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THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION: GLOBALIZATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Abhijeet Singh¹

The South Asian civilization or the Indus Valley civilization, as it is more commonly known, is as old as antiquity itself. The permanent character of settlements is one of the defining features of this civilization. The maritime trade during the Indus Valley civilization was developed and it was well connected to Egypt, Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) and China. The Indus Valley civilization was the first foray of the South Asian region into the international maritime trade and cultural diffusion with other parts of the world having a civilization. The amount of cultural, economic and social exchange and interaction can be ascertained from the archeological finds and it shows the intermingling and cross cultural influence among the then known and developed world.

Keywords: globalization, trade, Meluhha, Mesopotamia, development, maritime

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ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЯ ДОЛИНЫ ИНДА: ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ И ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВО В ДРЕВНЕМ МИРЕ

Абхижит Сингх

Южноазиатская цивилизация или, как она более известна, цивилизация долины Инда, стара как сама древность. Ее отличительной чертой был постоянный характер поселений. Морская торговля была развита, связывая цивилизацию долины Инда с Египтом, Месопотамией (современным Ираком) и Китаем. Это был первый прорыв Южной Азии в мировую морскую торговлю и культурное проникновение в другие цивилизации. Объем культурных, экономических и социальных связей с другими регионами подтверждается археологическими находками, которые демонстрируют контакты и взаимовлияние с известным и развитым миром той эпохи.

Ключевые слова: глобализация, торговля, Мелухха, Месопотамия, развитие, мореплавание

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¹ Abhijeet Singh, Independent Researcher, New Delhi, India; abhijeete0963@gmail.com

Абхижит Сингх, независимый исследователь, Нью-Дели, Индия; abhijeete0963@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3203-7962

The future for us is the foreseeable future. The South Asian, however, feels that it is perfectly realistic to think of a 'long time' in terms of thousand of years.

Edward T. Hall

INTRODUCTION

Indus Valley was one of the earliest and most developed civilizations of its time alongside Mesopotamian and Egyptian Civilization. The extent of its development can be seen from the excavated sites, the nature of urban planning, trade and communication much developed as compared to their Civilizational counterparts, metallurgical knowhow among other aspects crucially put this Civilization as one of the earliest international trading entity which established trading links with the then known world. It comes as no surprise if this Civilization is referred to as the epicenter of the early global trade. In order to understand how these trade links developed its important to first know all the evidences and the technical prowess which shed light on the true nature of trade and commerce in the time and how such navigation and both in land and sea was established.

Geographically, Indus Valley civilization covered Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Rajasthan, Gujarat and, Western Uttar Pradesh. It extended from Sutkagendor (Balochistan) in West to Alamgirpur (Western UP) in the East; & from Mandu (Jammu) in the North to Daimabad (Maharashtra) in the South. Some Indus Valley sites have also been found as far away as Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Also, the Pre-Harappan Civilization found in Mehrgarh, shows the first evidence of cotton cultivation.

Indus Valley civilization was one of the first attempts by humankind to forge external connection with the then existing civilizations. It was not just the domestic factor of trade rather the entrepreneurship that furthered their quest to embark on the globalization journey to connect economically as well as culturally with Egypt, Mesopotamia, parts of Oman peninsula, Akkadian, Iran and China. The Indus Valley system of seals and border passes (just like the present day system of passports and visas) was much advanced of its times and shows the amount of human intellect, perseverance and desire to forward trade and connections much beyond its borders. Another reason for this ongoing nature is the complex technological prowess developed by the Indus people.

The sheer amount of production must have far exceeded the amount consumed locally, which contributed to the need for looking outside. It is a well-known fact that Indus Valley civilization was an urban settlement having a landscape surpassing other civilizations by leaps and bounds. The meticulous planning and scientific knowledge of the people provides an indication to the business-oriented mindset of the Civilization as a whole. This article will study the Indus trade and connections in three parts. The first part will discuss the Indus Valley trade internal trade and trade relations with Mesopotamia, the second part will discuss the trade relations between Egypt and Indus People and the third part will explore the Indus Valley connect with the Oman Peninsula. The article will also explore the trade relations of the Indus people with China and several sources of raw materials within the close geographical proximity of the civilization.

