

Chapter 4 study questions: harappan society



**ASSIGN
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Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. Why is so little known about the Harappan society?

The Harappan society is puzzling due to the fact that the remains are inaccessible and the level of land in the Indus valley has been raised as a result of the silt deposits. However, archaeologists were able to uncover some remains from about 2500 B. C. E. At this time, the Harappan society was prosperous and well established. Another puzzling feature of the Harappan society is the lack of decoded written records. Although scientists have discovered many objects with their written language on it, scientists have yet to decipher the language. The Harappan society's language consisted of about four hundred symbols to characterize sounds and words. The remnants of the society along with their written language hold all the answers to understanding the Harappan society. Although little is known about the society, we do know that the society was established near the Indus River and used irrigation to help strengthen their agricultural society. The rich and poor differentiated from each other significantly. They had different sized houses with what was considered advanced water and sewage systems.

2. How do historians and archeologists explain the decline of the Harappan culture?

At approximately 1900 B. C. E. scientists assert that the Harappan society began its ecological downfall when they started to cut down trees for firewood and land cultivation. As a result of the clearings, erosion and less rainfall occurred, turning the Indus River valley into a desert. This created a climatic and ecological change which caused a reduction of agriculture resulting in the need for artificial agriculture. Another possibility of the

Harappan decline is that there could have been natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes which weakened the Harappan society.

3. How were the Indo-European migrants different from the cultures that already existed in India?

Pre-existent cultures were different than that of the Indo-European migrants because the migrants who were known as the Aryans were nomadic and pastoral peoples. Aryans arrived in India around 1500 B. C. E.; upon their arrival, they started a pastoral economy consisting of sheep, horses, cattle, and several other animals. Meanwhile, the pre-existing people of India were farmers. The Aryans skin tone was different than that of the Dravidians. The Aryans form of transportation was rather advanced for their time because they made use of horses to transport themselves along with carts and wagons to transport goods. Religious differences were focused on the fact that the Aryans primarily relied on the memorization of hymns, gods of war, and morality. The hymns were the Upanishads. Meanwhile the god of war was Indra in which they believed to have destroyed many buildings and monuments of the enemy. The Aryans lacked a large form of government. However, they had tremendous amounts of chiefdoms which were focused upon agricultural villages. Eventually, their form of government went from tribes to a more political and organized form of government.

4. Trace the origins of the caste system, making sure to include a discussion of varna and jati.

The caste system originated from Portuguese merchants and the word casta. Caste was a system of social classes which were based on distinct differences between groups of people. After the arrival of the Portuguese merchants, they saw several distinguishing features between the social

classes of the people. The caste system was part of the Aryan social structure depending on an individual's skin complexion or occupation. Varna was used to distinguish individuals of different skin complexion. This class was a major class between the Dravidians and Aryans which consisted of four sub-castes; eventually, the Dravidians and Aryans merged together with marriages ultimately resulting in indistinguishable skin complexions. The Varna caste includes four sub castes which are as the following: Brahmins Kshatriyas Vaishyas and Shudras As a result, they needed a new form to distinguish individuals. Consequently, they created another caste called Jati. Jati relied on the individual's occupation. The offspring of the individual would be born into the same caste, but if the individual broke the Jati rules, the individual would be cast out and submitted to a lower social class.

5. Discuss the nature of patriarchy in early Indian societies. What is the Lawbook of Manu and how does it relate to gender roles?

The patriarchy throughout early Indian societies was in favor of the men of the families and women received little to no powers at all. Many occupations throughout the government such as tribal chiefs, warriors, and priests were opportunities for the men to receive a place in government. Women had no jobs and men were able to inherit property and were given power to reign over all family affairs. Education was not taught to women; women were so unprivileged that they could not even learn about the Vedas. The " Lawbook of Manu" was a book about proper moral behavior and social relationships between different genders. The book taught that all men should treat women with respect, but also stated that women should remain loyal and devoted to all men including fathers, husbands, and children. Another portion of the book stated that maintaining wholesome homes and bear children was their

most important duty as a woman. Also, the practice of sati was encouraged through the Lawbook of Manu if they were widowed; sati was the practice of throwing themselves into their husbands funeral pyre to die with them. Nevertheless, the women rarely ever practiced sati, but it was highly encouraged by moralists to demonstrate as a symbol of their devotion.

