

The Importance of Religion in the Life of the Indus Man

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ABSTRACT

The religious ideologies of the Indus people are one of the most complex and least understood aspects of this civilization in the absence of any decipherable written text. Over the years since the discovery of Indus civilization, scholars from around the world have hardly touched the subject and out of those who did have mostly linked it with the later religions of the land; Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

This paper is an attempt to make the world realize the importance of religion in the life of the Indus man, of how he evolved around it and to which extent he grew because of it. And the only way to understand the religious ideologies of the Indus man is to study the lifestyle that he has left behind in the form of architecture, artifacts, objects of daily use, etc. Their architecture was not for individuals or a limited class of people but was for the masses, which benefitted from it. This is the reason why even monumental structures fall under the category of 'Public Works' instead of Palaces or Temples. An example of the communal work can be seen during Period III of Mehrgarh (and onwards) when in comparison with the settlements of Period I and II (tightly clustered villages), the settlements expanded not only to increase the size of the growing population but also for the betterment of the community at large. We also see specialized activities spreading to specialized zones for the first time. This was just the beginning of the facilitating mindset (religious ideology) of the Indus people for which we can find countless examples (Public Works) in the next phases of Indus developmental architecture.

It was this religious ideology of the Indus Valley civilization that differentiates it from its other two contemporaries – Mesopotamia and Egypt. It was this ideology that held it together without the use of weaponry or armaments at a time when its contemporaries were busy fighting over worldly gains.

INTRODUCTION

Recent archaeological excavations have helped us to look at the religious beliefs of the Indus people from a wider perspective than has been done before since its discovery. Therefore, the overall view that the previous scholars had about the religious beliefs of the Indus people needs to be revisited and rethought so that we can get a little closer to understanding what those glorious people believed in. Because it only seems fair to assume that the Indus religion was sophisticated, like much else in the civilization, and functioned at various levels to serve different classes of people according to their cultural needs and mental capacity.

I want to give my humble suggestions about the religious beliefs of the Indus people and its importance in their lives, I may or may not be right because in the absence of undeciphered Indus script one cannot be sure, yet I strongly believe that it would be unjust to depend on only the tool of archaeology for deducing the religious beliefs of people who in a

way no longer exist. Therefore, I think of equal importance in religious study, as in every other academic pursuit, is the absolute necessity of creative reasoning, which I will employ along with other sources to bring before you the religious beliefs of the Indus people. As is rightly said by E. H. Carr about the objectives of a historian is not only that he gets his facts right, but rather that he chooses the right facts to achieve a level of significance.¹ Some historians also believe that they must bring together various facts given by different field experts and put them together in such a way as to reach objective conclusions.

I will begin my argument by quoting Karen Armstrong, "...the history of religion has revealed that human beings are spiritual animals."² Their quest for a god is as old as humanity; it is not something that is created or imposed on them; it is a natural feeling and very much part of their system. According to Bruce Trigger's comparative research on the religions of various ancient civilizations, man considers himself to be part of a natural order, which consists of humans, natural and supernatural beings.³ The reason behind this awareness of man was the quest to find that superior being/supernatural power, which was unseen, for he since his birth had the powers of reasoning that made him understand that despite being the best creature on earth, born with the best of attributes, he still had limitations; there were still things that were beyond his reach and control. And these things were mostly related to natural elements; hence all primitive religions were based on the concept of natural elements. Although there is another theory which is based on the religious books (Old Testament, Bible, and Quran) belonging to the three monotheistic religions of the world, which clearly mention that man since his birth has been given the concept of one "God." It was instilled in him through the various messengers/prophets that were sent to this world for his guidance alone. According to these books, the first man and messenger was "Adam," who was followed by another 124,000 prophets. Father Wilhelm Schmidt, in his book *The Origin of the Idea of God*, backs this notion when he suggests that there had been a primitive monotheism before men and women had started to worship several gods. Originally, they also had acknowledged only one Supreme Deity, who, according to them, had created the world and governed human affairs. A belief in such a High god, also known as the "Sky god," (associated with the heavens) is still a feature of the religious life in many indigenous African tribes. Though they yearn towards him for prayer, believe that he is watching over them and would punish them for wrongdoings, yet he

¹ Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970), 192-3.

² Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Vintage Books, 1999), 3.

³ Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 442.

is not associated with any special cult and therefore is never depicted in any form of imagery or as an icon. This notion can also be explained when we study the three established monotheistic religions of the world. A good example of this fact is the people of the three monotheistic religions of the world (Jews, Christians, and Muslims), who are believed to be the followers of not only the one and same God, “Allah,” but their prophets (for example, Abraham and Noah) and stories related to them are also similar. Some of the stories of these prophets and about man’s early life can be traced in the various myths and legends across the world. Noah’s flood is one example; the concept of creation of the world, Adam, immortality and the belief in one God, are others. Besides these three religions, there are examples of individuals who not only believed in the concept of one God, (Akhenaton from Egypt, and Zoroaster from Persia) but also preached it. These people preaching the concept of one “God” in various parts of the world at different time intervals is enough indication to suggest that the sayings in these three monotheistic books about “God” sending prophets at different time intervals to guide mankind is nothing but absolute truth as these same stories about the same concepts are found across the world in the forms of myths and legends.