In the city of Harappa alone, there are a few sites that are recovered during excavations, which represent the entire glory of the Indus Valley civilization. The pre Harappa settlements, pre urban phase and urban phase all have one thing in common, production for internal trade and exports. The raw materials of different regions were also transported to other parts of the Indus realms [McIntosh, 2008, p. 148]. Historians have pointed out one distinct feature of the Indus Valley — external trade.

There have been instances where new proofs are discovered and the limit of external trade is further expanded than originally envisaged. Another important aspect, which must be focused upon, is the undeciphered script of the Indus Valley, which limits the modern understanding of the true extent of the urban settlements of the Civilization.

The sole reason for such an advanced civilization to be studied in part by suppositions or hypothesis is the lack of linguistic understanding, which can be ascribed to a distinct language, and script of the Indus people. The scientific methodology used to ascertain the age of the findings (copper and bronze objects, terracotta figurines and other valuable artefacts) sheds light on temporal aspects of the civilization. The process of procurement of raw materials to final products and the trade patterns of the various items to different parts of the world through land and sea routes point to a diverse and flourishing trade within the various cities of the Indus Valley and outside of it. Many of the crafting technologies in metallurgy and other products were adopted by the other countries not just in South Asia but also others in the ancient world; this lasting effect would have been possible only through a large scale diffusion of art and culture which necessitates large scale trade.

I

The major centers of trading in the Indus Valley were located mostly on the plains, which acted as centers of production with availability of labor and market. The source of raw materials in most of the products identified with the Indus processing industry of the time is attributed to the neighboring areas (minerals from Afghanistan and Iran, jade and cedar wood from China). The model subscribed to by the Indus people was an efficient supply chain mechanism found in the modern times. Historical research and excavations show the kind of economic advantages that the people employed to maximize production. Things that were not available locally were procured from the nearest sources and the production chain was efficient enough to supply internally and export to the outside markets.

The geographical extent of the Indus Valley Civilization was three times the size of the other civilizations of that time including Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Indus cities were arranged in a manner, which represented an advanced understanding about urban dwelling. The massive constructions unearthed in various Indus sites like Harappa, Lothal, Mohenjo-Daro reflect this fact [Kenoyer 2008, p.19–20]. Internal trade holds an important place in Indus history as it was presumably the first step in forging the processes and foundation required to become truly cosmopolitan in terms of trade and outside connections. The region of Baluchistan in the west to Kutch, Saurashtra and much of modern Gujarat and other Indus sites have been excavated in areas reaching in the north as far as Afghanistan. There are debates surrounding the original extent of the Civilization itself but there is no doubt that the production processes point otherwise.

The presence of Indus sites manufacturing different products, each aligning with the source of raw materials found nearby points to the fact that such sites did not come up by fluke; it was all carefully planned and executed. The easy access to raw materials [Ibid p. 23] was a precursor to an efficient production unit, which was not possible until all the factors were thought in advance. Such planning is not possible on a land, which is not within the direct influence of the city-state or any other kind of administrative mechanism that must have been in place. The claim that the presence of such sites does not mean the civilization was not extending to these areas or there was a remote connection between the Civilization and such sites is too vague.

This trade model within the various settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization shows that an elaborate network of well-defined movement of goods was in place. The local producers and raw

material processing units were interconnected to the source. At the same time, the local producers were connected to the bigger merchants in the urban centers of the bigger settlements like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Dholavira and Lothal among others. Such an arrangement made sure that the linkage between the source, the processing unit, local artisans and big merchants was maintained thus ensuring smooth flow from the bottom to the top. This robust mechanism of intra settlement trade made sure that the export market was always having a steady supply of goods that helped in forging deeper bonds with the external settlements like Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Iran among others.

