FISHBOWL DISCUSSION REPORT

Course: History MN-1 (History Minor – Semester 1)

Topic: Aspects of the Harappan Civilization

Report Presented by: Mehuli Sarker and Soundarya Acharya

Professor: Dr. Sukanya Mitra

Institution: Loreto College, Kolkata

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INTRODUCTION

A fishbowl discussion was conducted in the History Minor class to explore various aspects of the Harappan Civilization, including town planning, social structure, attire, worldview, technological advancement, archaeological sites, and challenges faced by archaeologists. The discussion encouraged collaborative learning, critical thinking, and interpretative analysis based on archaeological evidence.

Objectives Of The Discussion

To understand the socio-cultural and technological aspects of the Harappan Civilization.

To analyse archaeological evidence and interpret historical conclusions.

To develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills through the fishbowl method.

Methodology: Fishbowl Discussion

The fishbowl discussion method involves a small group of participants discussing a topic in an inner circle while the remaining participants observe from an outer circle. Participants may rotate roles during the session, allowing multiple perspectives to emerge. This interactive format promotes active engagement, listening skills, and analytical thinking.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

1. ***Most Attractive Features of Harappan Sites***

One of the commonly discussed questions was identifying the most attractive feature of a Harappan site and the reasons behind choosing it. Students highlighted urban planning, drainage systems, architecture, and evidence of organised civic life as major attractions. The discussion reflected how advanced planning and technological efficiency distinguished Harappan settlements from many contemporary civilizations.

2. ***Security and Social Structure in Town Planning***

Security and social hierarchy played an important role in Harappan urban planning. The citadel area was generally occupied by the ruling or elite class, while the lower town accommodated common people. Houses were designed in such a way that doors and windows did not open directly onto the main streets but instead opened into lanes or courtyards. This architectural feature suggests a concern for privacy and controlled accessibility, indicating an organized and socially aware community.

3. ***AFre of Women: The Dancing Girl Example***

The bronze statue commonly referred to as the “Dancing Girl” from Harappa was discussed to understand women’s attire and ornamentation. The figurine depicts a young woman wearing multiple bangles and minimal clothing, suggesting a distinctive sense of fashion and ornamentation. However, it was emphasized that this figure represents only one section of society and should not be generalized to all Harappan women. Nevertheless, it provides insight into aesthetic sensibilities and cultural expression.

4. ***Outlook Towards Life and Religion***

Participants discussed how Harappan society appeared to have a comparatively practical and optimistic outlook on life. Religion was certainly present, but it did not dominate daily existence to the same extent seen in some other ancient civilizations. Unlike the Egyptians, the Harappans did not invest heavily in monuments associated with the afterlife, such as pyramids or elaborate tombs. This suggests a worldview more focused on present life rather than the afterlife, indicating a socially balanced mindset.

5. ***Drainage System of Dholavira***

The drainage and water management system of Dholavira was highlighted as one of the most remarkable achievements of the civilization. The city demonstrated sophisticated planning through reservoirs, channels, and water conservation methods suited to its arid environment. Many participants observed that such systems were highly advanced and, in some ways, more efficient than certain modern urban systems.

6. Manda: A Northern Trading Post

Manda, located in present-day Jammu and Kashmir, was discussed as an important northern site of the civilization. Archaeological evidence indicates occupation during the Pre-Harappan, Early Harappan, and Mature Harappan phases. It likely functioned as a trading post, showing the geographical spread and economic network of the civilization.

7. Farmana: A Site in Haryana

Farmana, located in Haryana, was discussed as an important Harappan site situated near the river system of the northwestern region. The settlement displayed planned roads intersecting at right angles and standardized brick sizes in the ratio of 1:2:4, reflecting advanced construction techniques. Excavations that began around 2006 revealed its significance as an agricultural and cultural centre, with evidence from different phases of the Harappan civilization.

8. Kalibangan and Black Bangles

Kalibangan is known for the discovery of black bangles, which were discussed in terms of their material and uniqueness. These artefacts provide insight into craftsmanship, ornamentation, and cultural practices. The site also contributes significantly to understanding regional diversity within the civilization.

9. Housing and Environmental Awareness

Harappan houses were believed to have roofs made using materials such as hay or thatch, which may have functioned as natural temperature regulators. Additionally, mechanisms for draining rainwater through channels directly into the ground indicate awareness of environmental management and sustainable living practices.

10. Challenges Faced by Archaeologists

A major challenge highlighted during the discussion was the undeciphered Harappan script. Since no literary sources have been conclusively interpreted, historians rely entirely on archaeological evidence to reconstruct the civilization. This limitation creates interpretative challenges and uncertainties regarding social organization, governance, and cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

The fishbowl discussion provided an interactive platform to understand the complexity and achievements of the Harappan Civilization. Through collaborative dialogue, participants examined archaeological evidence, compared interpretations, and developed a deeper appreciation for early urban societies. The discussion highlighted the civilization's advanced planning, technological knowledge, and cultural diversity while also acknowledging the limitations historians face due to the absence of deciphered written records. Overall, the activity enhanced analytical thinking, teamwork, and historical understanding among students.




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