

## SCULPTURE OF INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

Dear learner, I think you must have seen various statues of India. Do you know about sculpture? Let us learn about sculpture in India. Sculpture in India has a hoary history. The earliest traces of civilization have been found in the Indus Valley. Surprisingly, they indicate the presence of a very sophisticated urban civilization. General Cunningham and Rakhil Das Bannerjee first conducted excavations in the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, both now in Pakistan. More centres of this civilization came to light in later excavations in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Since the area of the Indus Valley Civilization was so large, excavations have yielded a large number of sculptures.



### OBJECTIVES

After learning the lesson, the learner will be able to:

- learn about the Indus Valley civilization;
- state the name who explored this civilization;
- identify where the traces of this civilization have been found;
- describe the sculptures in different mediums;
- explain about the medium, form and size of the artifacts described in this lesson.

Based on their medium, sculptures could be divided into three categories: 1. metal sculptures, 2. stone sculptures, 3. terracotta sculptures. Indus Valley Civilization stone sculptures are comparatively few in number. Eleven were excavated at Mohenjodaro and two at Harappa. They are made of alabaster, steatite, limestone, sandstone, and greystone. The terracotta sculptures include human and animal

figurines and toys. The metal sculptures of the Indus Valley Civilization are artistic and have been made using sophisticated techniques. Apart from the figurines, the excavations also yielded seals, coins, jewellery and toys which opened a window into the environs and everyday life of the inhabitants.

#### 4.1 PRIEST BUST

Dear learner, first you will understand a well known artifact, Priest Bust.

##### Basic Information

This steatite bust of the priest king is the most well-known artifact from the Indus Valley Civilization. It presents several clues about contemporary culture and life



Fig. 4.1: Priest Bust



## MODULE - 1

Historical Appreciation of  
Indian Painting and  
Sculpture



Notes

### Sculpture of Indus Valley Civilization

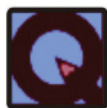
style. The jewels on his forehead arm and the cloak draped over the left shoulder hint at the wearer's high socio-economic status. His trimmed beard and neatly combed hair indicate a certain sense of fashion. The trefoil motifs on the shawl - it is not clear whether they are printed, embroidered or woven - show that people had begun to adorn textiles.

The detail and neatness of the sculpture bear testimony to the high level of technical and craft skills in the Indus Valley Civilization.

Title	:	<b>Priest Bust</b>
Medium	:	Steatite
Size	:	14.25 × 11 C.M.
Find location	:	Mohenjodaro
Collection	:	Karachi National Museum, Pakistan

#### General Description

Sculptures found at Mohenjodaro have mostly been excavated at the upper layers at the *garhi-wala-tila* site and so, are from the later phase of the civilization. This particular sculpture, found at the last layer, is a superb example of the Indus Valley sculptor's mastery of his craft. The hair of the subject is parted in the center exposing the ears, and reaches the nape, where it is caught by a ribbon. His neat hair, trimmed beard, half-closed eyes and the trefoil-adorned shawl set it apart from the rest of Indus Valley Sculptures. Because of its religious significance, the artist possibly executed this in the traditional style. The sculpture perhaps had some sort of coating which got cleaned away during the excavation and sorting. The shaven upper lip, the straight eyebrows and narrowed eyes give his demeanour a remote look. The thick neck, the squared shoulder and the slanting skull hint at restrained physical strength. The jewelled band at his forehead and a similar armband indicate that the subject must have belonged to the noble class. The adorned shawl draped across the left shoulder has a trefoil motif similar to the one seen on draperies on icons in Egypt, Crete and Mesopotamia. Babylonian priests wore clothes adorned with the same motif. Since steatite is very soft and the sculptor possibly carved the bust with a sharp stone or bone, or a tool may be made of bronze or copper.



#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

1. What is the Priest Bust made of?
2. Where was the Priest Bust found?
3. What is the Priest wearing on his arm?

## 4.2 DANCING GIRL

The Dancing Girl is one of the famous statue of the Harappan age. Let us know about the artwork.

### Basic Information

Metal craft was highly developed in the Indus Valley Civilization, borne by the astonishing figurines excavated from Mohanjodaro. The figurine of the so-called 'Dancing Girl' is perhaps the crowning glory of the metalwork of the Harappan age. The artist was perhaps trying to render a realistic figure of the subject. The svelte torso, the plump lips, the flat nose, well-fed cheeks, and bunched curly hair all indicate a woman of distinctly tribal origin. The artist captured feminine grace and beauty in her uncovered breasts, waist and thighs. Two heavy bangles on her right arm seem dramatically limited compared to the left, which has bangles almost up to the shoulder. Around the neck of the dancing girl is a necklace with four elongated pendants. Her dynamic posture suggests she has taken a short break



Notes



Fig. 4.2: Dancing Girl

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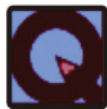
Notes

during a dancing session and is perhaps thinking about her next performance. Though small in size, its plasticity and sensuousness is impressive. The sculpture has been made using the lost wax process.