Another major feature of trade was the prevalence of standardized system of quantification of goods, which displays a developed market exchange system. Such development in goods trade can only be attained under a set of rules laid down by an overarching authority, which has a say in day-to-day affairs of traders operating in a marketplace. The Indus system of trade relied heavily on controlled measurements and movement, which was systematic in nature. The authority in question was directly responsible for setting rules of engagement among traders within the settlements and outside of it. The excavations at Harappa showed that majority of the standardized weights and other measures to ensure smooth flow of goods were located near entrance to the walled mounds, which proves that trade was regulated by some form of authority [Kenoyer, 2008, p. 18].

It is also speculated that trade in Indus Valley employed not only direct payments for the goods but indirect methods of barter. It is a hugely possible scenario where people often went for such exchanges given the intricate network of trading established within the settlements. The web of connectivity would have made it possible for the people to engage in such trade, as there is an evidence of some form of authority, which regulated trade. Another important system of payment, which is much more developed for its time, is the exchange of goods for services. The presence of services in the trade coincides with the modern day economic system which differentiates between the primary, secondary and tertiary modes of production, the last one representing the service sector in the modern sense [Kenoyer, 2008, p. 20]

The most important aspect of Indus Valley trade system was the appropriation of symbols, seals and standardized measures, which was backed by a form of legal structure and authority. The controlled nature of the process of trade was an indicator of a developed connection within the ancient world. There was model of 'free market economy'² which was regulated indirectly without any interference in everyday activities of businesses. According to Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, 'The role of elites and state officials in the establishment, maintenance and control of internal trade is still not well defined. Clearly the rulers of the Indus cities would have been the ones to establish and maintain the walls and gateways of each city. The main mechanism of indirect control of economy would therefore have been through taxation of goods entering or leaving the city. In addition, there were additional social, economic and political links to the surrounding hinterland or other cities that would help in reinforcing or maintaining control' [Kenoyer, 2008, p. 23].

The external trade aspect of Indus Valley has been given limited attention owing to a lack of archeological evidence but logical analysis of the excavated sites and the physical proofs of various Mesopotamian artefacts found in Indus Valley Civilization sites and vice versa points in this direction. There is perhaps a chance that historians looking for concrete evidence and having positivist³ (here

² In economics, a free market is an economic system in which the prices of goods and services are determined by supply and demand expressed by sellers and buyers. Such markets, as modelled, operate without the intervention of government or any other external authority.

³ Positivism is the name for the scientific study of the social world. Its goal is to formulate abstract and universal laws on the operative dynamics of the social universe. A law is a statement about relationships among forces in the universe. In positivism, laws are to be tested against collected data systematically.

positivism connotes empirical evidences, which can be verified by sight or through scientific experiments like Carbon Dating Analysis) tendencies will refute any claim of a world system which supports the existence of any kind of globalization in the early history but logical analysis proves otherwise. There are proofs, which shows that Indus Valley was not a military power, or a system based on conquest, the historical evidence and the excavated sites all point to the trade that took place in the Indus Valley and outside of it. Indus Valley civilization flourished for a long time and has seen mature phases where it developed contacts with the then known world and even if there is no archeological evidence to suggest certain theories but enough evidence is there to hypothesize about the true extent of connections and verifying them with the available proofs.

There is plethora of evidence, which suggests that trade links of the Indus people extended to Mesopotamia, Central Asia, and Oman Peninsula. The contact between Mesopotamians and Indus people has largely been ascribed to the contact made by the middlemen who were trading from the Gulf region with both Indus Valley cities and Mesopotamia. The supposition that there was only indirect trade does not corroborate with the available proofs, as there are evidences where Mesopotamian goods are found in the Indus sites and vice versa and it is not possible for the sea faring Indus people to trade indirectly for a long time with the Mesopotamians without actually discovering the land. The presence of the 'Meluhha' in the Mesopotamian texts proves that trade was more than indirect.

