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EXPLORING THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

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ABSTRACT :

The Indus Valley Civilization, one of the world's oldest urban civilizations, flourished in the Indian subcontinent around 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE. This remarkable civilization, known for its advanced urban planning, trade networks, and sophisticated infrastructure, left an indelible mark on the socioeconomic fabric of ancient India. In this article, we delve into the socioeconomic impact of the Indus Valley Civilization, shedding light on how this ancient society influenced the region and continues to resonate in contemporary South Asia.

KEYWORDS : socioeconomic , Indus Valley Civilization.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indus Valley Civilization, also referred to as the Harappan Civilization, thrived in the vast floodplains of the Indus River and its tributaries in what is now present-day Pakistan and northwest India. It was a highly organized urban civilization

characterized by meticulously planned cities, standardized weights and measures, advanced metallurgy, and a complex script that remains undeciphered to this day. The socioeconomic aspects of this civilization provide fascinating insights into how ancient societies functioned and influenced the course of history.

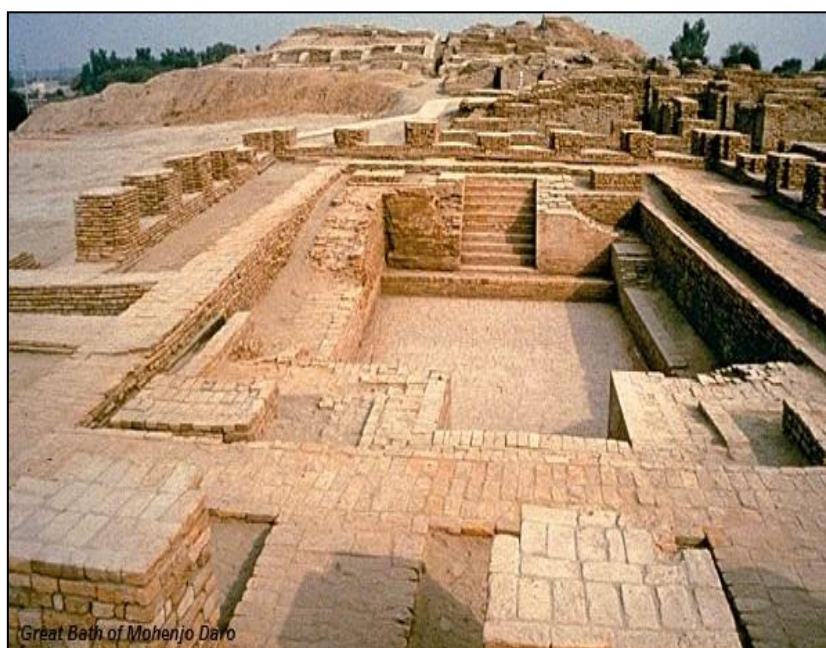
Urban Planning and Infrastructure:

The most striking feature of the Indus Valley Civilization was its sophisticated urban planning. Cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro

boasted grid layouts with well-organized streets, drainage systems, and multi-story buildings. This level of urban development was unprecedented in its time and had a profound impact on subsequent civilizations in the Indian subcontinent. It set a precedent for urbanization and city planning that influenced the growth of future cities in the region.

1. Grid Layout and Street Planning:

The Indus Valley Civilization is renowned for its advanced urban planning, which included well-organized cities with a grid layout. Cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro featured streets that intersected at right angles, creating a grid-like pattern. These streets were remarkably wide and well-



Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro

maintained, indicating a high level of civic planning. The grid layout not only provided an efficient means of transportation but also contributed to the overall organization of the city.

