who orchestrated this urban marvel—whether it was a council of elders, a centralized government, or a society collectively invested in structure—one truth remains: this was a civilization that valued the power of long-term planning.

As early as 3000 BCE, Indus Valley cities adopted this grid-based organization, laying the foundation for organized hubs like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. In Harappa, distinct areas served specific purposes: residential quarters, artisan workshops, and bustling trade zones. Smaller settlements flourished around these cities, forming networks that connected communities along the banks of the Indus River and across the Punjab Plain.

The streets followed a standardized north-south grid, with main streets nine meters wide, secondary streets three meters, and alleys a compact 1.5 meters. This grid, with its uniformity and clarity, was repeated in nearly every Indus Valley settlement, from the largest cities to the smallest towns.

The Harappans didn't just build for the present; they built for the future. They anticipated population growth and expanded catchment areas, understanding that as cities grew, new zones would need to be designated for residential, commercial, and public use. Their proactive approach to planning displayed a remarkable grasp of urban dynamics.



Archaeological site of Mohenjo-Daro

Lessons for Posterity

Today, as modern Indian cities grow at an unprecedented pace, the need to "Plan First" has never been more critical. Unlike the cohesive planning of the Indus Valley, many urban areas in India face unplanned sprawl, leading to strained infrastructure, clogged streets, and neighborhoods without basic services. The lack of foresight has fueled chaotic development, with green spaces and vital ecosystems sacrificed in the process.

The rapid urban sprawl in the peri-urban areas of Indian cities has become a pressing concern for policymakers and city administrators alike. While urban development within the core city jurisdictions is typically regulated and follows a planned blueprint, development in the urban fringes and agglomerations has been occurring organically. The proliferation of unauthorised colonies in major cities across India, including the National Capital, serves as a stark reminder of the challenges posed by unplanned urban developments.

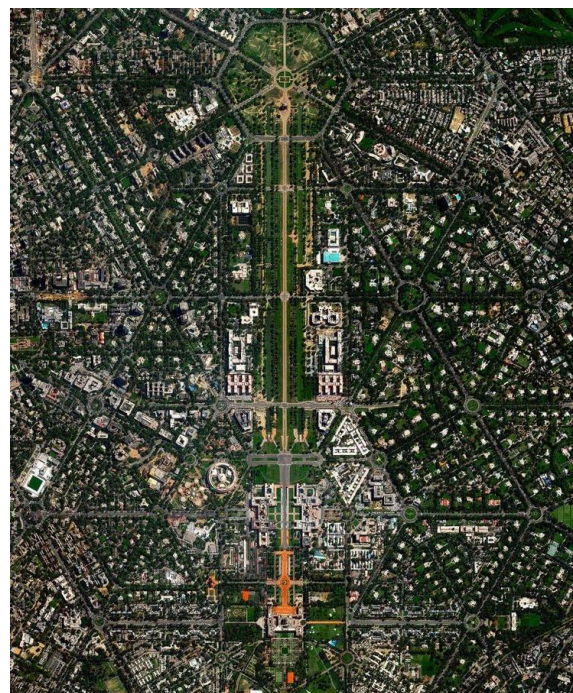
India's urban transformation, driven by projects like the Smart Cities Mission, can directly draw from the Harappan principles of zoning and integrated planning. Cities like Bangalore with its Layout Model, Gujarat's Town Planning Schemes (TPS), and Haryana's Sector Planning reflect attempts to bring order to urban growth. However, many regions still see the rise of unplanned settlements, which lack essential amenities like water, sanitation, and structured access to education and employment.

Local governments frequently prioritise urban retrofitting and renewal initiatives only after problems escalate to a critical mass, despite being aware that these efforts may fall short of achieving the desired outcomes due to the complex nature of spatial urban systems and the complexities of governance mechanisms involved.

Instead, a far-reaching approach is needed, focusing majorly on greenfield development for planned urban expansion and urban renewal efforts to resolve existing challenges effectively.

Imagine if we shifted our approach to prioritize a long-term vision: with proactive, multi-jurisdictional planning that integrates zoning, infrastructure, and balanced land uses, our cities could grow with purpose instead of expanding in disarray. Like the Harappans, who organized their land into interconnected zones, we too could build accessible, resilient cities that cater to the needs of all residents.

The "Plan First" principle reminds us that comprehensive planning is not a luxury but a necessity. By emulating the Indus Valley's visionary approach, we have the potential to transform the demands of modern urbanization into sustainable, thriving cities that reflect the timeless wisdom of one of humanity's greatest civilizations.



Aerial view of Lutyens' Delhi



Ruins of Harappa



Lesson 2 : Build Sustainable Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

In the ancient Indus Valley cities, water was not merely a resource; it was the very foundation of urban life. The Harappans approached water management with a foresight that feels visionary even today, creating sophisticated infrastructure to support water and sanitation.

Drainage and Sewage System

The Indus Valley's sewer and drainage systems stand as some of the most advanced of the ancient world. Running parallel to the grid-patterned streets, the "pipelines" followed the urban layout, ensuring a seamless flow through the city. Every home had its own drainage connection, with waste flowing directly into a covered city-wide system. These ancient drains, shielded by mud bricks and accessible through manhole covers, carried waste away, keeping residential areas clean and odor-free.

Remarkably, many homes also had indoor baths and even flush toilets, connected to an underground sewage network—complete with brick tanks and clay pots that served as septic systems, periodically cleaned through access points. Such meticulous sanitation planning was unparalleled among ancient civilizations.

Water systems

The Harappans didn't rely on a single water source; they developed an array of canals, dams, and man-made lakes. Canals crisscrossed the cities, not only supporting irrigation but also enabling trade and transportation. Rainwater was captured and stored in lakes, while canals connected to natural water sources, ensuring a steady supply even during dry spells. These irrigation systems, open to capture rainfall, were constructed with stone or mud bricks, designed to flow naturally with the landscape. The water was often purified before use, a detail that underscores the Harappans' commitment to public health

Wells

A notable aspect of the Harappan cities was the abundance of wells. Over 700 wells were discovered in Mohenjo-Daro alone, an impressive number compared to other civilizations of the time, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. This translates to approximately one well for every three houses, which is an unparalleled ratio in ancient societies. Public wells were strategically placed throughout the grid-like city blocks to ensure easy access to water for the residents

Dams

Dams were built directly on the water and were another important water-based architectural feat. These dams controlled how much water could enter or leave an area. These were used to prevent flooding, divert parts of rivers and store water.



Home Connections

The Harappans designed houses with dedicated bathing areas, where wastewater was funneled directly to street drains. Many homes had internal courtyards and opened onto smaller lanes, allowing for efficient water disposal. Wealthier residences even boasted underground heating systems for warm baths—a luxury rarely seen in ancient times.

Aqueducts

Harappans also had aqueducts. These channels started at high elevations and gradually descended to lower areas, usually ending in a basin or another water storage area. Some Aqueducts diverted into different directions to supply water to different areas in the cities. With all of these different water systems it appears most people, would have had easy access to fresh water.

Indus valley people had to plan ways to work around and with the seasonal changes. During the wet season, this meant storing extra water in various reservoirs and other water storage constructions. During the dry season, water that had been saved during the wet season was put to use to avoid a drought.



Lessons for Posterity

Even today, few cities can boast of the kind of sophisticated drainage systems that existed thousands of years ago in these ancient cities. With its advanced drainage and sanitation systems, water management in the Indus Valley is an enduring model of how infrastructure supports urban resilience. These innovations highlight the importance of planning urban infrastructure in advance, particularly as Indian cities grapple with water scarcity, poor sanitation, and increasing climate-induced flooding, the importance of resilient infrastructure becomes paramount to meet the demands of their growing populations.

Today, Indian cities face enormous water and sanitation challenges, with unplanned growth leading to shortages and inefficient management. These challenges affect the vulnerable citizens who reside in informal settlements the most, which often lack these basic services, exacerbating inequality and public health risks. The consequences of inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure are not limited to informal or unplanned areas but also affect prominent urban centres such as Gurugram, where high-rise, high-density developments exist without supportive infrastructure. The risk of infrastructure breakdown under pressure from massive urban growth, particularly in cities like Mumbai and Chennai, where water shortages and flooding already pose serious threats. The inadequate infrastructure in Indian cities, coupled with recent climate-induced calamities exacerbated by microclimatic changes, underscores the need to upgrade the current infrastructure and incorporate resilience into future networks. Initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission have been transformative catalysts in addressing some of the issues related to sanitation. However, it is just the beginning of our journey to reach the target of 100% in various benchmarking parameters. With a growing urban population and a rapidly expanding economy, the demand for water is rising significantly.

