

**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
**Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology – Kanpur**

**Lecture – 3**

**(Refer Slide Time: 00:37)**



So, we will be continuing on where we left for the last lecture and that is on the seals that we have from the Indus valley sites. So, as I have mentioned earlier that the seals they are made of either terracotta or of soapstone. And there are some of those very interesting seals that we have collected from this Indus valley sites. For example, the one we have on screen here. So, there are two seals we have on screen.

On the left side, we have there is the squarish seal in which there are some of the scripts that had been there in the upper register of this seal. And we can imagine that they are this undeciphered Harappan script that I have already mentioned before. In the central part of the seal, however, there is this very important prominent figure that we see that had been seated in a yogic posture.

And why do I call it a yogic posture, it is because that we see that it had been sitting here cross legged, a very Indian way of sitting that we have been finding it from the time immemorial. And then we also see his arms are widened and they touch the knees in a way

that in some of the yogic postures we have even today, those are part of the meditational practices and so on.

So, that is perhaps the reason why the historians and archaeologists they have identified this particular figure with a yogi. This is what we find in the central part of this image. And then this yogic figure, we do not really know that whether this is a figure which is a deity or a human being or royal or someone who had been an important member of the governing bodies in this Indus sites.

However, what we know is that there are different kinds of interpretations of this image. So, for example what we find in this image is that this particular male figure is because as we have already seen that all those bodily details have been added to the Harappan figures to suggest whether it is a male or a female figure. So, given the details that we have on this body, we can assume that this is a male figure.

And this male figure also wears a horned headdress. If we can compare this figure to some of the other terracotta figurines that we have studied so far, in those ones we have found that in the terracotta figurines of the male members, they are usually unadorned except for like a very few figures where like a necklace or a small piece of ornament had been added, which is not the case in this case.

This here we have like in the male figure that is seated in the centre of this seal, which has this very elaborate horned headdress with these two horns which almost mimic the horns of the zebu bulls that we have seen in the earlier seals and which are also some of the other celebrated images from the Harappan and the Indus valley sites. So, what we also see that it is not just the horn headdress that this person is wearing, but there are also some other suggestions which are running by the side of his faces.

So, the suggestion that there are some kinds of projections on the both sides of his faces, some of the historians and archaeologists have interpreted that it can be suggestions of two faces in the two sides and that is how people have speculated whether it has anything to do with some of the Hindu deities, who also have multiple heads and so on. So, on the other interpretations we have also seen that it can be a mask which has some of the projections.

And use of mask as well as the horned headdress had also been found in other material evidences from the Indus valley sites that is the reason we can also think that if this is the use of masks that had been implemented in this figure as well. So in the figure, in the face we also have suggestion of a broad nose with lips and with closed eyes perhaps which sort of also adds to the individual character of this person.

And then in the body, we find there are series of ornaments which sort of cover his upper part of the body and then there is also a waistband and then very interestingly there are many bangles those are represented in both his arms. So the bangles they actually cover the upper arms as well as the lower arms, which is also not very much of an established practice for depicting the male figures in the Indus valley context.

So, in terms of all the ornamentation that we find in this figure, they seem to be moving away from their regular representation of the male bodies in the Indus valley context which might have different kinds of significances. One of the significances it might suggest that this particular figure is much more prominent or much more important than the other unadorned figures that we found in the terracotta. It can also suggest that the idea of the gender the way we understand it today.

It might have been different in the Indus valley context, but as we have already stated that the script from this region and from this time period are still undeciphered. So, we do not really have any tangible evidence to suggest what kind of idea about gender and ornaments and so on they had. So, we can only assume while we are reading these images, interpreting these images as well as comparing them to the other visual evidences that we have here.

So, a similar seal we also find in that one, the one we have on the right side of the screen, and this one it is not broken. And in this one what we have is that there is also another male body that we have here and here there is a suggestion of the upper male body which is bare and perhaps there is a suggestion of a pot belly. And this figure we also find that is also seated in this cross-legged position.

And the hands are stretched in a position in the gesture of touching the knees, which is very similar to the yogic posture that we have already seen in the image on the left side, right. And then we also have a suggestion of this horned headdress, but from profile. So the image that

we have on the left side it is frontal and the image that we have on the right side of the image that is profiled.

And in the frontal images we usually find in the Indian context that if someone there is a person or a deity of high significance, they are placed in the frontal depiction or else if there is a tendency towards a narrative, where there are multiple figures, multiple events and all other telling of a story those are involved, then there is profile faces or profile figures those are involved. So, these are the kinds of things that we find in these depictions.