Anthropologists also tell us that in between the belief in one god, it was replaced by lesser spirits and more accessible gods. Karen Armstrong strongly suggests that, therefore, in the beginning, there was just “One God,” and “...if this is so, then monotheism was one of the earliest ideas evolved by human beings to explain the mystery and tragedy of life.”⁴ This notion is backed by both Bible and Quran, in which it is clearly mentioned that “Adam,” as I said before, was the first man in this world and was also God’s messenger. These sacred books also talk about how man, again and again, had gone astray, and for his guidance, various prophets were sent at different times to different people living in various parts of the world. This is exactly what Karen Armstrong strongly believes that in between these prophets people started to make their own lesser gods, just to feel closer to the One Superior being, that is when one religious idea ceased to work, it was simply replaced by another, or it was altered by some people for their own vaster interests. The history of humanity is full of examples when either the state or temples manipulated religious beliefs and /or the people for their own self-interests (examples are the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations).

Considering my discussion, I strongly suggest that the Indus people were aware of the religious beliefs that the first man “Adam” was born with, and which were communicated to

⁴ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Vintage Books, 1999), 9-10.

later generations at different time intervals through prophets (like Abraham and Noah)⁵ because these stories can be found in different corners of the world through myths and legends. Therefore, there can be only two justifications for this: one that there were constant movement and communication between all the people at that time, or the same message and information was conveyed to people of different regions at different time intervals through different prophets, thus the similarities in their myths and legends.

I would go with both because it is evident that the people of Indus were in communication with north-west and west Asia, and because it is proven that scientifically all humanity belongs to one lineage, all languages have one source; all females have one mother gene, etc. Although we might never be able to prove how this message of one “God” reached the Indus Valley or which prophet preached it (Noah’s himself, or some other prophet unknown due to the absence of deciphered Indus script), the religious and cultural legacy and the archaeological material that they have left us, is enough evidence to hold my stance, that they were pious, modest and down to earth people. It seems unfair to assume that Allah sent all the prophets to the Middle East and left the Indus Valley region and its people unguided when it was nearly double the size of contemporary regions.

I will begin the discussion with the two main parts of Islamic teachings, which are also part of not only the other two monotheistic religions of the world but almost every religion in the world. The first part is the right of God, that is a belief in the “One and Only God,” and the other is about the “right that every man has over his brother.” Though when we trace the history of humanity, alterations in both these parts can be observed.

Given the above discussion, when I review the lifestyle of Indus man, I see many examples, which can directly linked with the second right of Islam (also part of every religion), that is the right that every man has over his brother. Though I might never be able to prove the

⁵ Another difficult thing to refute is the existence of a pious man, who was religiously known as Noah (Old Testament, Bible and Quran), historically or mythologically known as Utnapishtim (Epic of Gilgamesh), Ziusudra (Sumerian myth), or Yu (Chinese myth), and who is also the saviour of humanity, as is proven genetically that we *Homo sapiens* belong to one race. The language we speak belongs to one linguist group. Therefore, it is difficult to prove wrong the stance of the Quran that God saved Noah and the pious people with him and drowned the rest. If this is true than I would take the liberty of establishing another important point here, that God’s word lived with Noah and spread later through him too, in every corner of the world, from pole to pole. And if this is true than I suggest that the people who settled in the Indus valley civilization must either have been Noah’s direct descendants or his pious companions, who carried God’s message with them not only to the Indus Valley region but to every corner of the world, as is shown through the myths of far off regions of the world.

rights of “God” (His Oneness), due to the undeciphered Indus script, the rights that each Indus man gave to his brother are evident from their lifestyle and also tells us about its importance in their lives.

The main objective and message of Islam is to establish the fundamental unity of mankind based on equality, liberty, and fraternity. It is a message of human equality in social status and legal rights. According to Allama Muhammad Iqbal’s philosophy

“...the individual and the community build each other. The individual develops his ego and all its potentialities and then utilizes them for building up the community. But such relationship cannot exist in a community based on class struggle and privileges of race, color or wealth. Only true realization of the teachings of Islam based on the unity of God and equality of man can ensure such a relationship most conducive to human welfare and progress”.⁶

And this is what was going on in the Indus civilization because they were united under one religious ideology (which is evident from Mehrgarh Period III onwards); that is why they expanded, progressed and reached the heights of success and prosperity (see [Fig. 1.1](#)).

Let us have a brief overview to understand what I mean. The land of the Indus and its five tributary rivers was and still is a bounty for the people who live here. This is the reason why the hunter-gathers choose to live and settle here in the first place. As humankind started to live in groups, settlements grew. As a result, culture also evolved. According to Robert Redfield, a culture is an organized or formalized body of conventional understandings (a complete set of rules, beliefs, and standards that a particular group follows).⁷ These understandings can be witnessed through their art, religious beliefs, or their lifestyle; they are passed on from one generation to the next, people die, but their culture lives on. It is something that is not genetically transmitted from one generation to the next but is imparted as a child grows up in a particular environment. We can learn about early cultures through the things that they have left behind in the form of tools, places where they once lived, the graves in which and how they buried their dead, sometimes with grave goods and sometimes without them. All these things have symbolic significance, and hence culture is a combination of various symbols. This rich cultural legacy, of which religion was a part, was left to the people of Pakistan and India by the people of Indus valley civilization. How? For that, I will put my creative reasoning at work and will bring before you only the facts which I think will help to trace and relive the religious beliefs of the Indus people.

⁶ <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/apr62/1.htm>

⁷ Robert J. Braidwood, *Prehistoric Men* (Toledo, OH: Scott Foresman and Company, 1967), 30-1.