2. **Drainage Systems:** One of the most remarkable aspects of the Indus Valley urban centers was their advanced drainage systems. These cities had an elaborate network of underground and surface drains made from baked clay pipes. The sewage and wastewater from households and public buildings were efficiently channeled away from the city, helping maintain sanitation and hygiene. This sophisticated drainage system was an early example of urban planning that aimed to ensure public health.
3. **Multi-Story Buildings:** The Indus Valley cities also featured multi-story buildings, which were a testament to their architectural prowess. These structures were constructed using standardized bricks made from kiln-fired mud, which allowed for consistent and durable construction. Multi-story buildings were likely used for residential purposes and possibly for storage or trade activities, demonstrating the civilization's advanced architectural techniques.
4. **Public Baths and Wells:** Public baths were a common feature in Indus Valley cities, indicating a focus on personal hygiene and communal activities. These public baths were typically connected to the city's drainage system, further emphasizing the civilization's emphasis on cleanliness. Additionally, the presence of wells ensured a reliable water supply for both domestic use and agricultural purposes.
5. **Great Bath of Mohenjo-Daro:** One of the most iconic structures of the Indus Valley Civilization is the Great Bath in Mohenjo-Daro. This large, rectangular pool made of carefully fitted bricks is believed to have had a ceremonial or religious significance. The Great Bath not only served as a place for ritual purification but also showcased the advanced engineering and construction skills of the civilization.
6. **Citadels and Defensive Structures:** Some Indus Valley cities, like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, featured elevated citadels that served as administrative and possibly defensive centers. These citadels were strategically located to oversee the surrounding areas and offered protection from potential threats. The construction of these citadels highlights the urban planning and defensive strategies employed by the civilization.
7. **Standardized Bricks and Construction Materials:** The Indus Valley Civilization is known for its use of standardized bricks and construction materials. The bricks were of uniform size, typically measuring 4.2 x 1.9 x 0.95 inches (10.6 x 4.8 x 2.4 cm), which allowed for consistent and efficient construction. The use of standardized materials indicates a high level of planning and organization in urban construction.
8. **Evidence of Public Buildings and Marketplaces:** Archaeological excavations have revealed the presence of public buildings and marketplaces in Indus Valley cities. These structures suggest that there were centralized areas for administrative activities and trade. The layout and design of these public spaces reflect the civilization's commitment to organized urban living.

In summary, the urban planning and infrastructure of the Indus Valley Civilization were remarkably advanced for their time. The grid layout, drainage systems, multi-story buildings, public amenities, and standardized construction materials all point to a highly organized society that prioritized sanitation, orderliness, and efficient urban living. These elements of urban planning have had a lasting impact on the development of urban centers in the Indian subcontinent and continue to be studied and admired by archaeologists and urban planners today.

Trade and Commerce: The Indus Valley Civilization was a hub of trade and commerce. Archaeological evidence suggests that they had extensive trade networks with Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq and Iran)

and other distant regions. This trade not only brought valuable resources and goods to the civilization but also contributed significantly to its socioeconomic development. The use of standardized weights and measures indicates a highly organized trade system, allowing for efficient economic transactions.

Trade and commerce were pivotal aspects of the Indus Valley Civilization's socioeconomic structure. This ancient civilization, which thrived around 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE in what is now modern-day Pakistan and northwest India, had a well-established trade network that contributed significantly to its economic prosperity and cultural exchange. Here, we delve into the key features of trade and commerce in the Indus Valley Civilization:

- 1. Trade Routes and Networks:** The Indus Valley Civilization was strategically located near major trade routes that connected it to other ancient civilizations. The most prominent trade route connected the Indus Valley to Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq and Iran) via the Arabian Sea. This route allowed for the exchange of goods, including textiles, metals, pottery, and agricultural products.
- 2. Standardized Weights and Measures:** Evidence of standardized weights and measures has been unearthed at Indus Valley sites. These standardized units ensured fair trade and commerce by providing a common system for measuring and valuing goods. This suggests a well-organized trading system that facilitated economic transactions.
- 3. Agricultural Surplus and Trade:** The fertile alluvial soil of the Indus River valley supported robust agricultural production. The surplus food generated by the civilization allowed for trade and the establishment of a market-based economy. Crops like wheat, barley, and various pulses were cultivated, and these agricultural products became valuable trade commodities.
- 4. Craftsmanship and Specialization:** The Indus Valley people were skilled artisans, producing a wide range of high-quality goods. These included pottery, metalwork, jewelry, textiles, and figurines. The presence of specialized craftsmen and craftswomen suggests the development of a diversified economy with a focus on craftsmanship and trade.
- 5. Trade with Mesopotamia:** Archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia have revealed numerous artifacts with Indus Valley origins, such as seals and pottery. These findings provide strong evidence of a thriving trade relationship between the two regions. In exchange for Indus Valley goods, Mesopotamia supplied valuable items like timber, metals, and semi-precious stones.
- 6. Maritime Trade:** The civilization's access to the Arabian Sea via the coastal city of Lothal facilitated maritime trade. Evidence of a sophisticated dockyard in Lothal indicates that the Indus Valley people were engaged in seafaring activities, further expanding their trade networks. This maritime trade allowed for the exchange of goods with distant regions.
- 7. Granaries and Storage Facilities:** Some Indus Valley cities had granaries and storage facilities. These structures played a crucial role in storing surplus agricultural produce, ensuring a stable food supply, and supporting trade. Efficient storage and distribution were essential for managing the economic aspects of the civilization.
- 8. Cultural Exchange:** Trade not only served economic purposes but also facilitated cultural exchange. Interaction with other civilizations influenced art, technology, and cultural practices. The seals and inscriptions found in the Indus Valley suggest that the civilization had a system of writing, which might have been used for trade records and communication with distant regions.

In conclusion, trade and commerce were fundamental to the prosperity of the Indus Valley Civilization. The civilization's strategic location, standardized systems, agricultural surplus, and skilled craftsmanship all contributed to the growth of a vibrant trade network. This trade network not only supported the economy

but also fostered cultural exchange, leaving a lasting legacy in the history of the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION:

Agriculture formed the backbone of the Indus Valley Civilization's economy. The fertile alluvial soil of the Indus River valley allowed for the cultivation of a variety of crops, including wheat, barley, and various pulses. This agricultural surplus supported the urban population, ensuring a stable food supply. The development of advanced irrigation systems, such as canals and wells, increased agricultural productivity and played a vital role in the socioeconomic prosperity of the region.

Agriculture and food production were central components of the Indus Valley Civilization's socioeconomic structure. This ancient civilization, which thrived from around 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE in what is now modern-day Pakistan and northwest India, relied heavily on agriculture as the backbone of its economy. Here, we explore the key aspects of agriculture and food production in this civilization:

1. **Fertile Alluvial Soil:** The Indus Valley Civilization was situated along the banks of the Indus River and its tributaries. These riverbanks provided fertile alluvial soil that was ideal for agriculture. The regular flooding of the rivers deposited nutrient-rich silt, making the land highly productive for crop cultivation.
2. **Crop Diversity:** The Indus Valley people cultivated a variety of crops, including wheat, barley, millet, and various pulses (legumes). Wheat and barley were the primary cereal crops, while millet and pulses added diversity to their diet. This crop diversity ensured a stable and varied food supply.
3. **Irrigation Systems:** To maximize agricultural productivity, the civilization developed advanced irrigation systems. Canals and wells were constructed to channel water from the rivers to fields. These systems allowed for controlled irrigation, ensuring crops received sufficient water even during dry periods. The sophisticated infrastructure for water management was a testament to their agricultural expertise.
4. **Domesticated Animals:** Alongside crop cultivation, the Indus Valley people practiced animal husbandry. Domesticated animals, such as cattle, water buffalo, sheep, and goats, were raised for their milk, meat, and as draft animals for plowing and transportation. The integration of livestock into agriculture contributed to the overall food production and economy.
5. **Storage Facilities:** Some Indus Valley cities featured granaries and storage facilities. These structures were used for storing surplus agricultural produce, safeguarding it against pests and spoilage. Efficient storage and distribution of food were vital to managing the economy and ensuring a stable food supply.
6. **Trade in Agricultural Products:** Surplus agricultural products were not only consumed locally but also traded within the civilization and with neighboring regions. Trade routes connected the Indus Valley to Mesopotamia and other distant areas, allowing for the exchange of agricultural goods, textiles, and other commodities.
7. **Harvesting Techniques:** The Indus Valley people used tools such as sickles and plows for harvesting and tilling the fields. Their knowledge of agricultural techniques and seasonal cycles allowed them to optimize crop yields.
8. **Food Processing:** In addition to farming, food processing was an essential aspect of the civilization's food production. Grain processing facilities have been discovered, suggesting that the people milled grains into flour and processed other food items. This added value to agricultural products and ensured their suitability for consumption.