It is speculated that the indirectly the two Civilizations were aware of each other's presence but the absence of the Mesopotamian artefacts in any of the excavated Indus sites gives credibility to the indirect trade theory. On the other hand, there are proofs, which show that in Mesopotamia there were settlements of the 'Meluhha' [Vidale, 2004, p. 261–80] people and various artefacts and Indus seals were found at Mesopotamian sites. It is quite possible that traders from the gulf region were trading with both the Mesopotamians and Indus people but the proof of Indus Valley settlements in Mesopotamia is perplexing. The presence of Indus people settlements on such a distant land (by the standards of those times owing to difficult navigation and wooden ships) shows that a group of artisans or specialists in their craft went there to trade or impart some specific technical knowhow to the local people.

It is highly possible that the settlements in Mesopotamia were a result of direct contact between the authorities of the two civilizations, as it is not possible to build a settlement of a community in a distant land without the approval of a concerned authority provided by both the civilizations at the given time had advanced settlements based on urban planning and engaging in long distance trade. It is also possible that the authorities were not aware and people-to-people contact was responsible for creation of such settlements. The presence of settlements surely indicates an understanding between the people — an understanding of the competitive trade advantage or an urge to learn techniques from the settlers. It is not possible in ancient times to convert currency to another form or to sustain life for long without a source of income; the only major explanation for the existence of such settlements is some kind of exchange. According to Massimo Vidale, "The maximum archaeological evidence of Indian imports and Indus-related artefacts in Mesopotamia may be dated to latest phases of ED III (at the Royal Cemetery of Ur) and immediately later to the Akkadian period, when, as widely reported, Sargon claimed with pride that under his power Meluhhan ships docked at his capital, and at least one tablet mentions a person with an Akkadian name qualified as a the holder of a Meluhha ship. In his famous inscriptions, Gudea, in the second half of the 22nd century BC, states that Meluhhans came with wood and other raw materials for the construction of the main temple in Lagash. Archaeologically, the most evident raw materials imported from India are marine shell, used for costly containers and lamps, inlay works and cylinder seals; agate, carnelian and quite possibly ivory. Hard green stones, including garnets and abrasives might also have been imported from the Subcontinent. Recent studies

would better suggest that the Indus families in Mesopotamia imported raw materials rather than finished beads and expediently adapted their production to the changing needs of the Mesopotamian demand and markets'. [Vidale, 2004, p. 272.]

Table 1. Correlation between the number of seals with Indus Icons and Indus signs in Mesopotamia and reported finds of etched carnelian beads

City	Seals with Indus inscriptions or Indus iconographies	Etched Carnelian beads ⁴
Ur	11	55
Kish	3	13
Lagash	2	-
Eshnunna	2	7
Nipur	1	2

Source: [Ibid, p. 261–280].

II

Trade between Indus Valley Civilization and other Civilization was crucial for the development of Indus Valley as a distinct world system, which included Egypt, Central Asia and Mesopotamia among other partners. In order to better understand the nuances of trade in antiquity it is of vital importance to understand how trade among different Civilizations took place in an era when geographical understanding was not yet developed in the modern sense and seafaring was limited due to non-availability of metals and alloys which could provide robust mode of transportation. In the absence of all the amenities which makes present day globalization a cakewalk, How did the Civilization of the past managed to create their own world systems and assimilate the essence of globalization even four- five millennia earlier?

According to C. C. Lamberg- Karlovsky, the different ways in which trade can take place over long distances can be divide into three subtypes namely, Direct contact trade, Exchange, Central place trade [Lamberg- Karlovsky 1972, p. 222–229]. Trade between ancient Egypt and Indus Valley could be understood according to the three models of long distance trade. The direct link between Egypt and Indus Valley have not yet been ascertained owing to lack of excavated material either in Egypt or in Indus Valley sites in India and Pakistan. This leaves us with no other option but to look for possible logical explanations with limited amount of empirical proof. In the ancient times, the only known source of Lapis Lazuli was Badakhshan, now in modern day Afghanistan.