Man did not start domestication in the Pleistocene Period and waited approximately 30,000 to 20,000 years until the Holocene Period to do so. This might sound weird, but not to the historians and geologist who believe that the Holocene Period (warm and stable climate, suitable for farming) was a window of opportunity in the lives of humans, and humans by this time possessed unique cultural alertness that enabled them to respond to this opportunity.⁸

Genetic research claims that as the earth reached the Third Glacier Maximum, it became difficult for both man, animals and plants to survive in places that were believed to be occupied by humans (Europe, the Middle East, Persia, Central Asia and North America), at that time. Therefore, humans for their survival had to relocate to more hospitable environments such as the Indus Valley region, the Himalayan steps, and Kashmir valleys.⁹ This notion is backed by extensive studies around the Indus region, which gives us significant archeological data that harmonizes with forensic anthropological investigations on inhabitants of modern Pakistan. The results show the arrival of a few people into the sub-continent from the north-west during the late Pleistocene Period between 12,000 to 17,000 years ago.¹⁰

In light of these observation along with the “Out of Asia” hypothesis, which is backed by irrefutable DNA data harmonizing with archaeological data around the early Holocene Period enlightens us about a “Third Migration” of survivors of the Last Glacier Maximum, which occurred at this time travelling from east to west, instead of from west to east.¹¹ This would make Indus Valley region and the Persian passage not only a genetic junction but also a cultural junction that saw the beginning of domestication of both animals and plants, hence the foundations of the first human civilizations were laid in the process in both directions (east and west). These movements by the people prove that since pre-historical times man had been traveling from east to west and from west to east, as has also been proven by the later prehistory and history of both Middle East and Indus Valley.¹²

⁸ Michael Cook, *A Brief History of The Human Race* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 4-9.

Paul G. Bahn, ed., *The Atlas of World Archaeology* (Oxfordshire: Andromeda, 2002), 30-3.

⁹ Narendra Katkar, “The Last Glacier Maximum: The Third Migration”, *Comptes Rendus Palevol*, 10 (2011): 665-78.

¹⁰ K. Kennedy, *God-Apes and Fossil Men: Paleoanthropology of South Asia* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

¹¹ Narendra Katkar, “The Last Glacier Maximum: The Third Migration”, *Comptes Rendus Palevol*, 10, (2011): 665-78.

¹² The earliest settlements found so far in South Asia are located in Baluchistan, which is an extension of the Iranian plateau closely connected and open to receive and transmit cultural influences from and to the other centers of ancient civilizations, especially between northeastern Iran, Seistan and Central Asia on the one hand and the Greater Indus on the other. Hence these areas were not only

Hence it was during the Holocene Period when the foundation of domestication was laid. Man, for the first time in the total time span of his existence on earth, finally started settled life in various parts of the world between 8000 to 12,000 years ago. Though, archaeology tells us that the first area to be cultivated was in the Middle East, in the area known as the Fertile Crescent, around 12,000 years ago, from where it spread to the rest of the Middle East, parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan, China, and Europe.¹³ But if we keep the “Out of Asia” hypothesis in mind, maybe in future years, we can find settlements in South Asia that might predate the settlements of the Middle East (Mehrgrah is one such example, which is responsible for revising the historical chronology of South Asia).

As man started domestication, he came into closer contact with natural elements. He found that despite doing everything right, the natural calamities were still beyond his control. Hence the concept of the “Divine” was reinforced in his mind. An idea that he was born with, a concept that time and again according to the teachings of the Old Testament, Bible and Quran had been conveyed to him through the 124,000 prophets sent to the world, only for man’s guidance. Another thing which was conveyed to him were the rights that his fellow men had over him. This message, when followed in true spirit, made him realize the perks of communal work. It dawned on him that to lead a well-settled life, he required communal work, and communal work could only be executed if there was unity among different individuals living together. And he understood that this could only be achieved on the bases of justice, equality, trustworthiness, and honesty, without any of these it was impossible.

The realization of these two facts brought a remarkable change not only in his thinking and social setup, but also in shaping the history of this land, which grew from the emergence of small settlements first into villages, towns, cities, and then eventually turned into one of the greatest civilization of all times. It was double the size of its contemporaries and was created without the use of any force. Isn’t this mindset enough to understand the religious beliefs of the Indus people and its importance in their lives? People could not have developed or expanded without following these two facts in their true spirit.

An example of this communal work can be seen during Period III of Mehrgrah (and

geographically linked but were strategically linked too, and in no time in history were they ever disconnected from one another as parallels in painted pottery types have been reported from Turkmenistan, northern Iran and Sialk I-III dating back from the end of the sixth millennium BCE to the fourth millennium BCE.

¹³ Michael Cook, *A Brief History of The Human Race* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 20-3.

onwards). In comparison with the settlements of Period I and II (tightly clustered villages) (see [Fig. I.2 - 3](#)), the settlements were not only expanded to increase the size for the growing population, but also for the betterment of the community at large; and we also see specialized activities spreading to specialized zones for the first time. This was just the beginning of this facilitating mindset of the Indus people for which we can find countless examples (Public Works) in the next phases of Indus developmental architecture. Here are just a few examples that show their inclination towards community welfare.

1. Uniformity in city planning, their layout, and essential architectural features
2. All the houses were built on the same pattern, following the grid system (see [Fig. I.4 - 5](#))
3. All settlements were at an equal distance, from the major cities, ensuring the smooth distribution of goods
4. The architecture is full of examples demonstrating 'Public Works' (see [Fig. I.6 - 10](#))
5. No palaces, temples or any kind of elaborate monumental architecture is found in this civilization when compared with its contemporaries for a few individuals
6. The sewerage system of this civilization was far more advanced in comparison to its contemporary civilizations (see [Fig. I.11](#))
7. Toilets and bathing platforms were invented by the Indus people (see [Fig. I.12 - 3](#))
8. Sewerage facility was available to every citizen
9. Drains carrying sewerage was covered with large slabs of stones (see [Fig. I.14](#))
10. They excelled in techniques to control waste disposal and to prevent encroachment of floodwaters on the city buildings
11. Special vertical shaft wells were first dug than constructed (see [Fig. I.15](#))
12. The doors and windows of the houses did not open on the main streets. Hence privacy was maintained (see [Fig. I.16](#))
13. Working areas were separated from household units
14. Civic Structures varied from settlement to settlement on the bases of need and utility (unlike what we find in its contemporary civilizations, for example, the Mesopotamian Temple, which was built on the same standard plan in various cities).

The given points are enough evidence to prove that a lot of emphases were given to community welfare, which upheld the concepts of privacy, equality, hygiene, and cleanliness. Their architecture was not for individuals or a limited class of people but was for the masses, which benefitted from it. This is the reason why the monumental structures fall under the

category of 'Public Works' instead of Palaces or Temples. Though we see a lack of uniformity in the 'Public Works', it does not in any way suggest that they were not united under one force or ideology, but rather that they were free to fulfill their civic needs according to the requirements of their concerned areas, for their growth and betterment, without been answerable to any single authority; as this control was not implemented physically or by force, but was spread through a single religious ideology over a vast area of land for many generations. Therefore, I believe that despite all the prosperity and wealth they enjoyed, they still believed in modesty and equality, the two things that are the bases of any just society and an important part of every religion even today. This is why settlements grew from villages into towns and cities, but the facilitating mindset of the people did not change. Why? Because they believed in building, rather than destroying, they believed in giving, rather than snatching, they believed in unity, rather than division, they believed in distribution, rather than accumulation, they believed in sharing, rather than collecting, and they believed in expanding, rather than shrinking. This could have been the only reason why they expanded and prospered for so many centuries. It was the force and importance of religious ideology that held them united, because scholars have debated this question repeatedly, as to which element was responsible for the significant changes in social organization. Some said it could have been their political leadership, a new ideology, but unfortunately, none proposed that it could have been their religion.

Another important example to back this concept is their burial practices. A burial practice is one of the key elements that is directly linked with the afterlife religious beliefs of man. Starting from the burial practices observed at Mehrgarh to the later cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa in the mature phase of Indus, archaeologists have not found elaborate burial (though the most generic form of burial was a burial chamber, reminiscent of much later Iranian burials), or bodies were buried near the houses (we have evidence from Jericho and Catal Huyuk that they also buried their dead beneath their houses). While according to Pascal Sellier, bodies were wrapped in leather shrouds impregnated with red ochre (the practice of covering the body with red ochre is attested in Central Asia during the Middle Paleolithic and is still found among the untouchable groups in South Asia),¹⁴ showing that it has culturally spread through many generations.

¹⁴ Pascal Sellier, "Mehrgarh: Funerary Rites and the Archaeology of Death" in *Forgotten Cities on the Indus: Early Civilization in Pakistan from 8th to the 2nd Millennium BC.*, ed., M. Jasen et al., 78 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1996).

The burial items were basic and included a goat, few pots, body covered with red ochre leather shreds, or a few jewelry items (see [Fig. I. 17](#)). These burial items are nothing in comparison to what we witness in the contemporary civilizations of either Egypt (see [Fig. I. 18](#)) or Mesopotamia (see [Fig. I. 19](#)).

Though the evidence of burial goods does suggest a definite belief in an afterlife as mentioned earlier, their scarcity suggests that they did not believe in using these items in their afterlife, as was seen in the case of Egypt. Another important point to add here is that the lowest percentages of artifacts were found in the burials of children or juveniles. This observation was made by Rita Wright, who suggests that it might not have been appropriate for juveniles and children to have had any grave goods before puberty that is until they reached adulthood. In her view, grave goods might have had some “religious significance” tied to the concept of an afterlife from which the children were excluded. This “religious significance” that Wright is talking about parallels the religious beliefs of the Muslims and Christians, according to which, the “Book of Deeds” begins when the child reaches puberty, before that he is pure and free from any accountability for his actions. As is said by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH),

“The pen has been raised for three persons (meaning they are not held accountable for what they do): one who is sleeping until he gets up, a child until he reaches the age of puberty, and an insane person until he becomes sane.”

Therefore, these children did not require burial goods to accompany them in afterlife, hence the low percentage of grave goods.

On the bases of these observations, I would like to suggest that the people of Indus civilization did not believe that grave goods could help them in their afterlife, and only good deeds would accompany them. Hence the scarcity of burial goods in comparison to its contemporaries and good deeds can be witnessed in the form of communal work. Another even more vital factor is that they might not have believed in the accumulation of wealth with the deceased, rather they believed in the circulation of wealth between the living people, which meant more prosperity among the living. This concept of circulation and distribution of wealth between the kin's is also part of the religious beliefs of many world religions today, including Islam.

Another principal element of the Indus civilization is “Peace,” which is directly linked to its religious beliefs. How? All Indus scholars state that there is a lack of weaponry in the whole Indus civilization. It appears that they did not fear invasion, which could be the only reason why they did not produce superior weapons for war in comparison to its contemporaries.