9. **Evidence of Agricultural Practices:** Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of agricultural practices, including plowed fields and remnants of crops. Pottery found at Indus Valley sites often bears imprints of grains, indicating their use in food preparation and storage.

In summary, agriculture and food production were the cornerstones of the Indus Valley Civilization's economy and sustenance. The availability of fertile soil, advanced irrigation systems, diverse crops, domesticated animals, and trade networks enabled the civilization to thrive. Efficient food production and storage were essential for supporting the urban centers and populations of this ancient civilization.

CRAFTSMANSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY:

Artifacts from the Indus Valley Civilization reveal a high level of craftsmanship and technological sophistication. They were skilled in pottery, metallurgy, and the production of seals, jewelry, and textiles. The existence of these specialized crafts suggests a well-organized system of production and trade, which not only served the local population but also contributed to the civilization's economic growth.

Craftsmanship and technology were integral to the cultural and socioeconomic development of the Indus Valley Civilization, which thrived from approximately 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE in what is now modern-day Pakistan and northwest India. This ancient civilization displayed remarkable skills in various crafts and employed advanced technologies for the time. Here's an exploration of craftsmanship and technology in the Indus Valley Civilization:

1. Pottery:

- **Wheel-Made Pottery:** Indus Valley potters were adept at using pottery wheels to create finely crafted pottery. They produced a wide variety of pottery types, including storage jars, cooking vessels, and decorative items.
- **Distinctive Styles:** The pottery of the civilization featured intricate designs and patterns. Common motifs included geometric shapes, animal forms, and stylized plant motifs. The use of multiple colors, including black, red, and white, showcased their artistic skills.
- **Utility and Aesthetics:** Pottery was both utilitarian and decorative. It was used for storing and cooking food, as well as for rituals and trade. The craftsmanship in pottery suggests a blend of functionality and aesthetics.

2. Metalwork:

- **Copper and Bronze:** The Indus Valley people were skilled metalworkers who primarily used copper and bronze. They crafted a wide range of objects, including tools, weapons, jewelry, and ornaments.
- **Casting Techniques:** They employed casting techniques to create intricate metal objects. Metalworkers would create molds and pour molten metal into them, allowing for the production of standardized and detailed items.
- **Jewelry and Ornaments:** Metal jewelry such as necklaces, bangles, and earrings were often adorned with beads and gemstones, showcasing their craftsmanship and artistic sensibilities.

3. Textiles:

- **Cotton and Wool:** The Indus Valley Civilization was among the earliest societies to cultivate and weave cotton. They also worked with wool from domesticated animals. This led to the production of fine textiles, which were dyed in various colors and patterns.
- **Advanced Spinning and Weaving:** The people of the Indus Valley used spindle whorls and looms for spinning and weaving. The resulting fabrics were of high quality and used for clothing, household textiles, and trade.

4. Jewelry and Ornaments:

- **Beads and Jewelry:** The civilization produced a wide array of jewelry and ornaments, including intricate beadwork, necklaces, bracelets, and pendants. Beads were often made from materials like shell, semi-precious stones, and metals.
- **Symbolism and Aesthetics:** Jewelry and ornaments held cultural and aesthetic significance. They were not only used for personal adornment but also for religious and symbolic purposes.

5. Seals and Script:

- **Indus Script:** The civilization had a script that remains undeciphered to this day. The script was often inscribed on seals made of clay or other materials. These seals featured detailed carvings of animals, deities, and other motifs.
- **Administrative and Trade Use:** Seals were likely used for administrative purposes, possibly to mark goods and documents related to trade. Their craftsmanship reflects the importance of record-keeping and trade in the civilization.