Various challenges—such as water scarcity, groundwater depletion, inadequate processing and distribution capacities, and high levels of non-revenue water—require urgent, targeted interventions to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which aims to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation while promoting sustainable water management. It is imperative for urban local bodies to recognise the urgency of integrating water and sanitation infrastructure as a cohesive system and to strategise interventions aimed at achieving 100% compliance with all necessary benchmarks to support thriving communities and economies.

Investment in building modern water and sanitation infrastructure solutions, such as last-mile water network connections, stormwater drainage systems, and greywater recycling, and upgrading sanitation networks based on the Indus Valley's timeless principles could help avert public health crises while improving the overall quality of urban life.





Indus River Valley



Lesson 3 : Design High-Quality Community and Open Spaces

In the Indus Valley cities, community spaces were more than just open areas—they were the lifeblood of urban life, pulsating with the energy of social, economic, and cultural interactions. Expansive plazas, communal courtyards, marketplaces, and civil amenities were central to the urban fabric, anchoring a society where public life thrived. These spaces fostered a unique social cohesion, facilitated trade, and served as venues for civic gatherings, all while providing much-needed breathing spaces within the densely populated cities. Remarkably, Indus Valley public spaces, such as the Great Bath in Mohenjo-Daro, predate the renowned public spaces of Greek and Roman civilizations, underscoring their pioneering role in urban design.

Both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro featured open courtyards within residential clusters and public buildings alike. These courtyards served as communal areas where daily routines unfolded—gatherings, small-scale economic activities, and moments of social interaction. In many homes, these courtyards even extended into public spaces, symbolizing a community-oriented city layout that prioritized collective life over isolated living. These public courtyards allowed neighbors to connect, children to play, and families to gather, knitting the social fabric of the city more closely together.

Larger communal plazas or assembly areas were likely integrated near significant structures like granaries and marketplaces. These spaces enabled residents to gather for trade, social interaction, and administration.

The Great Bath in Mohenjo-Daro, perhaps the most iconic public space of the civilization, was a sophisticated structure designed with steps leading down, a drainage system, and a waterproof floor. Likely used for ritualistic or community bathing, the Great Bath reflects the spiritual and communal significance of water in public life, drawing people together in shared rituals and ceremonies.

Granaries were also of central importance to the community. Situated near the citadel or public precincts, these storage buildings functioned as a lifeline for the city, ensuring a steady food supply. Elevated on stone or hardened mud platforms to protect against pests and environmental hazards, these granaries were designed with sections that allowed grains to be separated, likely for better inventory management. Acting as both a public utility and a gathering spot for farmers and merchants, the granaries underscored the city's commitment to communal welfare and economic stability.

Wells, found in abundance throughout Harappan cities, were another testament to the civilization's dedication to public well-being. Mohenjo-Daro alone contained over 700 wells—an unparalleled number for the time—strategically placed to ensure easy water access for all. Public wells not only provided essential water but also acted as informal meeting points, where residents gathered, bonded, and built community ties. The cities' extensive drainage systems, which seamlessly integrated with residential streets, reinforced the communal nature of these shared water sources and further exemplified the Harappans' commitment to collective health and sanitation.

Beyond these core structures, the cities included marketplaces, craft centers, storage areas, and dockyards in river and coastal cities, all essential to community life. These spaces fostered economic activity and facilitated trade, connecting the cities to surrounding settlements and far-off lands. The presence of such dedicated community spaces demonstrates that the Indus Valley people understood the importance of shared areas in fostering a thriving urban society.

Lessons for Posterity

As Indian cities today grapple with rising population densities, public spaces are shrinking. In bustling cities like Mumbai, commercial and residential pressures consume land, making it difficult to provide adequate parks and public areas.

The average per capita open space in Indian megacities — Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata Hyderabad and Chennai — falls significantly below the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recommended standard of nine square meters per person, underscoring an urgent need to protect and revitalise public spaces to fulfil the mandate to provide open spaces and green spaces to urban residents. The situation is even more troubling in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, where dedicated public green spaces have taken a back seat to basic municipal services.