Though genetic studies show the influx of people from the north-west and west Asia; trading activities also tell us about the to and fro movement of people but indicate that force was never used. Why? For one, they were peace-loving and two, they were welcoming and accommodating. The history of this country tells us that South Asians are still known for their hospitality and warmth and that South Asia is home to many world religions. Therefore, with the cultural traits in mind, I suggest this trait, like many others, has unconsciously traveled with time.

We have already ruled out that force was used for the smooth running of administration in such a vast area of occupation as there is no evidence of violence anywhere. The phenomenon of the so-called massacre of Mohenjo-Daro has also been ruled out now. And if there were any clashes, for example between the “bull people” or “the tiger people” (as is seen on some seals), it appears that they hardly had any effect on maintaining overall peace, which must have been resolved through the elders of the settlements, as elders of the family are still respected, and their decisions are still honored; a cultural trait, which is followed in the villages of both Pakistan and India even today. Why? Because they believed in non-violence and the strong family structure kept them bound, that is why they could sustain this civilization together for so long under a single strong cultural, religious ideology shared by all the people for their betterment.

The level of homogeneity employed in the Indus civilization is yet another remarkable element that has direct links to their religious beliefs, for we find artefacts of several types distributed throughout the occupational levels of different Indus sites, rather than clustered in large cities. These artefacts have even been found in the village settlements, suggesting an equality of access to wealth or the symbols of wealth among village and city dwellers, which goes against the idea of inequality. Therefore, I suggest they strongly believed in the concept of equality, which is evident from the site planning and burial customs.

Uniformity is not only seen in the architecture of Indus civilization but also in its crafts. This statement is backed by Bridget Allchin, Raymond Allchin, and Mark Kenoyer, among others. It was during its Mature Phase that artisans developed specialized technical knowledge and, as a result, not only increased production but also produced high-quality and a diverse range of goods, in specialized areas. This expertise of technique in a particular craft helped to develop Indus technical virtuosity that brought a social change in the social structure of Indus,

as is proposed by Massimo Vidale and Heather M. L. Miller.¹⁵ Shreen Ratnagar also adds that the Harappan society was a class structured society with people following their hereditary professions who were living in distinct areas in an urban settlement, as is the case in Pakistan and India even today.¹⁶ Though these changes must have been unintentional, as craft specialization was hereditary, nevertheless it seems that it made some people richer in comparison to others, as its consequences were witnessed generations later, in the form of the Hindu caste system, which indirectly resulted in the differentiation of roles, professions, and ranks within the communities.¹⁷ As there are many indications that by the Mature Indus Period urban society had evolved considerable social stratification and division, but this in its early stages was neither rigid nor universally recognized; it developed in a firm caste system with its disparities and evils at a much later stage after the demise of this civilization, and when it did two reformative religious movements (Jainism and Buddhism) sprang from within the region not only to negate it but also to counter its effects on the masses. The book of Hinduism reforms “Upanishad” also came about at the same time. Here I would like to address the question as to who the true originators of “Hinduism” were. The answer is not as complicated as it was fifty years ago when the Aryans were considered to be the originators of this religion. In view of recent research, it is debatable as to whether the Aryans defeated the people of the Indus civilization or that they even came to the sub-continent on a large scale is precisely unknown. Therefore, it is not difficult to conclude on the bases of the “mediating yogi,” the “so-called shivalingas,” “the pipal tree,” “the Great Bath” that many Indus images or so-called cults have culturally traveled through generations. But in which context they were produced or used definitely seems to have changed. If this not been the case, then two reformative religions would not have sprung from the region to make the beliefs of Hinduism counterproductive. And given the scenario, Hinduism also came up with its book of reforms known as the “Upanishads.” This development shows that the people of this land intentionally fell under the spell of the deadly “caste system,” but then to counter it individuals like Buddha (Buddhism)

¹⁵ Massimo Vidale and Heather M. L. Miller, “On the Development of Indus Technical Virtuosity and Its Relation to Social Structure”, *South Asian Archaeology 1997*, ed., Maurizio Taddei and Giuseppe De Marco, Vol. 1, Intituto Italiano Per L’ Africa E L’ Oriente (Rome, 2000): 115-131.

¹⁶ Shreen Ratnagar, *Encounter: The Westerly Trade of the Harappan Civilization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 170

¹⁷ Massimo Vidale and Heather M. L. Miller, “On the Development of Indus Technical Virtuosity and Its Relation to Social Structure”, *South Asian Archaeology 1997*, eds. Maurizio Taddei and Giuseppe De Marco, Vol. 1, Intituto Italiano Per L’ Africa E L’ Oriente (Rome, 2000): 115-31. Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From The Stone Age To The 12th Century*, 158. Wright, *The Ancient Indus*, 177. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, 149-50.

and Mahavira (Jainism) sprang from the same “Mati,” known as clay in Urdu, meaning people of the land.

There are hardly any icons, imagery or religious buildings from the Indus civilization to associate it with the belief in multiple gods, for whatever supposed religious material has been found (seals, figurines, masks, etc.), could be the property of a limited number of individuals and their application must have been very different, as the iconography of the “One Supreme God” of the Hindus into various personifications came much later to this land.