6. Urban Planning and Architecture:

- **Brick-Making:** The construction of cities in the Indus Valley required advanced brick-making techniques. Standardized bricks were produced and used for buildings and infrastructure.
- **Multi-Story Buildings:** The presence of multi-story buildings in urban centers showcased their architectural skills. These structures included homes, granaries, and possibly administrative buildings.
- **Advanced Drainage Systems:** The planning and construction of drainage systems, including underground and surface drains, demonstrate their expertise in engineering and urban planning.

In summary, the Indus Valley Civilization was characterized by its remarkable craftsmanship and technological advancements. The people of this ancient civilization excelled in various crafts, including pottery, metalwork, textiles, and jewelry. Their mastery of technology and artistic sensibilities are evident in the artifacts and structures that have been unearthed through archaeological excavations, leaving a lasting legacy in the history of ancient civilizations.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE:

While much about the social and political structure of the Indus Valley Civilization remains enigmatic, it is clear that there was a central authority governing the cities. This suggests the presence of a hierarchical social structure and some form of governance. The existence of granaries in the cities indicates a degree of centralized control over resources, which would have played a role in managing surplus food production and distribution.

The social structure and governance of the Indus Valley Civilization, which thrived from around 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE in what is now modern-day Pakistan and northwest India, remain subjects of ongoing research and debate among historians and archaeologists. While much about their specific social and political organization remains enigmatic due to the limited decipherable written records, certain aspects can be inferred from archaeological evidence and comparative studies. Here is an overview of the social structure and possible governance of this ancient civilization:

1. Social Structure:

- **Urban Centers:** The Indus Valley Civilization was characterized by well-planned urban centers. Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of highly organized cities with advanced infrastructure, suggesting a degree of centralization and urbanization.

- **Hierarchical Society:** It is likely that the civilization had a hierarchical social structure with distinct social classes. This hierarchy may have included rulers or elites at the top, followed by a middle class of artisans, merchants, and administrative personnel, and a lower class consisting of laborers and farmers.
- **Craftsmen and Specialization:** The presence of skilled craftsmen and craftswomen suggests that there was a division of labor and specialization within society. This division allowed for the production of a wide range of goods, including pottery, metalwork, textiles, and jewelry.

2. Governance:

- **Centralized Authority:** The presence of large, well-organized urban centers hints at the likelihood of centralized authority. While the specific form of governance remains unclear, it is possible that there was a central authority or governing body overseeing the cities and regions.
- **Administrative Structures:** Some scholars suggest that administrative structures may have existed to manage aspects of city life, trade, and resource allocation. Evidence of seals with inscriptions and symbols suggests that there was a system for record-keeping and possibly taxation.
- **Granaries:** The presence of granaries in some Indus Valley cities indicates a level of central control over food storage and distribution. These granaries might have been managed by the governing authority to ensure a stable food supply.
- **Citadels:** Some cities, such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, had elevated citadels that may have served as administrative and possibly defensive centers. These citadels suggest some form of centralized governance and protection against external threats.

3. Religion and Governance:

- **Religious Structures:** The Indus Valley Civilization had religious structures, such as temples and altars, which suggests a connection between religion and governance. It is possible that religious leaders or institutions played a role in the governing structure.
- **Symbols and Iconography:** The presence of religious symbols and iconography on seals and artifacts indicates the significance of religion in daily life. These symbols may have been used for administrative and governance purposes as well.

4. Trade and Commerce:

- **Trade-Based Governance:** The extensive trade networks of the civilization required some level of governance to regulate trade, enforce contracts, and ensure fair practices. Administrative bodies may have played a role in facilitating trade relationships.

5. Water Management:

The advanced water management systems, including drainage systems and wells, suggest a degree of urban planning and governance to manage water resources efficiently.

It's important to note that the exact nature of governance in the Indus Valley Civilization remains speculative, and much of our understanding is based on inference from archaeological findings. The absence of decipherable written records, such as inscriptions or texts, makes it challenging to provide a comprehensive account of their social and political structures. Nevertheless, the evidence of organized cities, centralized structures, and specialized craftsmanship points to a sophisticated society with some form of governance that contributed to the civilization's achievements and longevity.