6. What are the Vedas and what do they teach us about early Indian societies?

Vedas are a set of hymns, songs, prayers, and rituals made to honor the gods of the Aryans. The Rig Veda is one of the earliest Vedas dating back from about 1400 to 900 B. C. E.; it contains at least 1028 hymns. The Rig Veda was created along with three other Veda's compiling to make four Vedas. The later Vedas were written around 600 B. C. E. The Vedas were written to reflect a lively society where the Aryans constantly fought with the Dravidians and other inhabitants of India. Another purpose of the Vedas was to identify Indra, and other religious ideas from the Aryans.

7. What are the fundamental religious teachings of the Upanishads?

The Upanishads means "a sitting in front of" and were written as dialogues helping to explain the Vedas and counter the religious arguments it raised.

The Upanishads taught that an individual soul was born into the physical world more than once; the objective was to achieve a permanent union with Brahman to escape the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth. It was considered that if an individual maintained good morals throughout life, they would be rewarded by being reincarnated to a higher class in the caste system.

Unfortunately, if an individual was wrongful in many ways, they would be moved down. Several doctrines were written to help elucidate the purpose of the Upanishads. Some of the doctrines were known as samsara, which stated

that an individual temporarily goes to the World of the Fathers and returns to earth in a new incarnation, and karma which explained the encounters of incarnated souls.

8. How did the religious beliefs as expressed in the Upanishads dovetail with the social order during the Vedic age?

Religious beliefs and social order such as varna and jati fit together because religious beliefs believed that one was reincarnated into a higher social class when one had good moral, and if the individual was deemed bad, they would face unfortunate events such as being lowered in social classes. The social order attempted to justify the religious beliefs because one could not control the position that they were in; one could not become a better person through their morals and be reincarnated into a better social class. Social order instead took advantage of the way the people worked because they worked efficiently thinking that they could be born into a better social class. As a result, their advantages strengthened the biased social classes.

9. In what ways did the religion of the Upanishads include an ethical system?

An ethical system was included in the religion of the Upanishads when they disapproved of greed, envy, gluttony, and all the manner of vice. Instead, they encouraged mercy, self-control, charity, and honesty, but most of all, personal integrity. These practices of good morals aided in the promotion of peace throughout the society. As a result, people were able to become extremely efficient in their work; people recognized this form of morals as a way to better themselves. Selfishness is considered in this because it did not help other people; just themselves. Also, the system taught that an

individual should have respect for all living things, which commonly resulted in the vegetarian diets.

10. How did the Dravidian and Aryan cultures blend during this period?

Dravidian and Aryan cultures merged as Aryan migrants brought social and cultural traditions to the Indian subcontinent. Through the many battles and conflicts the Dravidians and Aryans encountered, the fighting eventually ceased and they learned to deal with one another, and live on the same land. The Dravidian culture was benefited as the Aryans spread agriculture and herding, a kingship government, a caste system, and asset of distinctive religious beliefs.

Terms

1. Samsara

-Samsara was one of the doctrines of the Upanishads. The book of Upanishads along with this doctrine was written around 800 to 400 B. C. E. The doctrine, Samsara, helped to explain the virtues of the Upanishads stating that souls depart momentarily to the World of the Fathers and then go back to earth in a new incarnation.

2. Karma

- Karma was another one of the doctrines of the Upanishads. It was written approximately around 800 to 400 B. C. E. Karma helped to explain the Upanishads by stating that one could be reincarnated to higher or lower classes depending on their behavior whether doing good or bad acts.

3. Moksha

– Moksha was an achievement of a dreamless sleep where one was permanently released from physical incarnation. This was written along with the Upanishads during 800 B. C. E. to 400 B. C. E. Moksha was achieved by deep meditation and find Brahman's relationship to their souls ultimately resulting in unity with Brahman and eternal, peaceful ecstasy.

4. Sati

– was a practice of sacrificing one's self upon the deathbed of their husband. It was a custom of the people of India. Sometimes Sati would be spelled suttee. This tradition was practiced to demonstrate their devotion to their husbands. It was practiced in the Vedic age around the 1st century B. C. E.

5. Lawbook of Manu

– The Lawbook of Manu was a book that was written around first century B. C. E. The book was written by an anonymous sage of India and attributed the book to Manu. According to Indian mythology, Manu was the creator of the human race. This book stated the values of respect towards women, to obtain proper moral behavior and social relationships.

6. Rig Veda

– was one of the earliest and most important collection of hymnbooks containing 1, 028 hymns addressed to the Aryan gods. Rig Veda was one of the four hymnbooks that were written around 1400 B. C. E. to 900 B. C. E. and the other three around 600 B. C. E. The Vedas symbolize a religious viewpoint on affairs. Rig Veda consists of work reflecting changing conditions of Aryan Indian and the interests of the Brahmin priests who composed it.