Recognizing the benefits of public green spaces such as Cubbon Park in Bangalore, Central Vista in Delhi, and the recently developed Central Park in Jaipur has encouraged policymakers and local urban administrators to prioritize greater capital investment in quality urban open and green spaces..

Public spaces are more than recreational areas—they are essential to the social, cultural, and economic health of a city. Integrating parks, plazas, and pedestrian-friendly zones into urban planning can mitigate social isolation, foster inclusivity, and promote cultural exchange. Especially in densely populated areas, where over 26% of urban populations reside in informal settlements, public spaces offer respite and connection, enhancing quality of life.

Emulating the Indus Valley’s community-oriented city design, we can reshape modern urban landscapes to prioritize open spaces, active citizenship, and vibrant community life. By weaving plazas, green spaces, and pedestrian zones into city planning, Indian cities can nurture the community bonds that are essential to resilient urban life. The Harappans’ foresight reminds us that community vitality is indeed the heart of a city—a lesson that remains as powerful and relevant today as it was five thousand years ago



Cubbon Park, Bangalore



Replica of 'Dancing Girl'
of Mohenjo-daro



Water Systems of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa :
Visualization



Lesson 4 : Standardise and Regulate Urban Development

A defining feature of the Indus Valley Civilization was the standardisation and regulation of critical systems that enabled it to flourish despite its vast geographical spread—from settlements in the northern river basins of present-day Punjab to the southern regions of Gujarat and the Gwadar area in Pakistan. This remarkable cohesion was maintained across diverse climates and varying natural resources. These systems include construction materials, construction methods, town planning norms, civic services, land use zoning and several aspects of trade and commerce.

The Harappans primarily used stone, mud-brick, and wood for construction, with material selection influenced by local resources. In rural areas, houses were typically built with sun-dried mud bricks, whereas urban structures, including homes and public buildings, utilised baked bricks for enhanced durability. These bricks were produced with a size ratio of 4:2:1, reflecting the civilisation's emphasis on standardisation.

The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) cities were planned in a grid pattern with wide, straight streets ranging in width from 13 to 34 feet intersecting at right angles, dividing the cities into two parts: the citadel, an upper fortified part, and a lower part for the common people. Citadels, elevated areas reserved for the elite and administrative class, served as political and economic centres. The cities had access to wells to each house and an advanced drainage system with covered drains on both sides of the street.

The drains carried dirty water to an underground main drain outside the city. These standardised and advanced town layouts supported the large populations and organised urban growth.

Indus Valley cities employed standardised methods to mitigate the effects of floods and droughts. To protect against flooding, they built massive walls around cities, constructed settlements on raised, man-made hills, and designed tapering structures. They also created artificial water reservoirs to conserve water. To combat droughts, they developed aqueducts to ensure a steady water supply.