And then what happens here that we have this particular figure that we have on the right side of the slide, here we have the image which is clearly in the profile because we see a very strong suggestion of a nose and then one eye and the lips and so on that suggests that the figure is looking in profile. Then there is also something that we find that there is an extension behind its head, his head perhaps, that that goes like it can be a depiction of hair.

It can be depiction of the extension of his horned headdress, but we do not really know what it is. We can only assume that there have been some kinds of adornment or this also part of their clothing culture which are represented in this seal. Now, the other important part here we also see that how these bangles which are also represented here as well. They almost look like there are sharp nails which are poked inside its hands.

However, comparing it to the other figure on the left side we can assume that these are also representation of bangles. And these are two some of those unusual male figures in which we find that the bangles cover their upper arm as well as the lower arm, which is always not the case for the male figures as we have already discussed. Now, going back to some of the other symbols that they are also representing the seals or they populate the entire picture playing in there.

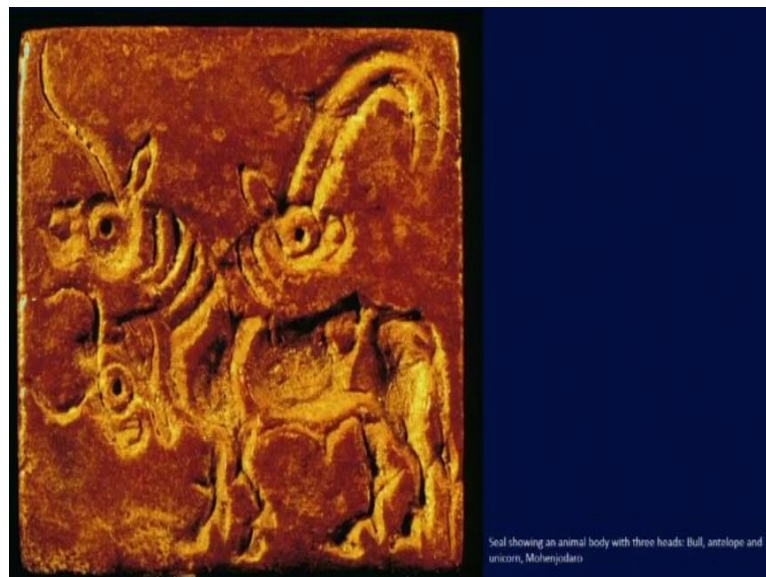
There are some of the other animals which are represented. So, for example in the seal on the left side even though it is partly broken, what we find there is that the central figure that is seated on a high chair or a platform almost like a seat which is reserved for the Royals and then around the platform there are many animals that we find around it. So, for example in the left side of this figure we have a rhinoceros and then of course we also have a bull like figure.

And on the right side of this figure, we have an elephant and perhaps a tiger. So, we can imagine that all these different kinds of animals and how they have also been depicted in this seal with the minimal details as well as keeping the essential characters intact, how they have been represented in this case and which is also reflected on the right side of the slide where we find some depiction of a fish as well as a turtle like form.

So, there can be some of these aquatic animals and the creatures which are represented in the seal on the right side. So, these different kinds of animals which have been represented in the seal on the left that had also encouraged archaeologists, the historians as well as the art historians to name this particular seal as the Pashupati seal. However, as we have already stated that the script is not deciphered.

And there is no direct connection to any of the Hindu gods with this image, so we cannot assume that this is the depiction of the Hindu god Shiva or Pashupati with the seal being identified as the Pashupati seal. So, these areas also need to be clarified.

**(Refer Slide Time: 11:39)**



Some of the other very interesting depiction of the animals that we find in the seals is perhaps here in this one and this is a seal which shows that there are multiple animals which are represented. And multiple animals which are actually represented by their heads, but the body they share is the same. So, there are heads of a bull, there is an antelope as well as there is a unicorn. So unicorn is something that we know that perhaps it is still being discussed in great detail.

For example some of the pioneering archaeologist they have discussed the possibility of the unicorns as well as some of the other animals in the Indus valley belief and whether we can consider them to be real animals or the symbolic representation of their belief. So, this is something we still do not know and only we can have more and more interpretation on these things. So here what we have is that there is this one body of the animal that had been carved from this terracotta, this clay slab.