Let us now briefly look over the similarities between the three post-dated religions of the land, and the icons, script, and imagery, whose meaning is unknown;

1. The mediating yogi
2. The all in some way are considered as part of the Shamana tradition (renouncers)
3. This tradition is much older than Hinduism today
4. Supreme god of Hindus is “Brahma,” he is one and all-powerful, the rest are his different personifications
5. Jain doctrines also originate from an omniscient and omnipotent being
6. Jainism is considered non-Vedic
7. The concept of Karma is common between all three religions
8. Buddha preached to reach the state of “nirvana,” eternal peace

The significance of highlighting these points was to bring before you a wider picture of the people of this land and their age-old religious affiliations. Despite the dissimilarities between the three established religions of this land, the one common element is “*karma*,” which is evident during the Indus time too, though we do not have any text to back it, we do have their archaeological remains which speak louder than words. The term “*Karma*” in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophy means somebody’s current and future lives are determined by that person’s behavior in this and previous lives. Though we do not know whether the Indus people believed in many lives, one thing is evident that they spent their current lives doing many good communal deeds and the scarcity of burial goods tells us that they did not believe that material things could help them in their future life. This notion is backed by their various personality traits, which can be described with the help of adjectives like honesty, equality, and unity, among many others. This concept of *karma* is present in every religion of the world, including the three monotheistic religions. Another very important fact is that all these religions believe in one Supreme Being, whether it is “Brahma” of the Hindus or belief in an unnamed

omnipotent of the Janis or the un-talked about god of the Buddhist. We also have come across the term of “Shamans,” (mediating yogi or elders of the family could be a symbol of such men) in association with this region, which goes back a long way, maybe it was the human link between man and god, since Indus times and which is pretty evident even today in the region. We find many such people in the villages and cities of both Pakistan and India playing an active part even today.

It only seems fair to assume that the Indus religion was as sophisticated, as just, as equality based, as uniform, as welcoming, like much else in this civilization, and functioned at various levels to serve different classes of people according to their cultural needs and mental capacity, as most advanced religions do. And it is quite evident that the Indus civilization greatly influenced the evolution of religions not only in India but Near Eastern countries too.

Considering the things I have talked about, I strongly believe that the Indus people were aware of the religious beliefs that the first man “Adam” was born with, and which later prophets like Abraham and Noah; and individuals like Zoroaster and Akhenaten preached to the world. As the three monotheistic religions, followed by more than half of the world’s total population, are off-shoots from the legends of these great prophets and personalities.

The Indus civilization has been given credit for a lot of things, but I think the one credit, which is superior to all and which it has never earned, is its religious ideology, which was at par in comparison to its contemporary civilizations. It was this ideology that helped it to prosper; it was this ideology that helped it to grow and expand, it was this ideology that helped it to remain peaceful, when its contemporaries were busy fighting over worldly gains, it was this ideology that kept them united for so many centuries. That is why historians till today say, that it is difficult for a statesman to keep the people of this land together in comparison to a saint or Sufi.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of the undeciphered Indus script, despite many arguments in favor of one Indus God, it seems that it is difficult to prove the rights of “One God”, at this point, yet the rights that each Indus man gave to his brother and the importance of religion in his life is evident from his lifestyle and is difficult to prove wrong. Therefore, I rest my case here, for the time being, hoping that future studies and excavations can enlighten all of us in more ways.

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APPENDIX

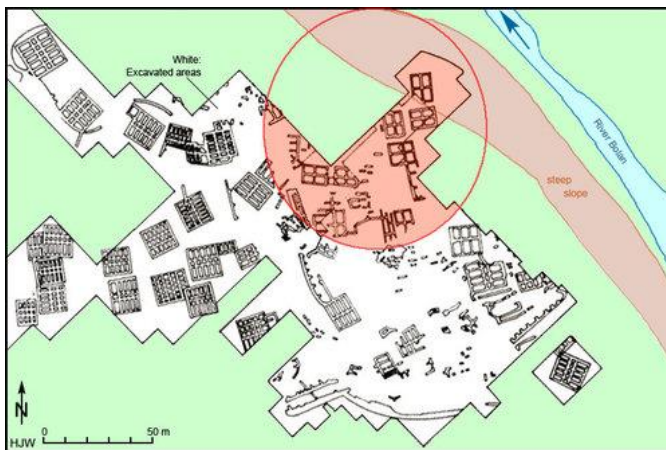


Figure I.1 Oldest part of Mehrgarh and its later expansion.
(<http://alternativearchaeology.jigsy.com/india>).

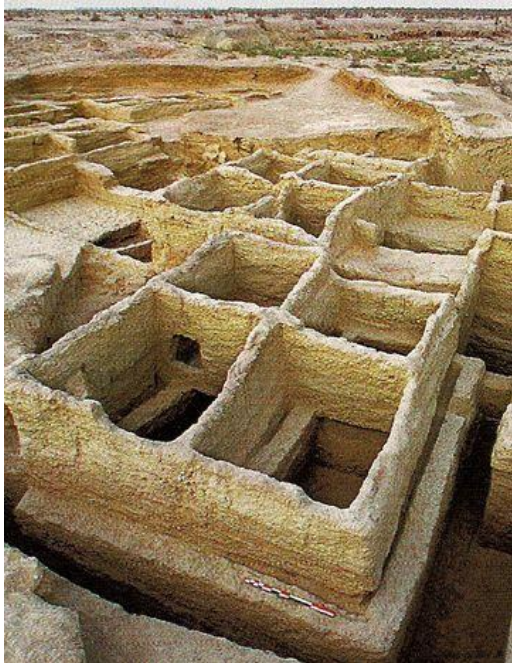


Figure I. 2 Constructed houses of mud-brick or hard packed clay at (Mehrgarh.<http://rizzaf.com/early-history/>).



Figure I. 3 Another view of the house structure at Mehrgarh.
(<http://www.tourism.gov.pk/mehrgarh.html>).