Title	:	<b>Dancing Girl</b>
Medium	:	Bronze
Period	:	2500 B.C.
Place of origin	:	Mohenjodaro
Size	:	10.2 × 5 × 2.5 cm
Collection	:	National Museum, New Delhi

### General Description

This tiny bronze figurine is now universally known as the 'Indus Dancing Girl'. A masterpiece in its own right, this dynamic figurine exudes feminine poise and grace. The right hand is on her hip and the left knee is thrust forward, the head is slightly tilted backwards. Her curly hair is arranged in a bun at the nape and is adorned with jewellery. The eyes are large and lost in thought. The figurine was cast using the lost wax process. A wax figurine was made and covered with several coatings of clay mixed with cowdung. Once the coatings dried, the block would be heated so it turned hollow. Melted metal was then poured into the block and allowed to cool. The cooled metal took the shape of the figurine. The figurine was received by breaking the clay block.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

1. Where is the figurine exhibited?
2. What is the medium of the Dancing Girl?
3. Name the technique used for casting the dancing girl.



### ACTIVITY

Visit your nearer Museum or Gallery to collect some photographs of stone sculptures and terracotta sculptures. Now make a collage to maintain the colour balance, rhythm and harmony.

### 4.3 MOTHER GODDESS

Do you know that Mother Goddess, a beautiful feminine figure found in Indus art? Let us appreciate the statue.

#### Basic Information

The fact that mother goddess figures have been excavated from several sites and feminine figures are also depicted on many of the Indus seals suggests that Mother Goddess worship was a widespread practice among the people of the Indus Valley Civilization. The similarity of adornment style indicates the figures were made for use in religious rituals. Certainly, the people of the Indus Valley Civilization



**Notes**



**Fig. 4.3: Mother Goddess**

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### Notes

## Sculpture of Indus Valley Civilization

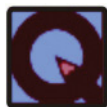
popularized a cult of Goddess worship which has continued to this day with the worship of *Gramdevis*, *Shakti Devi*, *Bhudevi*. Mother Goddess worship was also prevalent in other ancient civilizations, including the Mesopotamian civilization. The cult possibly had its origins in the cultivators' veneration of the bountiful Earth Goddess for providing succour. Archaeologists believe these Indus Valley terracottas to be votive idols of the Mother Goddess. This particular sculpture is one of the figurines excavated at Harappa.

Title	:	<b>Mother Goddess</b>
Medium	:	Terracotta
Period	:	2500 B. C.
Place of origin	:	Mohenjodaro Size - 8.5 × 3.4 cm
Collection	:	National Museum, New Delhi

### General Description

This figurine showcases the high level of maturity of the Indus Valley Civilization artisan. The eyes of the almost nude figure have been formed with two pellets of clay. The nose is pinched. A waistband holds a skirt which covers the lower part of the body. The figure is ornamented with heavy necklaces, pendants and armbands. The lower part of this standing figure is broken. The left arm is broken as well. Her fan-shaped turban is flanked by two bowls. Soot marks on the bowls suggest that they were used as lamps or incense burners and the figurine was votive in nature. This is a fine example of the Indus Valley Civilization sculptor.

The figurine has been made by hand. The eyes and breasts have been formed using pellets of clay. The nose has been shaped by pinching a tiny roll of clay with fingers. The jewellery was stuck on the figure. The legs have no detailing. Once the clay figure was finished and dried, it was baked in the kiln. The baking gave it a red colouring. This method of making figurines is known as terracotta. Terracotta products were sometimes given a polish too.



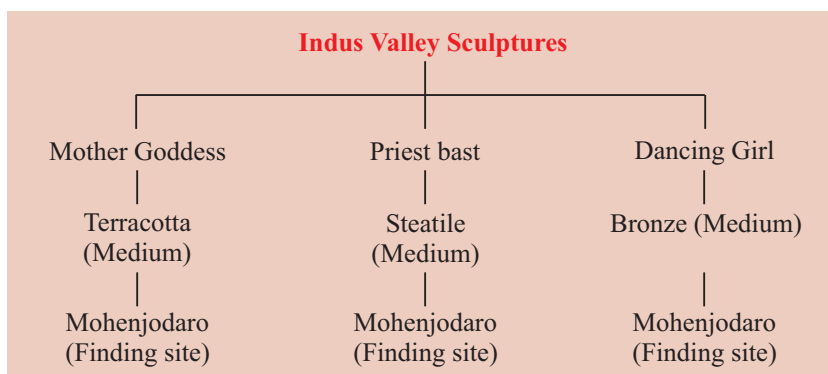
### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.3

Fill in the blanks:

1. The medium used for making the Mother Goddess figurine is .....
2. The place of origin of the Mother Goddess figurine is .....



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**



**Notes**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The learner

- can make whatever drawing on the clay pattern on their own.
- paint the model with locally available colours.



**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Describe the technique and method used for Indus Valley Civilization sculptures.
2. Explain the theme of Indus Valley Civilization sculptures.
3. Describe the Priest Bust.
4. Describe the Dancing Girl bronze.
5. What was the significance of the Mother Goddess figurines?
6. What were the Mother Goddess figurines used for?
7. Which other civilizations had similar Mother Goddess figurines?
8. How is the jewellery on the dancing girl’s left arm different from that on her right arm?
9. Write in your own words about the statue of the Dancing Girl.



**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

**4.1**

1. The priest-king bust is made of steatite.



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### Notes

2. It was found at Mohenjodaro at the *Garhi-wala-tila* site.
3. The priest is wearing an armband on his arm.

### 4.2

1. It is collected at the National Museum, New Delhi.
2. It is made of bronze.
3. It was cast using the lost wax process of metal casting.

### 4.3

1. terracotta.
2. Mohenjodaro site

### GLOSSARY

Terracotta	Baked clay for making pottery and toys
Bust	The part of the human body above the waist
Votive	holy
Lost wax	a technique of metal casting