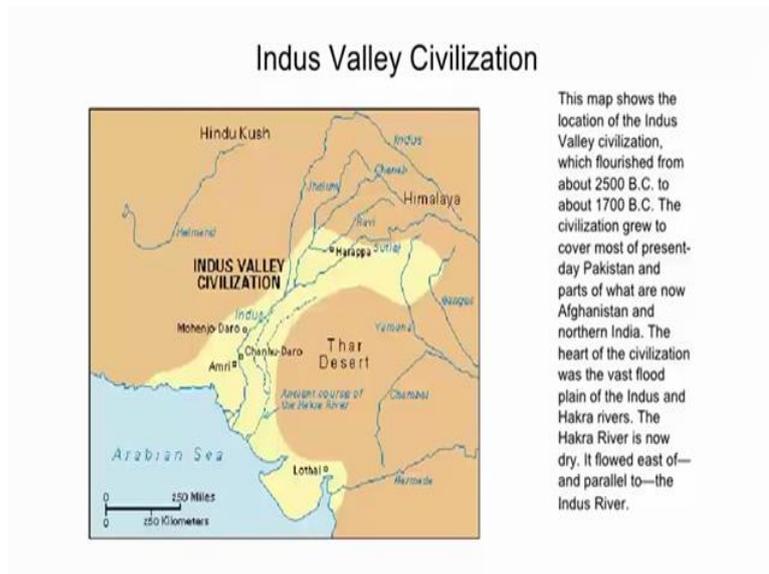


Introduction to Indian Art – An Appreciation
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Module – 02
Ancient Art: Indus Valley Civilization
Lecture: W2 - L2

Welcome viewers to the MOOCs online course on Introduction to Indian Art and Appreciation, this is the second module of the second week devoted to the cultural and religious diversities of the Indian art and in this module we are going to discuss the art of one of the most ancient civilizations of Indian sub continent that is Indus valley civilization.

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Let us begin with the map of Indus valley civilization, this map obviously shows the, location of the Indus valley civilization; which flourished from about 3000 B.C to 1500 B.C and deliberately keeping a few more 100 of years here and there because we cannot really date them so exactly.

So, let us keep it 3000 B.C to 1500 B.C, the civilization grew to cover most of the present day Pakistan and parts of what we known as Afghanistan and northern India. But

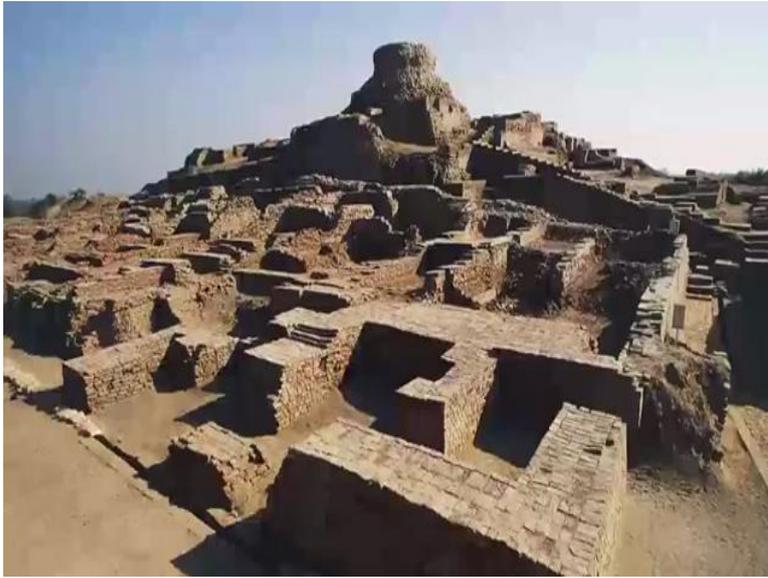
we have also discovered some very important Indus valley civilization sites in Gujarat for example, the one that is become very famous recently is known as Dholavira located in Gujarat, then we have another very well known Indus valley civilization site in Rajasthan that is called “Kalibangan” we have one more called Lothal again in Gujarat.

So, if you look at the entire spread of the Indus valley civilization today, a large part of that region is of course, in present Pakistan, but it is also true a large part of Indus valley civilization is also present in India. If you are looking at this sites discovered in Rajasthan and Gujarat and you all know that, it was due to the fertile flood plain continuously nourished by the Indus River that this huge and very rare civilization developed 5000 years back.

