Connection Between the Harappan and the Vedic Age

CO_2e Why in news?

Recently, a group of archaeologists are collaborating with Sanskrit scholars to decipher the text of the Rigveda that establish a relationship between the Harappan civilisation and the people of the Vedic age.

Overview of Harappaa and Vedic culture

• **Harappa culture**- It is the earliest known culture of the Indian subcontinent of the kind now called "urban" (or centered on large municipalities).
• It is the largest of the **four ancient civilizations**, which also included **Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China.**



• **Time period-** The society of the Indus River Valley has been dated from the Bronze Age, the time period from approximately 3500 to 2200 BCE.
• Location- In modern-day India and Pakistan, and covered an area as large as Western Europe.
• **Vedic culture**- A few centuries after the decline of the Harappan civilization, a new culture flourished in the same region and gradually spread across the Ganga-Yamuna plains.
• There were significant differences between this culture and the culture that preceded it.
• The Aryans settled on the *banks of rivers Indus (Sindhu)* and *Saraswati* (which is now nonexistent).
• They composed many hymns in honor of the gods and goddesses they worshipped. These were compiled in ***four Vedas***.

What are the key highlights of the recent research?

- **Debate on the period of origin of the Vedas-** One set of historians says that the Vedas originated between **1,500 BC and 2,000 BC**.
- Another set of historians believe that the Vedas date farther back to **2,500 BC (4,500 years ago).**
- This would coincide with the age of the genetic evidence from the erstwhile Harappan woman's bone samples tested at the *Rakhigarhi site.*
- **Harappan genes-** DNA analysis of 3,000 modern South Asians from various linguistic and religious groups revealed genetic similarities to a Harappan woman's skeleton.
- This similarity spans from the ***Andaman and Nicobar Islands to Ladakh, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Bengal***.
- Scholars suggest that most Indians carry Harappan genes, typically **25% to 30%**, and should be considered descendants of a common "**ancient ancestor South Asian**" due

to the widespread presence of these genes across India.

What are the similarities between Rig Vedic and Harappan Civilizations?

Points of similarity	Rig Veda	Harappan Civilization
Fire	The site of Rakhigarhi has found evidence of ritual platforms and fire altars.	Fire worship is mentioned in Rigvedic texts too.
Saraswati	In Rigvedic text of the area where people lived, there is frequent description of the river Saraswati. The mention of the river is recorded at least 71 times in the Rigvedic text.	A majority of Harappan settlements were along the banks of river Saraswati. Of the nearly 2,000 known Harappan settlements spread over the Indus basin, Saraswati, and in Gujarat, of which almost two-thirds, at least 1,200 are located along the basin of the river Saraswati.
Animal bones	In the Surkotada region of Kutch, Gujarat, bones belonging to a proper domesticated horse were found.	Animal bones being that of a horse finds mention in Rigvedic texts too.
Food and Culture	People of both cultures ate the same type of food. People from both cultures made the same kind of weapons and wore the same kind of clothing. They wore both cotton and wool. The inhabitants of both cultures were jewelers, both men and women were fond of jewelry.	
Occupation	20. occupations of the people of both cultures were farming and animal husbandry. Cows, oxen, dogs, sheep, goats, etc. were both domesticated animals.	
Religious front	People from both cultures believed in religious sentiments. People of both cultures incorporated many religious features into later Hinduism. People of both cultures were materially prosperous. However, there were differences in their religious beliefs and customs.	

What are the counter arguments against the similarities between Harappa culture and Vedic culture?

- **Use of Iron-** Cities and towns first came into existence during the Harappan times, dating 4,500 to 4,600 years ago.
- They again later came into existence 2,400 years ago, by which time proofs of use of iron also emerged but Rigvedic texts do not mention the use of iron.
- **Animal bones-** We don’t have strong evidence to prove that the domesticated horse was present during Harappan times.
- Those historians who date the Rigveda to after 2,000 BC, believe that the animal bones were that of a wild ass.

- **South Asian ancestor theory-** Contrary to this theory the NCERT textbook revisions mention that the Harappans were indigenous to India, dating back to 10,000 BC.

  South Asian ancestor theory states that there was a large scale immigration of 'Aryans' from Europe to central Asia and then to south Asia

Quick facts

River Saraswati
• It is called the **Ghagghar-Hakra river** and flows **only during the monsoon season.** • It originates from the **Shivaliks**, the foothills of the Himalayas, then flows through **Punjab, Haryana, and a part of Rajasthan** before entering what is now **Pakistan.** • The Indian part of the river is named the **Ghagghar**, while the one in Pakistan is the **Hakra.**

Reference

1. The Hindu- Decipher Rigveda text
2. IITE- Comparative study between Harappa culture and Vedic culture

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering