

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Revision Notes

Chapter 6: The Beginnings of Indian Civilisation

These notes explain Class 6 Social Science Chapter 6 for the 2026-27 NCERT textbook. The focus is the Harappan Civilisation, town planning, water management, farming, crafts, trade, seals, daily life and decline.

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

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1 Chapter at a Glance

Chapter 6 introduces the Indus, Harappan or Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilisation. It explains civilisation, planned cities, water systems, farming, crafts, trade, writing and decline.



1.1 Big questions

- What is a civilisation?
- Why is the Harappan Civilisation important?
- What were its major achievements?

1.2 Fast revision frame

- Civilisation needs administration, urban life, crafts, trade, writing, culture and productive farming.
- Harappan sites spread beyond the Indus valley.
- The decline was linked mainly with climate change and the drying of the Sarasvati.

Memory Hook

Use C-U-W-T-D: civilisation, urbanism, water, trade and decline.

2 Meaning of Civilisation

The chapter defines civilisation as an advanced stage of human society. It is not only about large buildings, but also about organised life.



2.1 Core features

- Government and administration manage complex activities.
- Urbanism includes town planning, cities, water management and drainage.
- Crafts, trade and writing support daily life and record keeping.

2.2 Food and culture

- Productive agriculture feeds villages and cities.
- Cultural ideas appear through art, architecture, oral traditions and social customs.
- No single feature works alone; the features support one another.

Core Idea

A civilisation is a connected system of cities, food, skills, exchange and shared culture.

3 Early Civilisations in the World

Civilisation began at different times in different regions. Mesopotamia and Egypt developed early, and the Indian Subcontinent had its own ancient civilisation.



3.1 World comparison

- Mesopotamian civilisation began about 6000 years ago.
- Ancient Egyptian civilisation followed a few centuries later.
- The Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation developed from about 2600 to 1900 BCE.

3.2 Indian focus

- The chapter focuses on the northwest region of the Indian Subcontinent.
- This region had fertile plains, rivers and growing settlements.
- Villages gradually developed into towns and cities.

Timeline Link

A civilisation timeline helps students compare regions without confusing them.

4 From Village to City

The plains of Punjab and Sindh were watered by the Indus and its tributaries. Farther east, the Sarasvati once flowed through Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat.



4.1 Why the region grew

- Rivers made the plains fertile.
- Farming supported villages.
- From about 3500 BCE, villages grew into towns; around 2600 BCE, many towns grew into cities.

4.2 Names of the civilisation

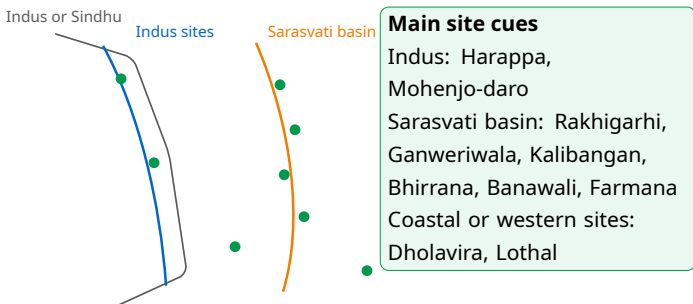
- Archaeologists call it Indus, Harappan, Indus-Sarasvati or Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilisation.
- Its inhabitants are called Harappans because Harappa was the first excavated city.
- It is one of the oldest civilisations in the world.

Naming Cue

Harappan is named after Harappa, the first excavated city of this civilisation.

5 Why Indus Valley Is an Older Term

The term Indus Valley Civilisation is still common, but the textbook explains why it is now limited. The sites extend beyond the Indus valley.



5.1 Wider spread

- Major cities include Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi and Ganweriwala.
- Smaller settlements include Lothal, Kalibangan, Farmana, Bhirrana and Banawali.
- Many sites lie in the Sarasvati basin.

5.2 Correct usage

- Indus-Sarasvati or Sindhu-Sarasvati better reflects the wider spread.
- The civilisation covered cities and villages across a large region.

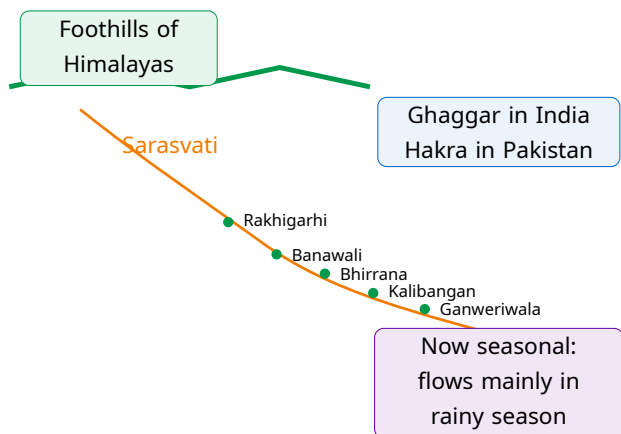
- New discoveries continue even today.

Avoid This

Do not treat the civilisation as limited only to the Indus River valley.

6 The Sarasvati River

The Sarasvati River is important in this chapter because many Harappan sites were found along its basin. Today it goes by the name Ghaggar in India and Hakra in Pakistan, and is now seasonal.



6.1 Textual evidence

- The Rig Veda mentions Sarasvati as both a goddess and a river.
- It describes the river as flowing from the

mountain to the sea.

- Later texts describe it as drying up and disappearing.

6.2 Archaeological link

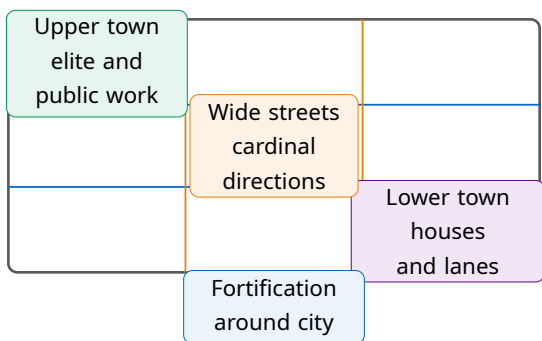
- Many sites appear along the Sarasvati basin.
- Rakhigarhi and Ganweriwala were major cities in this region.
- This helps explain the name Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilisation.

Source Link

Pair Sarasvati with both Rig Veda evidence and Harappan settlement evidence.

7 Harappan Town Planning

Large Harappan cities were built according to careful plans. Their streets, zones, houses and public structures show organised urban life.



7.1 Street and zone planning

- Many streets were wide and oriented to cardinal directions.
- Most cities had fortifications.
- Several cities had an upper town for elites and a lower town for common people.

7.2 Buildings

- Large buildings may have served collective purposes, such as storing goods.
- Individual houses lined streets and lanes.

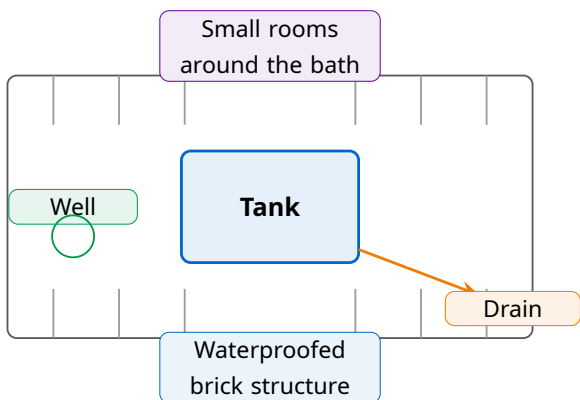
- The quality of construction was similar in small and big houses.

City Link

Good town planning makes streets, water and public spaces work together.

8 The Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro

The Great Bath is one of the most famous structures from Mohenjo-daro. Its exact purpose is debated because we do not have written explanations.



8.1 Key features

- It was a small but carefully built tank.
- It used waterproofing material such as natural bitumen.

- It had surrounding rooms, a well and a drain to empty water.

8.2 Possible uses

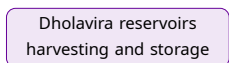
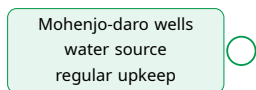
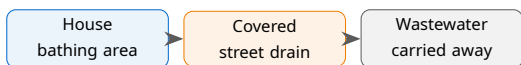
- It was probably not a common public bath because many houses had bathrooms.
- It may have been used by elites or for religious rituals.
- Archaeologists compare evidence before deciding.