Now evidence of religious practices in this area date back approximately to even 5500B.C, apparently the farming settlements began around 4000 B.C and around 3000B.C there appeared the first science of urbanization. This is again and amazing feature of Indus valley civilization that they came up with not just Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa two very well-known cities, but a few more cities as well, may not be as big as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, but pretty big cities.

So, it is. In fact, urban civilization, cities with all the facilities with all the urban and civic facilities were built up during that point of time. So, architecturally, again Indus valley civilization is very important for us there is a lot to learn from even today; then they have produced an immense verity of sculptures, which we have already mentioned in one of our earlier modules and of course, you look at their artistic merits whatever they were producing, it is again true that this civilization got some of their best talented artists during that time.

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So, looking at the ruins today, it is it may not be so easy for a no ways, for a non initiated to even imagine that, these areas 5000 years back, where the most thriving and flourishing areas very well known civilization well known even at that point of time because there a very strong and regular trade relationship with places like Mesopotamia, Persia.

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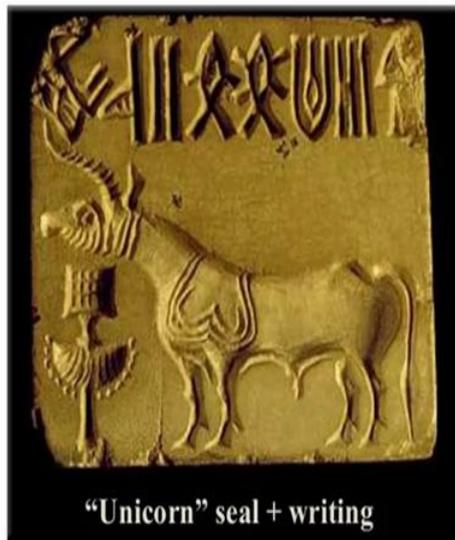
So, from these ruins, where the archaeologists started studying collecting evidences, they came up with very interesting findings and they were able to build up a very interesting history of Indus valley civilization.

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Now, when this civilization was at its peak, At that point of time it is assumed that this civilization may have had a population of over 5 million yes, over 5 million. Inhabitants of the ancient Indus river valley developed new techniques in handicraft for example, seal carving we shall see a few scenes right now, then metallurgy they were quite good at metal casting, they were also able to produce copper product, bronze, lead and tin products. The Indus valley cities are notable. For their urban planning, baked brick houses, elaborate drainage system, water supply systems and clusters of large nonresidential buildings.

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One of the most intriguing findings from Indus valley civilization is of course the seals, not 1 or 2 we have found many plenty of this seals these seals are very small little tablets with a beautiful carving on them. Usually carvings of some human being animals mostly here is one carving where you can see one human being who looks like a goat, but what is even more interesting besides the visual images s also the presence of writing.

So, these seals have the image of an animal, in this particular image that we are looking at right now; is the image of a unicorn and it also has writing on top. Since these seals have scripts. So, immediately these seals indicate that, this particular civilization Indus valley civilization, people in this civilization they knew, how to write. They had a very well deft of language perhaps it was so developed and at the same time it has become so obsolete that today, till today nobody has been able to decipher these scripts, we have not been able to really read, but we are hoping we desperately looking for a day that somebody will be able to decipher this scripts and then the entire history of Indus valley civilization, will revile itself.

Otherwise we have been able to find 1000 of potteries, 100 of seals, 100 of sculptures, huge areas of ruins like what we saw just now, this great bath or this ruins were houses were there, brick houses were there at one point of time, they also had beautiful

underground drainage system; see it was a very well developed urban system that they developed at that point and they (Refer Slide Time: 08:20).

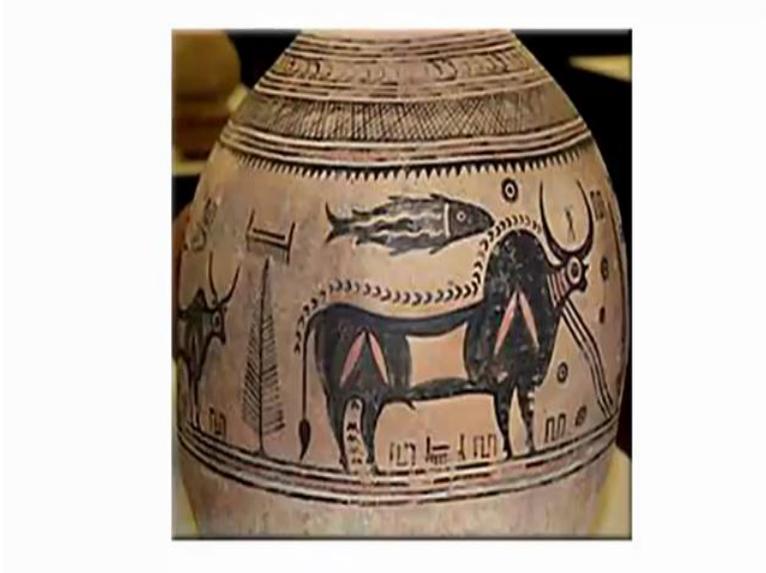
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Now, as art historians and as students of visual studies, we are looking at the seals not only as archaeological evidences, but also as artifices; as art works because all these seals have beautiful images of animals or some creatures carved on it; which means that they required skilled craftsmen and artists to do this carvings on the seals.