There is a possibility that there existed a direct contact between the Egyptians and Indus people but due to the undeciphered script of the latter, some facts must be in the dark. It is also possible that the present Indus sites excavated represent only a small percentage of the original sites of the Indus Valley and perhaps some site yet to be discovered and excavated might provide the much required proof to establish the true nature of trade between Egypt and Indus Valley civilization. Since the precious gemstone was found only in the Indus Valley site in Afghanistan and its neighbouring areas it is impossible to assume that Egyptians were not aware of their contemporaries.

This leaves us with another possible explanation that perhaps trading took place between the two Civilizations without them actually knowing that they are trading. The ancient world was not well connected in terms of geography, well defined routes were not usual as the terrain provided enough

⁴ The number refers to both isolated beads and groups. Most of these beads come from graves.

challenge and lack of the knowledge of advanced cartography coupled with natural factors was another hurdle in effective communication between people residing within different geographical boundaries. This leaves them with an option to exchange goods and services like a continuous chain where every time a good passes hands from point A to point B it becomes independent of its predecessor source. The relay like system must have prevented any direct contact between the two civilizations but goods anyhow found their way to the destined markets. Though this explanation leaves a doubt about how can a good lose its trail even when it is independently, being relayed from one point to another. There is no way that at the relaying points there were people who were not keeping an account of the goods transferred or received from different places and if such account keeping can be traced then probably a link can be established between the two trading peoples (civilizations).

There is yet another explanation for the trade between the two civilizations, a common link to both the entities which traded with both Egypt and Indus Valley and acted as a channel of communication and transit hub for goods. The gulf settlements of the ancient period were an excellent source of providing transitory services to the sea faring people of Egypt and Indus Valley merchants. It is largely possible that the merchants from the two lands were trading with the common gulf settlements in the Gulf of Oman and then the goods were finding way to the respective destinations. Such a theory while it seems plausible has some inherent flaws when it comes to explaining Indus -Egyptian trade links.

First the Indus people were known to have made permanent settlements in the Mesopotamian and later Akkadian region and it is known that Egyptians were in direct contact with both the Mesopotamians and later the Akkadians. If Egyptians were dealing directly with the Mesopotamians then what prevented them from dealing with the traders of the Indus Valley who were living in the settlements spread across the coastal towns of Mesopotamia is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed. Secondly the Indus technology in lead and copper processing was far ahead of its times and the specialized settlements were getting the raw materials either imported from Indus sites or procuring them from the local source which means that it was the skill which led the Mesopotamians accept such settlements as a win-win situation for both the settlers and the local population. The high degree of Indus artistic and technological achievement can be seen in the cutting, polishing, etching and drilling of the very long carnelian beads, preparation of metal alloys, use of lost wax casting technique [Possehl, 2002, p. 89]. It is impossible for the Mesopotamians to impose a selective ban on Egyptians to not contact and connect with the Indus people. Until now, there has been no concrete evidence of a direct contact between the two civilizations but no other theory satisfactorily explains the absence of such contact either. The true connection between the Egyptian and Indus people probably lies in the unexplored sites of two Civilizations or the undeciphered language of the latter holds the key to several pertinent questions.

III

The Indus Valley interaction with the settlements in the Oman peninsula was formed in the fourth millennium B.C, the establishment of transit route was not the only function that Oman settlements served. Oman had trade links with Mesopotamia, Iran and to a lesser extent with Egypt. Indus Valley provided a key balance to the imports at a time when the imports from Mesopotamia and Iran decreased to the Oman Peninsula. It was a period when the internal trade began flourishing and output exceeded more than what could be locally consumed within the Indus Valley. One of the striking feature of the trade between the Indus Valley and Oman peninsula is that it was not the geographical proximity or the land route which enabled trade between Oman peninsula settlements and Indus

Valley civilization by default, there are key evidences supporting a sea route to Oman from the Coastal regions of the Indus Valley [Rao, 1965 p. 30].

This trait of the trade shows the sufficient production and specific intent of the Indus people to trade externally, which was extraordinary for the time. Special preparations had to be made to ensure safe passage of the goods and the men transporting them, which required meticulous planning, knowhow of the ship design and a mature ship building industry. The knowledge of winds, direction and basic mathematical calculations were a prerequisite to undertake such a journey. The construction of inland ports and the necessary supporting infrastructure required precise knowledge of the oceanic phenomenon, all of which was quite advanced for a civilization in fourth millennium BC.