Evidence Cue

For the Great Bath, write structure, water system and debated purpose.

9 Water Management and Cleanliness

The Harappans gave great importance to water management and cleanliness. Their houses, drains, wells and reservoirs show high civic planning.



9.1 Drains and wells

- Many homes had bathing areas.
- These were connected to larger drains under streets.
- Mohenjo-daro had hundreds of brick wells.

9.2 Dholavira reservoirs

- Dholavira had at least six large reservoirs.

- Some were built with stones, and some were cut into rock.
- The largest reservoir measured 73 metres in length; one rock-cut reservoir shown by NCERT measured 33 metres.

Core Idea

Water management points to planning, labour organisation and local administration.

Water feature	Site	What it shows
Bathing areas and drains	Many Harappan houses	Concern for cleanliness
Hundreds of wells	Mohenjo-daro	Regular water access and maintenance
Large reservoirs	Dholavira	Harvesting, storage and distribution

10 Harappan Food and Agriculture

Harappan cities depended on productive farming. Rural settlements supplied food to urban centres, just as villages support cities today.



10.1 Main crops

- Harappans grew barley, wheat, some millets and sometimes rice.
- They also grew pulses and many vegetables.
- They were the first in Eurasia to grow cotton.

10.2 Food variety

- They domesticated animals for meat.
- They fished in rivers and the sea.
- Pot studies show dairy products, turmeric, ginger and banana remains.

Food Link

A city can grow only when surrounding villages produce enough food.

11 Farming Tools and Rural Support

The chapter shows a small clay model of a plough from Banawali. It reminds students that farming technology supported Harappan cities.



11.1 Tools and skills

- Harappans made farming tools including the plough.
- Some farming methods continued in later times.
- Cotton weaving also depended on agricultural production.

11.2 Village-city relationship

- Small rural sites managed intensive agricultural activity.
- Agricultural produce from villages reached cities daily.
- Cities could survive only if enough produce arrived from rural areas.

Answer Cue

Mention villages when explaining why Harappan cities could survive.

12 A Brisk Trade

The Harappans traded actively within their civilisation and with regions outside India. Trade connected cities, craftspeople and distant cultures.



12.1 Exports

- They exported ornaments, timber and objects of daily use.
- They probably exported gold, cotton and some food items.
- Carnelian beads from Gujarat were especially valued.

12.2 Imports and routes

- Imports probably included copper.
- Trade used land routes, rivers and the sea.
- Coastal settlements in Gujarat and Sindh show

maritime activity.

Trade Link

Harappan trade joined raw materials, skilled crafts and transport routes.

Trade item or route	Evidence	Revision use
Carnelian beads	Found at Susa in present-day Iran	Exports and skilled craft
Lothal dockyard	Huge basin in Gujarat	Maritime trade
Steatite seals	Animal figure plus signs	Goods, identity and trade
Copper	Likely imported	Raw material exchange

13 Crafts and Metallurgy

Harappan crafts were advanced. Craftspeople shaped beads, shells, ivory, metals, terracotta and stone into useful and beautiful objects.



13.1 Beads and shells

- Carnelian beads were drilled and decorated with special techniques.
- Conch shells were made into bangles.
- Shell is hard, so working it required skill.

13.2 Copper and bronze

- Copper is a soft metal.
- Copper mixed with tin makes bronze, which is harder.
- Harappans used bronze for tools, pots, pans and figurines.

Memory Hook

Copper plus tin makes bronze, and bronze is harder than copper.

14 Lothal Dockyard and Maritime Activity

Lothal in Gujarat had a huge basin that is understood as a dockyard. It shows the importance of boats and sea trade.



14.1 Dockyard facts

- The basin measured about 215 metres in length and 37 metres in width.
- It was longer than two football grounds.
- It was used to receive and send boats for transporting goods.

14.2 Why it matters

- This is described as the first intensive maritime activity in India.
- It shows that Harappans traded beyond nearby land routes.
- Coastal sites connected inland production with sea routes.

Transport Link

A dockyard turns trade from local exchange into long-distance movement.

15 Seals and the Harappan Script

Thousands of small seals have been found at Harappan sites. They were probably linked with trade and identification.



15.1 Seal features

- Most seals were made of steatite.
- They often show animals such as unicorn, bull or horned tiger.
- They carry signs from a writing system above the animal figure.