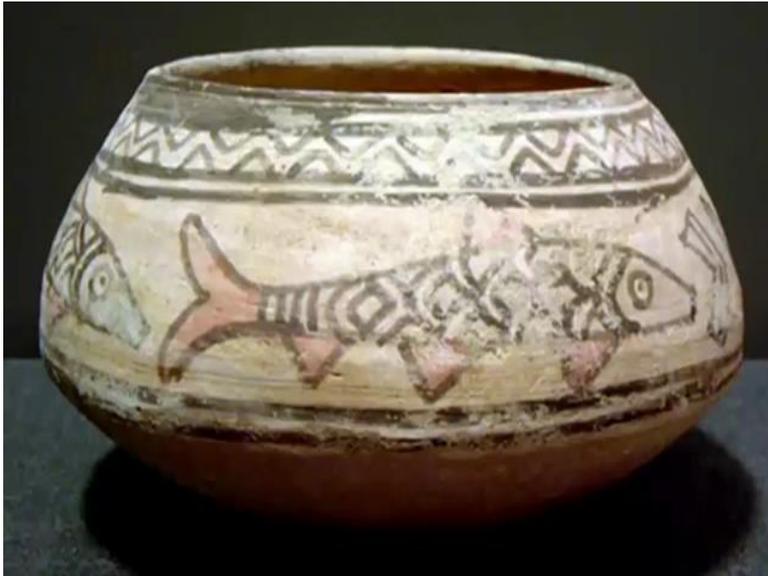
Though we may not be able to read what is written on the seals because we had not been able to decipher the scripts, but we can definitely read the visual image. At least we can say this is unicorn, this is a bison, and this is an elephant. So, on and. So, for then with regard to the purpose of making the seals where they used as coins or some kind of emblem, what to put a samples or something, archaeologists are still debating on this issue; you can also add your argument and enrich the debate.

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Apart from seals, we also get in terms of number not just 100, 1000 of potteries from Indus valley civilization made from Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa or in Gujarat dholavira or in kalibangani in Rajasthan or in lothal in Gujarat, in most of this sites even if we had not been able to find sculptures from all the sites, but at least we have been able to find and earn a 100 and 1000 of potteries of various shapes, potteries of various sizes, potteries with beautiful designs and paintings on them from all the sites just from one site.

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For example dholavira in Gujarat, we found at least 60 to 50 track loads of potteries, which were shift from the site to New Delhi to National museum to archaeological office, just imagine the number of evidences archaeological evidences available as far as the art products are concerned, we are looking at this potteries; not just because of beautiful and very interesting characteristic of the pottery itself, but we are looking at them also because most of this potteries have paintings on them.

So, after Bhimbetka I would like to consider, Indus valley civilization pottery as the next evidence of painting in the history of Indian painting. Since we were talking about history of Indian painting, just 2 modules back and we did not mention at that point of time are at least we did not show any evidence of painting from Indus valley civilization. So, here we are, Here we can see Indus valley civilization potteries with paintings and not repetitive paintings various kinds of paintings of birds, animals, geometric shapes painted on the pottery.

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So, if I am asked do you have any evidence of painting in Indus valley civilization if you are looking at wall painting, if you are expecting some paintings on paper or pamlay for wall we do not we do not have a single evidence, but that does not mean, there is no evidence of painting in Indus valley civilization here is the proof, there are 100 of potteries with paintings on them.

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Look at this one, look at this group of potteries with beautiful paintings of various kinds; it can be geometric, it can have very regular patterns, it can have animal figures on the pottery so on and so forth.

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And we have also found a huge number of regular potteries not very exclusively painted

potteries, potteries without paintings which indicate that these were the pots and vessels used by the common people for regular use. These pots are very important, all these potteries are very important material evidences for art historians and archaeologists because by studying these potteries, one can really have a very realistic view about that civilization about their society about their community.