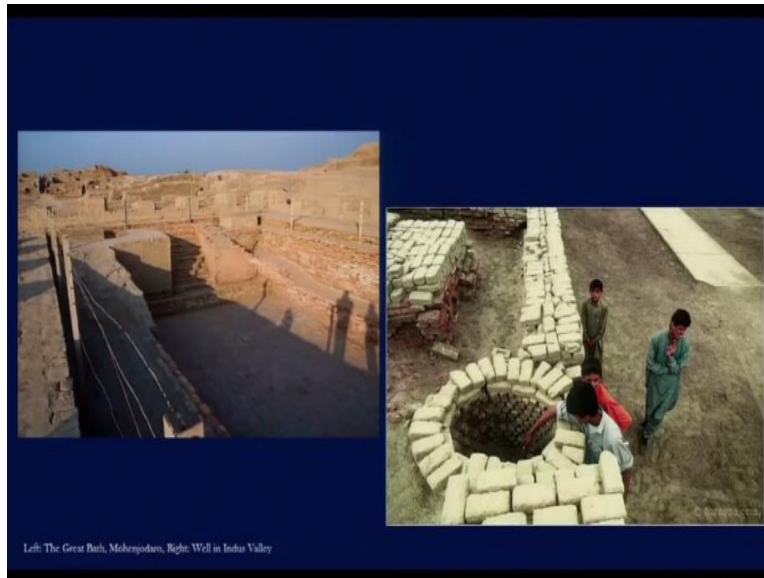
And from there we have all the details of its back, of its legs, and the tail and everything else. And then with all the depiction of their muscles and the ups and downs in the body which are very carefully made on this terracotta seal. And then what we have here is that how the same body can be worked for these three different animals. And if we remove the two heads for each of these animals, we will find that the body is sufficient to have it as a fully formed animal.

So, this is an ingenious idea that we see that had started during this Harappan period to have like this depiction of one body with two or three heads or sometimes we have two bodies with one head and how all these different observations had been merged together to have these creative expressions. This is something that we see that had started during the Harappan period and it was taken further in the later times in Ajanta, in some of the South Indian temples and so on.

We find similar kinds of visual strategy those are also implemented for showing the animals either with one body two heads or two body one head and so on. So, there had been different kinds of experimentation with movement, with gesture, posture, and the similarity between different animals which suggests that they were observant and they had made keen observation about all the animals around them.

Either, they can be real animals, they can also be imagined animals but that is something that they had observed and they had implemented in their visual practice with great detail as well as with much efficiency.

**(Refer Slide Time: 15:04)**



So, with those I also want to come back to one of the issues that we have touched upon in the earlier part of this module and that is to do with the brick structures. So, we know that how clay is used for making these terracotta figurines. At the same time, there is also the large scale practice of making bricks. So, from the river clay, I mean from the mud, which is collected from the riverbank that is also something that is considered to be the ideal for making bricks.

And that is also some of the practices that is perhaps one of the reasons what we find that today the availability of bricks, the soil around the river and all those things are intrinsically connected. So, even today if we see some of the brickmaking industries and some of the workshops, mostly they are situated by some of the rivers. And that also suggests that how some of these practices that had started during the Harappan period.

They have their resonances in the contemporary practices today as well. So, for making brick we see that how the mud is collected and then they are made into these particular shapes and there is the kind of bricks we have found from the Harappan site it seems that there was a standardization in terms of making the bricks. So, they might have used some kind of moulds. They might have used some kind of template for making the bricks.

Now, after the mud bricks are created, they are sun baked and then they are put in the kiln. And if we also see some of the recent practices of making the bricks, so we find that a how in this closed kiln how the bricks are actually baked and the baking of this bricks can go on for two three days and so on. And in this case, what happens is the bricks which are actually very

close to the fire, they are the ones which become more brittle and the ones which are not really close to the fire.

So those are the ones they become slightly unsuitable for making buildings and giving them durability and stability. So, the ones which are in between which are not too close from the fire not too far away from the fire, these are the ones with this earthen red colour, those are the ones which are considered to be perfect for making houses, for making residential places as well as for public structures.

And those bricks are the ones we also see that they have been profusely used for some of the structures and some of the remaining structures that we have in these places. So, for example we have this grid bath in the city of Mohenjo-Daro and in this grid bath what we find that it is a rectangular space and even though this place is very close to the river, but there was also a requirement for making a bath and that is something that the archaeologists and historians they have not predicted.

They have assumed that how this grid bath had also had served as a place for people to gather around, so something like what we think about today as a place for social gatherings. And as we can see the shape of it that it has this rectangular ground plan and then the sunken area that is accessed by the flight of steps and then there are also like raised platforms around this area which also perhaps allow people to sit there and socialize.

So that is the reason this particular bath or this reservoir had been considered to be a public bath and not something that is used for within a royal palace complex or someone's house. So, this is also another reason why it had been a great matter of debate that whether there was any particular ruling family in the Indus valley site or there had been this idea of a governing body in the Indus valley cities.

And they have made these public places and the public places have survived and no other royal palaces or a particular seat of the royal that did not really survive until today, right. So that is what these archaeological sites also suggest about their material culture, their approach to governance, their approach to social life as well as socializing. On the right side, we also have something that is the well.

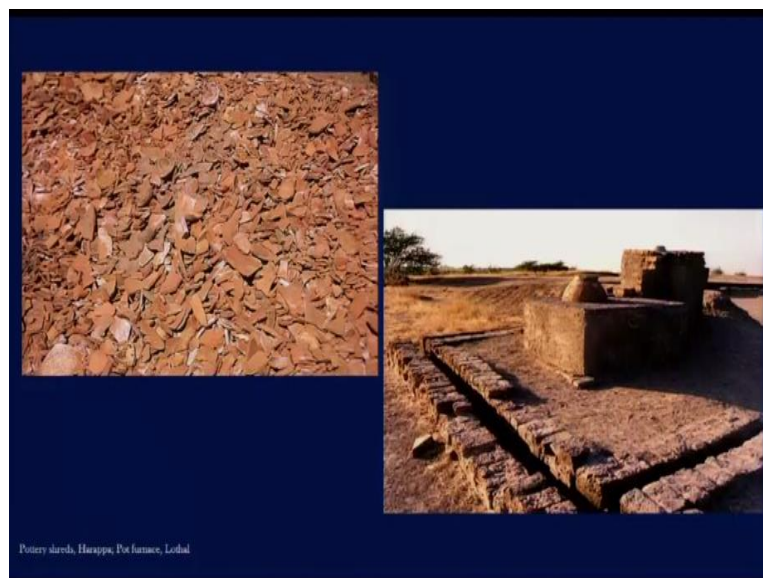


And as we know that the bricks were also something those were used for making the canals as well as the bricks were also used for making the wells for the supply of the groundwater. So, these are some of the technologies that we see they have been evident in very early part of the history that we have in the Indian subcontinent. And here that we have on screen that how those bricks and one can also see that how those bricks have also been standardized in terms of their size and shape and everything else.

And so how those bricks are put in this arrangement for making the wells and perhaps we can also imagine that but there are those fragments of the walls and other remnants made of bricks which might suggest that where these wells were, whether they are situated by places of habitation or whether they are also placed somewhere close to where public socializes. So, these are different kinds of aspects that we find to be more and more evident with the use of these bricks.

And something that I have already been suggesting that how this also relates to their understanding of the local atmosphere as well as how they understand their connection to the nature by utilizing the local clay as well as mud for making them, making all these build structures around them.

**(Refer Slide Time: 21:15)**



So, another thing that we find there is that there are the pottery shreds that we find in this area. And of course it can be the discarded material, But there have been some of the areas where huge amount of pottery shreds are found and that suggests that this is not something

that is just one site is destructed and that is how the shreds have collected in one place. But it seems like there had been those dumping grounds the way we see today.

The things that we abandon and then we throw them away to a particular place it seems like similar kind of things were also happening for the Indus valley people as well that they were using different kinds of pottery items and different kinds of figurines and so on. And those after a point of that use, they were given up and when they are abandoned, they ended up being in this dumping grounds and were like this tremendous amount of the pottery shreds were collected over time.

After excavation of this sites as we know that how these pottery shreds are now found and this suggests that there had been this widescale practice of abandoning the clay made pottery as well as the figurines and that had existed in the second and third millennium BC. And the sights from where this pottery shreds are found from those are mostly the areas we find they are outside of the perimeters of the city or the city walls.

So, that might also suggest that how some of the practices we even have today that there are some of the sites which are important and there are some of the sites which are part of much more formalized practices. So, those sites are not really the sites for this kind of abandonment, but right outside the city walls we usually have the sites where we abandon things and all the residue of the city life, they are discarded.

So, similar kind of practices we can think about in the third and the second millennium BC in the Indus valley sites as well. On the right side, we have a very interesting image and that is actually a pot furnace. So it is a small shaft furnace that we have here, but that gives us a sense of how sophisticated they already had been during the second millennium BC and so on. So, here what we find there is this rectangular shaped furnace.

And at the top of that there is an opening for releasing the air perhaps and also like that area could also have been covered. And this area also relates to these channels, the channels which are made from this terracotta bricks, perhaps for running water, perhaps for something else, but these are some of the sites which give us a sense of their sophisticated technologies, which were implemented for making this different kind of pottery and terracotta figurines.  
Thank you.