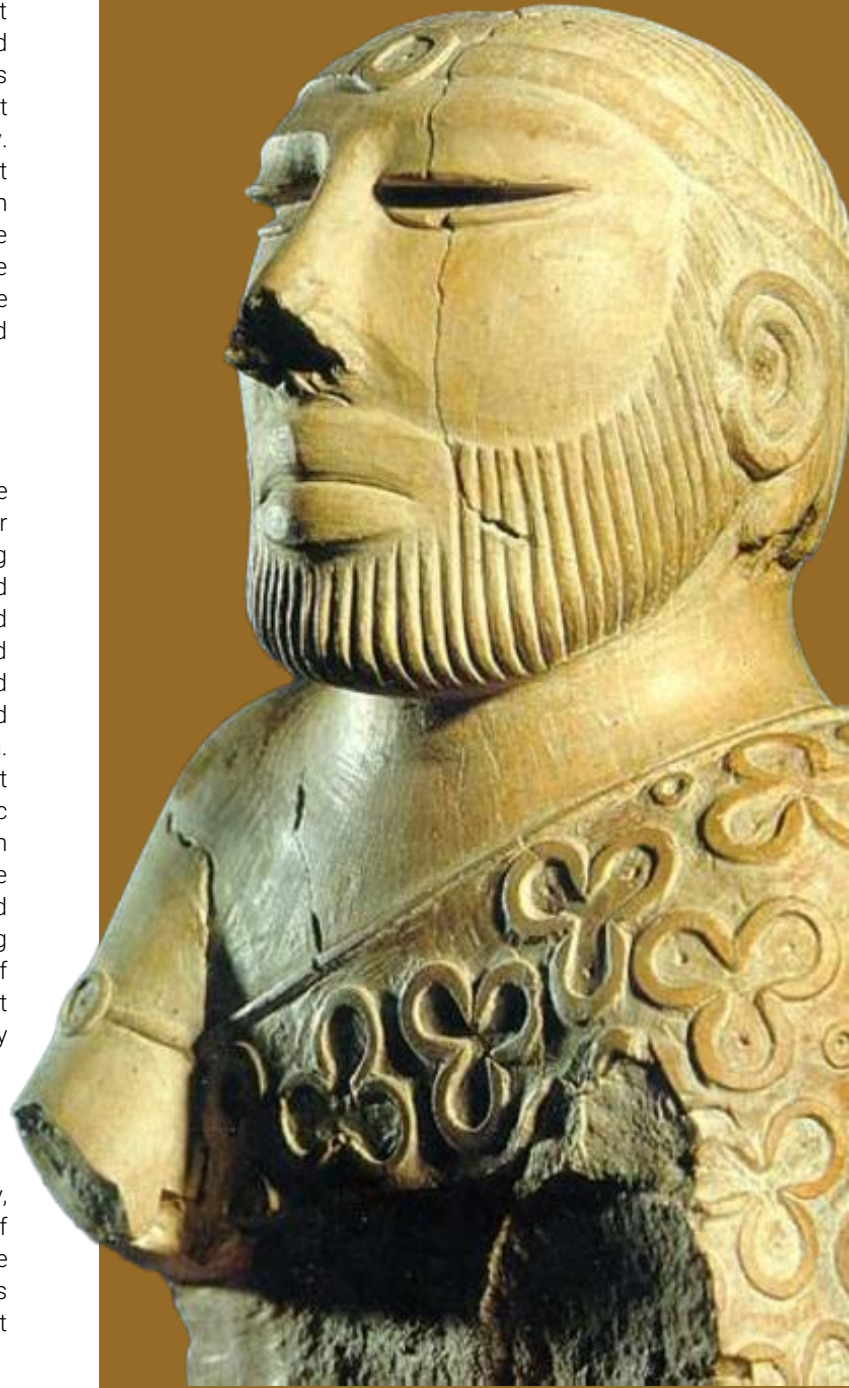
First Street: City of Mohenjo-Daro

Lessons for Posterity

Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization regulated and standardised essential aspects throughout the vast geographical spread without any centralised governance mechanisms. This standardisation is reflected in enabling systemic development throughout the settlements of the Indus Valley. Standardising and regulating urban development have never been more critical as India's urban population expanding at an unprecedented rate while cities face issues such as inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion, poor waste management, water scarcity, and unplanned expansion.

Standardized urban development can help create uniform systems for transportation, housing, water supply, sanitation, and waste management, ensuring that essential services are delivered efficiently and equitably. By regulating construction practices and urban planning, cities can prevent haphazard growth, reduce the strain on natural resources, and enhance resilience against climate change-related challenges like flooding, heatwaves, and air pollution. Additionally, standardized urban development promotes inclusivity, safety, and economic productivity. Well-regulated cities with uniform building codes, zoning laws, and sustainable infrastructure foster a sense of order and predictability, attracting investment and enabling economic growth. It ensures the creation of affordable housing, public spaces, and efficient transportation systems, improving the overall quality of life for residents.

By learning from the success of the Indus Valley, modern Indian cities can harness the power of standardization and regulation to create more resilient, efficient, and equitable urban environments that can accommodate future growth without compromising sustainability.



Priest king from
Mohenjo-Daro



Archaeological Site of Indus Valley City



Lesson 5 : Develop Climate Resilience in Cities

The architectural and urban planning techniques of the Indus Valley Civilization, especially in cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, reflect a profound understanding of climate resilience. The Harappans demonstrated remarkable foresight in protecting their cities from environmental challenges, such as seasonal flooding, through raised construction and elevated platforms. Many sites were built on man-made hills, lifting entire neighborhoods above flood-prone areas—a striking example of early urban resilience. Massive walls surrounding the cities served dual purposes: guarding against potential invaders and diverting floodwaters. Ingeniously, the walls tapered at the base, a design believed to guide water away from the city's core, minimizing the risk of internal flooding.