Legacy and Influence:

The Indus Valley Civilization's socioeconomic impact is still evident in contemporary South Asia. The urban planning and infrastructure laid the foundation for future urban development in the region. Additionally, the trade networks established during this time contributed to the cultural exchange that shaped the diverse tapestry of South Asian societies. Some elements of their craftsmanship and technologies, such as pottery-making and metallurgy, continued to evolve and influence subsequent civilizations.

The legacy and influence of the Indus Valley Civilization, also known as the Harappan Civilization, extend far beyond its existence from approximately 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE. This ancient civilization, located in what is now modern-day Pakistan and northwest India, has left a lasting impact on various aspects of the Indian subcontinent's history, culture, and heritage. Here are some key elements of the legacy and influence of the Indus Valley Civilization:

1. Urban Planning and Architecture:

- **City Planning:** The grid-based layout of the Indus Valley cities, with well-organized streets, drainage systems, and multi-story buildings, laid the foundation for urban planning in the region. Many contemporary South Asian cities still exhibit traces of this ancient urban planning.

2. Trade and Commerce:

- **Trade Networks:** The Indus Valley Civilization was a hub of trade and commerce, with extensive networks that reached as far as Mesopotamia. This early trade set the stage for South Asia's future as a significant center for trade and cultural exchange.

3. Agricultural Practices:

- **Irrigation Techniques:** The advanced irrigation systems developed by the Indus Valley people contributed to efficient agriculture. These techniques influenced subsequent agricultural practices in the region.

4. Craftsmanship and Technology:

- **Metallurgy and Craftsmanship:** The craftsmanship and technological achievements of the civilization, including pottery, metalwork, and jewelry making, influenced subsequent artistic and artisanal traditions in the Indian subcontinent.

5. Cultural and Religious Influences:

- **Religious Practices:** Some elements of the religious practices of the Indus Valley Civilization, including the worship of certain deities and the use of symbols, have continued to influence the religious traditions of South Asia.
- **Language and Script:** While the Indus script remains undeciphered, its existence hints at the development of early writing systems in the region, which could have influenced future scripts and languages.

6. Administrative and Organizational Skills:

- **Record-Keeping:** The presence of seals and symbols suggests the development of administrative and record-keeping systems. These early systems likely influenced administrative practices in the region.

7. Cultural Diversity:

- **Cultural Exchange:** The Indus Valley Civilization's participation in trade networks facilitated cultural exchange with neighboring regions. This exchange contributed to the rich cultural tapestry of South Asia.

8. Water Management:

- **Efficient Water Management:** The advanced drainage and water supply systems developed by the civilization served as models for future civilizations in the Indian subcontinent, helping to manage water resources effectively.

9. Influence on Subsequent Civilizations:

- **Aryan Migration:** While the relationship between the Indus Valley Civilization and the Aryan migration that followed is debated, some cultural elements, such as language and religious practices, may have been influenced by the interactions between these two cultures.

10. Archaeological and Historical Legacy: - Research and Exploration:

The excavation and study of the Indus Valley Civilization have contributed significantly to the field of archaeology and historical research in South Asia.

In summary, the legacy and influence of the Indus Valley Civilization are multifaceted and have left an indelible mark on the Indian subcontinent's history and culture. The civilization's achievements in urban planning, trade, agriculture, craftsmanship, and administrative practices continue to resonate in contemporary South Asia, and its study remains integral to understanding the roots of civilization in the region.

CONCLUSION:

The Indus Valley Civilization, with its advanced urban planning, trade networks, and sophisticated infrastructure, had a profound socioeconomic impact on ancient India. It set precedents in urban development, trade, agriculture, and craftsmanship that influenced subsequent societies in the Indian subcontinent. Understanding the socioeconomic dynamics of this ancient civilization provides valuable insights into the roots of South Asian civilization and its enduring legacy in the modern world.

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