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Another cluster of potteries of various kinds and the shapes size and the un daunt feature of potteries suggest that, they were used on a daily basis potteries of a daily use.

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THE LIVES OF PEOPLE OF MOHENJO DARO and harappa

- 1) AGRICULTURE was their main economic activity.
- 2) They had irrigation systems.
- 3) They had pottery and jewelry making.
- 4) Houses were made of clay bricks.
- 5) Their leaders were priest-kings.
- 6) Their religion was animism and polytheism.
They worshipped many gods some of which were animals like the very revered BULL.

So, far from whatever we have seen this kind of archaeological and artifacts and art evidences, we can come up with these very basic few fundamental understandings that in Indus valley civilization agriculture was their main economic activity, they had wonderful irrigation systems, they had pottery and jewelry; pottery we have seen, jewelry we shall see after a few slides, we have found a number of houses made of clay bricks, they had leaders who were priest kings.

So, we have some kind of idea about how the society worked, who control the society, what was the kind of administrative system they followed. About the religion, of course we have not found anything that closely resembles, let us say Hindu religion or Buddhist religion it seems that they believed in animistic religion that is they believed in the natural powers and it was a polytheistic society. So, people had different kinds of religious believes, they might have worshiped gods some of which were animals like the very Refer Slide Time: 14:31) bull and that is one of the reason we have plenty of bull images from Indus valley civilization.

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Now, the same material that is clay, with which they have built houses, with which they have made potteries, they have also made beautiful terracotta figurings; again not 1 or 2 we have found a huge number of terracotta figures, from Indus valley civilization.

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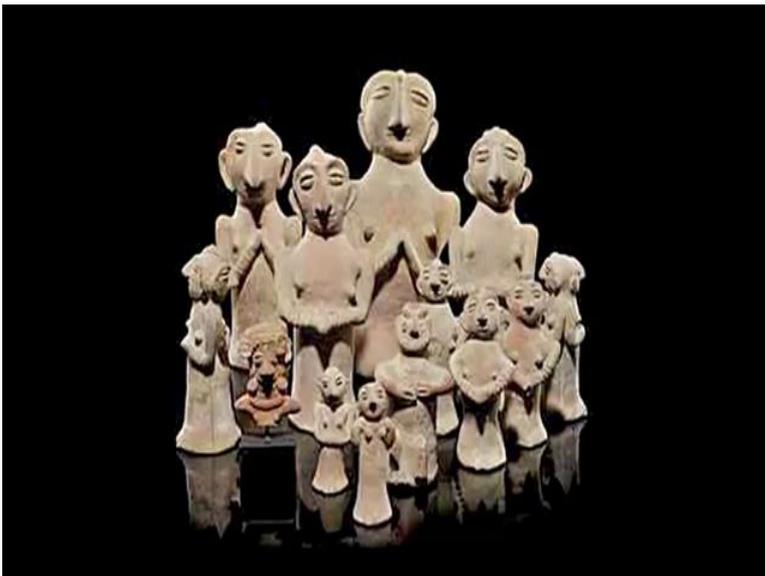
And of different styles if the previous one look like a handy work of more skilled craftsmen, this one looks a little crude yet this figure has all the essential features, and the beauty of its own.

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This is a group of terracotta figures than in a very rudimentary technique, but most of this terracotta figures and that is why they are called “terracotta” they are baked, either baked in sun or they used kiln in order to make this clays permanent.

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Now, this group of terracotta was perhaps found as a group and it looks like everybody is

in a folded hand or in a praying gesture. So, this is interesting that they were making terracotta figure is not only as individual pieces, but also as a group composition, but where did they keep them at the altar inside any temple no we do not have any clue, but they were found like that.

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And with the same clay; same material, they have also made a number of toys. So, Indus valley civilization beside other things is also famous for their clay carts and clay toys and clay dolls and it is a kind of technique or fond of clay doll clay toy which is still being used even today go to any rural fair you go to any rural kind of gathering, you will find if not in clay, but this kind of toy carts are found to be made in wood or other materials, but the basic technology remains the same, look at this.

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So, many such clay animals found from Indus valley civilization, if they not found attached to any cart or with any kind of rod or connecting elements, by looking at the this holes right. Underneath the hump of this bull, you can definitely say that this particular animal was part of a toy cart

Jewelry since we already mentioned jewelry, we must remember that apart from the other artifacts; we have found a variety of jewelries made out of clay, using beads and various kinds of stones and natural elements from Indus valley civilization from Mohenjo-Daro from Harappa and by looking at the different kinds of specimens of jewelry, it seems that that each city developed its own trend or stylistic features of jewelry and experts on Indus valley civilization art, can actually tell you by looking at the jewelry that this is from Harappa and that is from Mohenjo-Daro this is amazing.