7. Upanishads

- Upanishad means “ a sitting in front of” and were dialogues that explored the Vedas. They taught about the reincarnation of life stating that appearances are deceiving and each person is a small fraction of a Brahman. Brahman was known as the universal soul and the foundation of all things existing. The teachings stated that a soul was born into the world more than once either as a newborn or an animal. The Upanishads consisted of several doctrines helping to explain the goal of an individual soul to achieve Moksha where one could escape the eternal cycle of life and death and enter permanent union with Brahman.

8. Dravidian

- Group of people from around 3000 to 1500 B. C. E. which created a complex Harappan society in India. Preceding the Dravidian's decline after 1900 B. C. E., Dravidians dominated the Indus River valley. The precipice of the Dravidian's power was around 2500 B. C. E. to 2000 B. C. E. From that time the Indo-European migrants came in and clashed with the Dravidian people. Eventually the Dravidians accepted their traditions and religion.

9. Indo-European

- Indo-European is a series of tribes from southern Russia who intertwined with the people of India such as the Dravidians. The merging between the two groups took place over several centuries beginning around 1500 B. C. E. The most prominent of the Indo-Europeans were known as the Aryans. The Aryans were nomadic and pastoral peoples also known as the “ noble people.”

10. Aryans

– Aryans were the most prominent of the Indo-Europeans. Their name also meant “ noble people” and was known as nomadic and pastoral peoples. They began their migration into the Indian subcontinent settling into the Indus Valley around 1500 B. C. E. They heavily relied on the pastoral economy, primarily depending on their cattle to earn fortunes. Although they had no form of writing, they developed a series of poems and songs orally and finally committed it to writing around 1400 B. C. E.

11. Caste

– a system initiated by the Aryan people around 1000 B. C. E. which determined the places that individuals and groups occupied in society. Caste is derived from the Portuguese word casta referring to the social classes based on hereditary distinctions. The system was based on two different types of people, varna or jati. Varna was based on skin complexion. Meanwhile Jati was based on an individual’s occupation. Varna and Jati had rules for each type of caste which compiled to regulate eating, communication, and behavior. Lastly, Varna and Jati were not to be intermarried during that time.

12. Varna

– Varna was one of the categories of the caste system which was based on skin complexion. Different Varnas were people of different skin colors. The four main varnas were increasingly recognized around 1000 B. C. E. and were as the following: priests (Brahmins), warriors and aristocrats (Kshatryas), cultivators artisans and merchants (vaishyas), and landless

peasants and serfs (shudras). Later on, a category of untouchables were added. They were people who performed dirty and unpleasant tasks.

13. Jati

– Jati was a sub-category of the caste system developed which was based on occupations. Jati was determined by the occupation of an individual. If an individual was an offspring of an individual in the Jati caste, they would follow their footsteps and marry to another person in the same caste.

14. Brahmins

– Brahmins were one of the four primary Varna groups initiated by the Aryans around 1000 B. C. E. They were priests, and were of the highest rank varna; they were the most honored and led the society. Brahmins amounted up to at least 1800 jati.

15. Kshatriyas

– Kshatriyas were one of the four primary Varna groups initiated by the Aryans around 1000 B. C. E. They were warriors and aristocrats, and were the second highest in rank of the varna social class. Kshatriyas along with Brahmins were highly honored and led their society.

16. Vaishyas

– Vaishyas were one of the four primary Varna groups initiated by the Aryans around 1000 B. C. E. They were cultivators, artisans, and merchants; they were third highest in rank of the varna.

17. Shudras

– Shudras were one of the four primary Varna groups initiated by the Aryans around 1000 B. C. E. They consisted of landless peasants and serfs. They were the lowest in rank of the Varna society.

18. Indra

– Indra was the chief deity of the Rig Veda associated with the Aryans after 1500 B. C. E. Indra was primarily associated with war, and sometimes with the weather. The Aryans associated with war and weather through his violent characteristics of wielding thunderbolts helping the Aryans battle their enemies.

19. Varuna

– Varuna was an Aryan god which was thought to be residing over the sky in a heavenly palace. He oversaw the unjust and just casting the unjust to the subterranean House of Clay, and the souls of the just to World of the Fathers.

20. Brahman

– was a universal soul taught by the Upanishads. Brahman was known as the eternal foundation for all things that exist, also the only reality which resulted in the goal of the Upanishads to reach the eternal reality with Brahman. The purpose of the Upanishads was to escape the cycle of birth and rebirth. The teachings of Brahman began from 800 to 400 B. C. E. and many of them practiced the method of trying to join Brahman through the method known as Moksha.