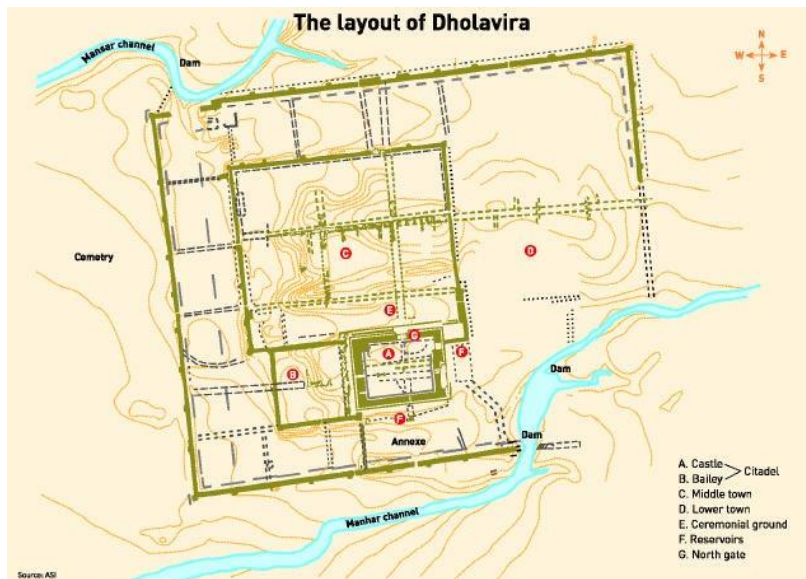


Figure I.4 Layout of Dholavira. (<http://bclip.takshashila.org.in/tag/indus-valley-civilization/>).

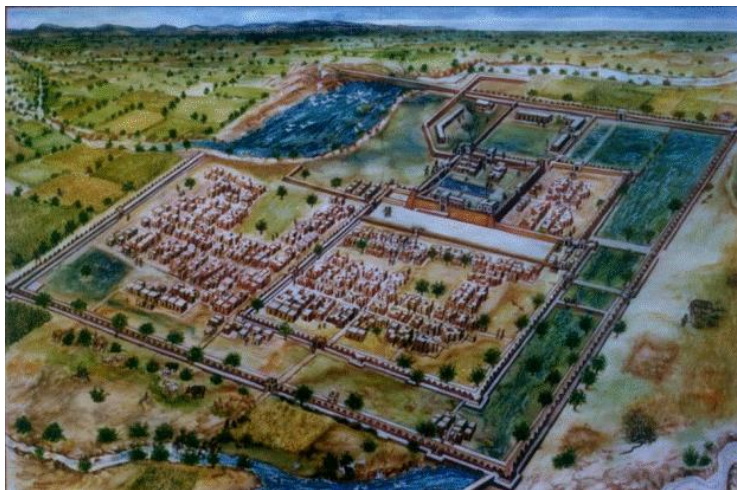


Figure I.5 An artist's impression of Dholavira. (<http://www.sindhulogy.org/harappan-site-details/>).

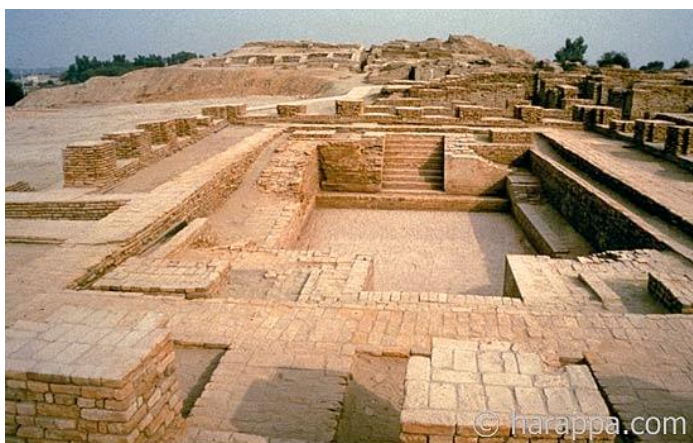


Figure I.6 Great Bath Mohenjo-Daro. (<http://www.harappa.com/indus/8.html>).

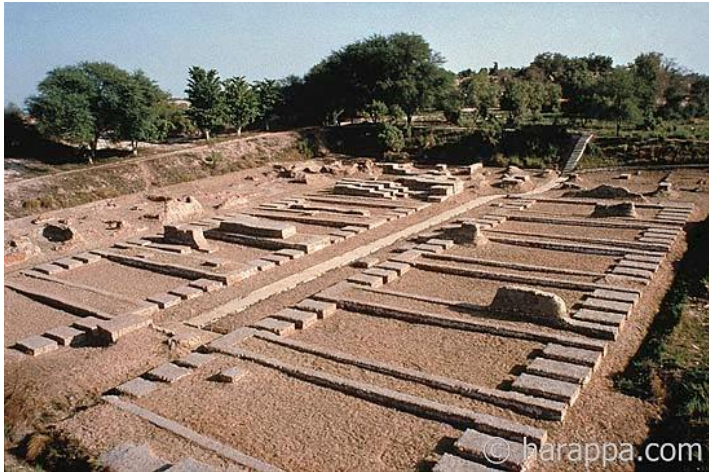


Figure I.7 The Granary, Mohenjo-Daro. (<http://www.harappa.com/indus/15.html>).



Figure I.8 Water Reservoir (dam) at Dholavira showing stairs. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dholavira>).