15.2 Unsolved script

- The Harappan writing system has not yet been understood.
- The symbolic meaning of many animal figures is also uncertain.
- Still, seals clearly connect with trade activities.

Avoid This

Do not claim that the Harappan script has been fully read. It is still undeciphered.

16 Daily Life Objects

Archaeologists have found many objects used by Harappans. These show both practical life and recreation.



16.1 Objects of daily use

- Bronze mirrors, terracotta pots, stone weights and bronze chisels were found.
- Weights helped in trade and measurement.
- Tools show technical skill and everyday work.

16.2 Games and toys

- A gamesboard from Dholavira was engraved on stone.
- A terracotta whistle from Karanpura shows playful design.
- Harappans made many games and toys for children and adults.

Source Cue

Use objects to infer daily work, trade, play and skill.

17 Cultural and Symbolic Objects

Some Harappan objects seem cultural or symbolic. They help us think about beliefs, art, gestures and continuity, even when meanings are uncertain.



17.1 Famous finds

- A figure often called Priest King was found, though we do not know who it represents.
- The Dancing Girl is a bronze figurine from Mohenjo-daro.
- The Pashupati Seal shows a three-faced deity seated on a raised platform, surrounded by powerful animals.

17.2 Continuity hints

- The Dancing Girl wears many bangles on one arm.
- This practice is still visible in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- A pot design may preserve a story similar to the thirsty crow tale.

Careful History

When meaning is uncertain, describe evidence first and avoid overclaiming.

18 Why the Civilisation Declined

Around 1900 BCE, the Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilisation began to fall apart. Cities were abandoned one by one, and many people returned to rural life.



18.1 Rejected old idea

- Earlier scholars suggested warfare or invasion.
- The textbook says there is no trace of warfare or invasion.
- Harappans do not seem to have maintained an army or weapons of war.

18.2 Accepted factors

- Climate change caused reduced rainfall and a drier phase.
- The Sarasvati River dried up in its central basin.
- Agriculture became harder, and food supply to cities decreased.

Avoid This

Do not write invasion as the proven cause of Harappan decline.

Cause claim	Status	Textbook cue
Warfare or invasion	Not supported	No trace of warfare or invasion
Reduced rainfall	Accepted factor	Drier climate affected agriculture
Sarasvati drying	Accepted factor	Central basin cities were abandoned
Rural shift	Outcome	People moved to smaller settlements

19 End or New Beginning

The chapter does not treat the decline as a complete disappearance. Many parts of Harappan culture and technology survived.



19.1 Rural shift

- People scattered into hundreds or thousands of smaller settlements.
- Rural life gave easier access to food and water.
- The earlier administration no longer seems to have existed.

19.2 Survival

- Cities disappeared, but many skills continued.
- Technology and cultural practices passed into later phases.
- Indian civilisation continued in new forms.

History Link

A city can decline, but people, skills and memories may continue.

20 High Value Answer Points

The exercise questions ask students to explain names, achievements, travel, kitchens, familiar objects, reservoirs, wells and civic sense.



20.1 Achievement answers

- Mention planned cities, drainage, reservoirs, crafts, trade and agriculture.
- Use Dholavira, Mohenjo-daro, Lothal and Harappa as examples.
- Explain how each achievement helped urban life.

20.2 Civic sense answers

- Refer to bathrooms, drains, wells and reservoirs.
- Explain regular maintenance and collective planning.
- Compare with modern city cleanliness in a balanced way.

Writing Cue

For long answers, write evidence plus explanation, not only a list of facts.

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21 Quick Reference Summary

The final section collects the chapter's must-know facts for one-sitting revision before solving textbook questions.



21.1 Must-know facts

- The Harappan Civilisation flourished from about 2600 to 1900 BCE.
- Harappa was the first site excavated, so the people are called Harappans.
- Dholavira is famous for reservoirs, and Lothal is famous for a dockyard.

21.2 Final recall

- Water management shows civic planning.
- Trade depended on crafts, routes, seals and measurements.
- Decline was linked mainly to drier climate and Sarasvati changes.

Last-Minute Cue

Connect every site to one feature: Harappa, Dholavira, Lothal, Mohenjo-daro and Rakhigarhi.

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- [Class 6 Social Science - All Chapters](#)