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So, there was no standardized style, the jewelry makers and the jewelry artists had the freedom to develop their own individual independent designs. Bangles a very simple kind of jewelry, but they were found in great numbers, which again indicate that people and mostly it would be women or men would be using bangles very frequently and that is one of the reasons why we have found a huge number of bangles from Indus valley civilization.

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And even a minimum number of specimens of jewelry from Indus valley civilization would tell you that, jewelry design was a very well developed craft at that point of time because the design what was not standardized. The design kept on changing itself, from site to site, from one place to another you come across the different set of designs it was possible only because they were innovating new designs in jewelry; the way they were innovating new images in terracotta figurines, the way they were innovating new images in sculpture as well and pottery of course,.

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So, looking at all these artifacts including the one that we are looking at now, which is a very curious example of a bronze sculpture which is popularly known as the dancing girl from Mohenjo-Daro made in bronze, And very well crafted.

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And this particular specimen of bronze sculpture indicates or rather it proves the bronze casting was very well known by them by the Indus valley people. At the same time some of the Indus valley sculptures were also very skilled in creating naturalistic body in stone and this is coming from at least 3000 years back. So, 3000 years back somebody in Indus valley civilization may be from Mohenjo-Daro Harappa it seems this is from Harappa, somebody was very skill full in creating a small image of a male, which carries all the naturalistic physical characteristic feature of a real human being; how is that possible, where did they learn this from.

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And at the same time we also come across this sculpture of a famous priest head; where you see that, it is a slight shift from a naturalistic sculpture. Because the bearded pattern on the face, then the beautiful patterns on the drapery which is running across the shoulder, these elements indicate that this figure which is popularly known as the “Priest head” is either a conceptual image and imagined figure or the representation of a real figure or a real man, but done in a way that he looks more than real. So, that he looks slightly different from a realistic perception. So, that we worship him; he is more powerful than us.

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And at the same time we can see all this bulls, there are beautiful not 1 or 2, but plenty of such bulls in Indus valley civilization. Now again you can see this interlunation on the part of artists to go for a naturalistic rendering of the animal, but at the same time there is a great feeling of empathy and definitely a skill. And definitely a knowhow and knowledge about the material with which they are making this sculptures.

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The Indus Valley civilization raises a great many, largely unresolved, questions.

Why did this civilization, considering its sophistication, not spread beyond the Indus Valley?

In general, the area where the Indus valley cities developed is arid, and one can surmise that urban development took place along a river that flew through a virtual desert. The Indus Valley people did not develop agriculture on any large scale, and consequently did not have to clear away a heavy growth of forest. Nor did they have the technology for that, since they were confined to using bronze or stone implements. They did not practice canal irrigation and did not have the heavy plough.

Most significantly, under what circumstances did the Indus Valley cities undergo a decline?

Now at the end of this module I would like to draw your attention to some of the enigmas; some of the mysteries of Indus valley civilization. first of all the script which we have already discussed we are yet to decipher the scripts available on the seals of Indus valley; that apart there are many they are many such largely unresolved questions raised by Indus valley civilization and one of the most intriguing disturbing question I would say is, that how did Indus valley civilization come to an end? It seems that the whole civilization came to a halt it seems that the whole civilization suddenly disappeared from the earth.

So, far we do not have a definitive clue to prove that for. And so reasons Indus valley civilization came to an end. We are simply throwing up some certain guesses some guess works, we are desperately trying to find a solution an answer to this. That apart it is also true that, why did the civilization considering its sophistication dis not spread beyond the

Indus valley. In general the area where Indus valley cities developed is arid and one surmise that urban development took place along the river, that flew through a virtual desert the Indus valley people did not develop agriculture on that area, but it did develop other areas, yet the urban civilization did not spread the way it could have been covering a large span from that part to this part.

But ultimately it is very significant that, under what circumstances did the Indus valley cities undergo a decline? What made this entire civilization disappear or simply vanish? What happened to the people those millions of people who lived in these cities, lived in the rural beds, who occupied the entire areas of Indus valley civilization, what happened to them? Did they migrate to some other place; did they simply perish there; did they come down to the Indian mainland? We do not have any clue so far. So, Indus valley civilization leaves us with the mystery, with the enigma and with it with the same enigma, with the same mystery; I wind up the module on Indus valley civilization today here.

Thank you.