Yet, even with these innovative measures, the Harappan cities eventually faced environmental degradation from unsustainable land use practices. Over time, deforestation for brickmaking, over-farming, and pasture overuse weakened the land and strained resources. Gradually, signs of environmental stress appeared: hastily constructed houses, overcrowded streets, and declining urban quality. These pressures may have contributed to the civilization's eventual decline, highlighting the critical balance between expansion and environmental sustainability in building climate-resilient cities.

The mystery of the Indus Valley's decline has led to various theories, with climate change emerging as a likely cause. Within this theory are two scenarios: drought and flooding, each with far-reaching impacts on the Harappans' way of life.

The Drought Theory suggests that the Saraswati River, a significant water source, began drying up around 1900 BCE. As this river disappeared, it would have drastically altered the surrounding environment. A major water loss would have affected irrigation, reduced plant life, and strained daily life. Farmers and other inhabitants reliant on the river would have faced crop failures, forcing communities to move or face starvation.

The Flood Theory considers the monsoon season, a regular feature of the region's climate, which could have occasionally brought catastrophic rainfall. Heavy rains could wash away crops and damage buildings, creating food shortages and destabilizing communities. Both drought and flooding would have had similarly devastating long-term effects on the civilization.



Lessons for Posterity

The decline of the Indus Valley Civilization, likely influenced by climate change, serves as a powerful reminder for modern cities facing similar environmental threats. Today, Indian cities face a growing list of climate-related challenges, including heat waves, erratic rainfall, floods, and rising temperatures. These realities emphasize the need for cities to shift their focus from merely "fighting climate change" to actively "living in a changed climate." Adaptation is no longer optional; it is essential.

However, much of India's current urban growth overlooks these risks, with settlements expanding in low-lying, flood-prone, and coastal areas. Building climate-resilient cities requires embedding environmental adaptation within urban planning. Indian cities must prepare Climate Resilient City Action Plans (CRCAPs) that integrate strategies such as urban forests, nature-based solutions, water-sensitive urban design, flood management systems, and heat-resistant construction techniques.

By learning from the Harappans' strengths and weaknesses, we can prioritize resilience to ensure that future generations inherit urban environments that are not only sustainable but equipped to thrive in a changing climate.



Lothal An ancient well, and the city drainage



Conclusion

Reflecting on the Indus Valley Civilization, where cities were built with remarkable uniformity and innovation—astonishing even by today's standards—despite social challenges and external threats, we find a historical precedent of urban excellence. With the technology, human, and intellectual capital we possess, we can, and indeed should, do better than our ancestors, who built centuries ahead of their time. India's urban future will be shaped by how well we can draw lessons from both the past and the present. India's rapid urbanization is both a challenge and an opportunity, requiring more than superficial fixes. It demands deep structural changes inspired by ancient wisdom and bolstered by modern policy.

Through effective urban planning, supported by robust infrastructure networks and responsible resource management, we can build resilient cities that address today's challenges while preparing for future demands. Plan First adopts a systemic approach to enhancing the quality of life by improving the physical attributes of our cities. Complementing this, the creation of quality public open spaces in densely populated urban areas can significantly boost citizens' mental well-being. Moreover, these spaces contribute to a city's social, cultural, and economic vitality by fostering inclusivity and encouraging cultural exchange.

Over the years, the standardization and regulation of various systems within urban planning processes have evolved. However, greater emphasis is needed on standardizing expected benchmarks across all aspects of urban planning while clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of different authorities and appropriately revising rules and regulations. These measures will enhance administrative efficiency and ensure the intended results.

Urbanization brings prosperity, but its challenges are equally significant, with climate change standing out as one of the most complex. Drawing inspiration from the enduring lessons of the Harappans, we can chart a course toward sustainable and equitable growth, allowing us to adapt to a changing climate while ensuring that all communities thrive.

To manage this transformation effectively, a new urban vision must incorporate comprehensive planning, robust infrastructure investments, climate adaptability, and social equity. As custodians of our urban heritage, we must learn from the past to build cities that thrive in harmony with nature and nurture the well-being of all citizens. With today's technological, intellectual, and human capital, we have the means—and the responsibility—to construct urban centers that surpass the achievements of our ancestors and address the pressing needs of modern urbanization in a sustainable and holistic manner.





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