Figure I.9 Lothal a reconstructed version by an artist. (<http://rajooda.deviantart.com/art/Lothal-002-169402273>).



Figure I.10 Lothal Dockyard. (<http://www.shunya.net/Pictures/Western India/Gujarat/Lothal/Lothal.htm>).



Figure I.11 A corbelled arch drain at Mohenjo-Daro. (<http://www.mohenjodaro.net/indushouses49.html>).



Figure I.12 Several sump pots and latrines built one above the other were uncovered on Mound ET at Harappa. (http://www.sewerhistory.org/grfx/wh_region/indus1.htm).



Figure I.13 Bathing platform at Mohenjo-daro. (<http://www.mohenjodaro.net/indusbathingdrain85.html>).



Figure I.14 A covered drain from Mohenjo-Daro.



Figure I.15 Vertical Shaft Well from Mohenjo-Daro.



Figure 1.16 From Mohenjo-Daro. Doors and windows did not open on the main street.

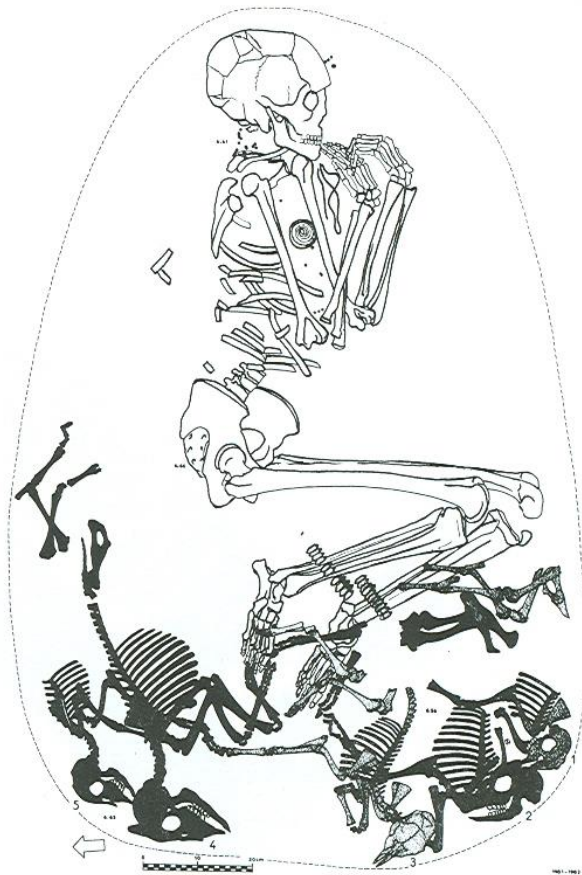


Figure 1.17 Human burial with goat sacrifice from Mehrgarh, Period IA, ca. 6500 BCE.

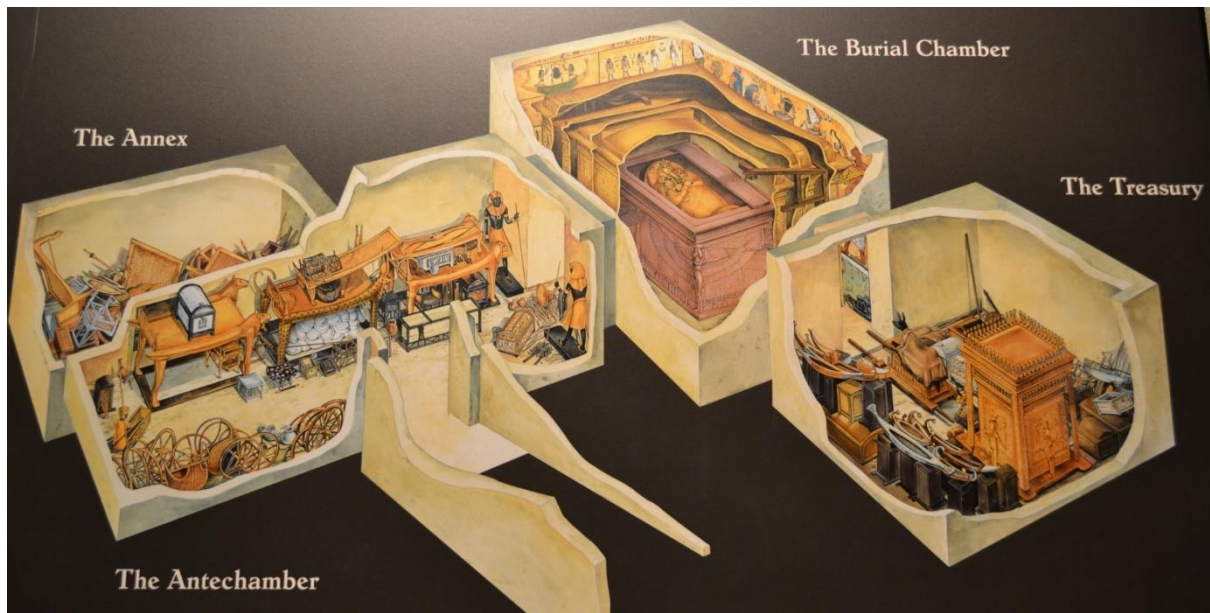


Figure I.18 Burial Chamber of Egyptian Pharaoh - Tutankhamun



Figure I.19 [Royal Tomb of](#) - Queen Pu-abi: Most of the spectacular treasures from The Royal Tombs of Ur (1800 graves) came from her burial chamber, which had not been looted by grave robbers.