The discovery of Indus goods in various settlements of the Oman peninsula especially in all of the Umm an-Nar coastal settlements and inland sites mark a strong presence of inter Civilizational trade. The presence of Indus style seals in Oman settlements and Iran points to the fact that not only goods were exchanged but there was a presence of a trading community which was permanently residing in these places. The presence of such stamping material casts light on the practices of marking the products or marking and entire consignment of goods using some documents specific to the particular consignment. There are so many objects found in various settlements of the Oman peninsula that it leaves not an iota of doubt regarding the trade linkages between Indus Valley and Oman peninsula settlements.

In the words of Dennys Frenez, 'Large containers with a distinctive curvilinear profile and thick layers of black or dark purplish to brown slip coating their internal and external surfaces, suggesting that they were probably used to ship foodstuffs or liquids. In addition to the large storage jars, different types of Indus jars with black-on-red painted decorations have been found in both domestic and funerary contexts. Small unclipped carinated jars, often described as 'bottles', with Indus-style decorations painted in black on the shoulder have been found inside Umm an-Nar collective graves. Pedestalled dishes, also called dish-on-stands, are one of the finest and most distinctive Indus pottery production found in Oman peninsula sites. Another unique Indus pottery type that was likely used for food processing are the perforated jars, tall straight-sided vessels with the base perforated with a large hole and the entire body pierced with tiny holes. In the Oman Peninsula, fragments of Indus-type cooking pots have been found at Ras Al-Hadd, along the coast, and at Salut and Bat in the interior sites' [Frenez 2021: 386]. According to Vidale [Vidale, 2000, p. 40], 'carnelian bead making was the first craft to reveal to the archaeological world the impressive standards of Indus technology. Another distinctive technology developed by the Indus bead makers was the artificial colouring of carnelian using chemicals and pyrotechnology to decorate beads by bleaching their surface'. All these finds and discovery of artefacts and ornaments during excavation in the ancient Civilizations spaces point to a single trend in the Indus Valley trade behaviour. The trade was not a random decision to set sail and explore new lands rather it was a calculated and well thought move with a prudent approach to set foot in a new place to maximise profit and establish new markets for the finished product and procure the sources of raw materials wherever necessary.

CONCLUSION

The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the first civilization to establish contact with the outside world in a manner, which was unprecedented. Before the advent of the international trade in the modern sense, the Indus people had a well-developed understanding of how the international trade takes place. The unique identification system and the issuance of the seals to the outsiders coming to

the borders of the Indus Valley cities is a well-recognized fact, which points to the Indus understanding of cosmopolitan connect. South Asian civilization is one of the most prominent examples of the process of globalization.

The Indus Valley trade contacts were a result of a long process evolving over period of time and developing to an extent where production surpassed consumption and the technical knowhow was better suited to meet the demands of external market along with the domestic market. The easy availability of the raw materials within the cities and settlement and the contiguous land boundary with others settlements of the time allowed the domestic industry to flourish and trade to boom. The culture also played an important role in the development of the 'international trade' and a world system of exchange. The sea faring capabilities of the Indus, Egyptian and Mesopotamian people added a further advantage to the earliest attempts at globalizing production and consumption.

The relative ease with which the Civilizations developed a niche in their respective fields is worth a thousand words to explain human understanding of economics even in its nascent stage and human ingenuity. The sources of raw materials, the centers of production and the centers of imparting technical knowhow to the people of the distant lands was a new phenomenon and hence no notion of protectionism was seen, on the contrary it was more of a learning experience for both sides, in the early times but these developments paved a way for future economic practices in the later period. The tone of a global order was not set after the industrial revolution but during the advent of first Civilizations. Industrialization upped the globalizing phenomenon but the ancient connections and exchanges were the true flag bearers of modern day globalization and they set the tone for future human endeavors.

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