

**1. What status was the environment accorded during the Vedic period? How do Vedic symbols encapsulate the spirit of environment? Discuss.**

**Approach**

First in Introduction give a brief introduction of Vedic period and then contextualise the environment part to it as its demand of question. In body part address both the demands of status of environment and symbols representing the role of environment. In conclusion with the summary try to contextualise to the current times for better impact.

**Introduction**

The Vedic Age was between 1500 BC and 600 BC. This is the next major civilization that occurred in ancient India after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization by 1400 BC. The Vedas were composed in this period and this gives this age the name. Further the Vedas have several references in them on environmental protection, ecological balance, weather cycles, rainfall phenomena, hydrologic cycle, and related subjects that directly indicate the high level of awareness of the seers and people of that time.

**Body**

**Status of Environment**

- Ancient treasures of vast knowledge reveal a full cognizance of the undesirable effects of environmental degradation, whether caused by natural factors or human activities.
- The protection of the environment was understood to be closely related to the protection of the dyaus or heavens and prithvi or earth. Between these two lies the atmosphere and the environment that we refer to as the paryavaran.
- Many of the Rig Vedic hymns therefore vividly describe the Dyava Prithvi that is, they describe Heaven and Earth together.
- The Rig Veda venerates deities like Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Maruts and Aditya, that are responsible for maintaining the requisite balance in the functioning of all entities of Nature whether the mountains, lakes, heaven and earth, the forests or the waters.
- Seers recognised that changes caused due to indiscreet human activities could result in imbalances in seasons, rainfall patterns, crops and atmosphere and degrade the quality of water, air, and earth resources.
- There are many hymns seeking the blessings of the five basic gross elements or the pancha mahabhoota of Nature: akashor firmament, vayu or air, agni, tejas or fire, apah or water, and prithvi or earth.
- People were careful to refrain from activities that could cause harm to Nature's bounties. It was understood that the well-being of Mother Earth depended on the preservation and sustenance of the environment.
- The Rig Veda makes a clear reference to the presence of a protective layer which we know now to be the ozone layer that filters the harmful rays of the

sun and protects the earth and praises the radiation that enters the atmosphere that is responsible for the health of the environment.

Therefore the Vedic society which was nature worshipping society as they were in awe of day to day phenomena of seasonal changes , the moon and the sun.This led them to name various forces of nature as gods and goddesses.This system of worship is still followed in many parts of India.

Following symbols summarize the importance of spirit of Environment:

- Concept of Panch mahabhootas: The universe consists of five basic elements viz. earth or land, water, light or lustre, air and ether. The nature has maintained a status of balance between and among these constituents or elements and living creatures.
- Divinity to Nature: Vedic Gods and Goddesses conceptualized from the natural elements of Environment. E.g. Vayudev (Air), Varundev (Rain).
- They used to perform various yadnyas (religious activities) and sacrifices to please natural forces.
- Concept of Water as Apah and Air as Vayu: According to Rig-Veda the water and air is essential to all forms of life.
- Their curious nature towards Environment helped them to identify certain plants as Osdhadhi i.e. medicinal plants. Their belief in ‘Sacred groves’ indicate protective attitude towards forest ecosystem.
- The protection of the environment was understood to be closely related to the protection of the dyaus or heavens and prithvi or earth. Between these two lies the atmosphere and the environment that we refer to as the paryavaran. Many of the Rig Vedic hymns therefore vividly describe the Dyava Prithvi i.e. Heaven and Earth together.

### **Conclusion**

People of Vedic times considered every stakeholder in the environment as sacred. Their belief of God as creator of everything added dimension of purity to their approach towards environment. Way of life in those times itself was in harmony with environment which automatically helped in preservation and conservation. Therefore the present society in India and world can emulate the sustainable practices of Vedic period which can help them to live with harmony with nature.

**2. Examine the advancements made in the fields of urban planning and architecture during the Indus Valley Civilisation. Where do we find the marvellous examples of Indus Valley cities and architecture?****Approach**

It's a question based on basic topic of Indus valley civilisation. In this the candidate can start with brief introduction of Indus valley civilisation and urban nature of its planning. In next part write in detail major features of the urban planning and architecture. In next part write some examples of these to substantiate. In conclusion write a summary based and contextual conclusion.

**Introduction**

The Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC), also known as the Indus Civilisation, was a Bronze Age civilisation in the northwestern regions of South Asia, lasting from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE, and in its mature form from 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE. It is the oldest urban culture excavated in Indian subcontinent as of now. Archeological excavations at various places such as Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Rakhigarhi indicate planned city settlements with several elements of uniformity in all Indus valley civilisation sites.

**Body**

Advances made in the fields of urban planning and architecture:

1. Streets and Roads
  - The streets were straight and cut each other at right angles. They were 13 to 34 feet wide and were well lined. The streets and roads divided the city into rectangular blocks.
  - Archaeologists have discovered the lamp posts at intervals. This suggests the existence of street lights. Dustbins were also provided on the streets. These prove the presence of good municipal administration.
2. Drainage System
  - One of the most remarkable features of the Indus valley civilization is that the city was provided with an excellent closed drainage system.
  - Each house had its own drainage and soak pit which was connected to the public drainage. Brick laid channels flowed through every street. They were covered and had manholes at intervals for cleaning and clearing purposes. Large brick culverts with corbelled roofs were constructed on the outskirts of the city to carry excess water.
  - Thus Indus people had a perfect underground drainage system. No other contemporary civilization gave so much attention to cleanliness.
3. The Great Bath
  - The most striking feature in Mohenjodaro is the Great Bath. It consists of a large quadrangle. In the centre, there is a huge swimming pool (approximately

39 ft long, 23 ft wide and 8ft deep) with the remains of galleries and rooms on all four sides.

- It has a flight of steps at either end and is fed by a well, situated in one of the adjoining rooms. The water was discharged by a huge drain with corbelled roof more than 6 ft in depth. The Great bath had 8 ft thick outer walls. This solid construction has successfully withstood the natural ravages for 5000 years. There were arrangements for hot water bath in some rooms.

#### 4. Granaries

- The largest building in Mohenjodaro is granary which is 45.71 mtrs long and 15.23 mtrs wide. In Harappa there are a series of brick platforms which formed the base for two rows of 6 granaries each.
- In the Southern part of Kalibangan brick platforms have also been found. These granaries safely stored the grains, which were probably collected as revenue or store houses to be used in emergencies.

#### 5. Buildings

- People of Indus valley civilization built houses and other buildings by the side of roads. They built terraced houses of burnt bricks. Every house had two or more rooms. There were also more than one storied houses.
- The houses were designed around an inner courtyard and contained pillared halls, bath rooms, paved floors, kitchen, well etc. Besides residential quarters, elaborate structures have also been found.
- One of these buildings has got the biggest hall measuring 80 ft long and 80 ft wide. It might have been a palace, or temple or hall for holding meetings. The workmen quarters are also found.
- There was an excellent system of water supply. There were public wells by the side of streets. Every big house had its own well. They also built a dockyard at Lothal.

#### 6. Dockyards

- There was a dockyard built in Lothal. It was supposed to be mean as an inland port for the ships which were a feature of urban trade and economy of the period

#### Marvellous examples of Indus Valley cities and Architecture:

- Harappa: It is on the banks of Ravi River. Trade routes towards Afghanistan used to pass located in the Punjab province of Pakistan. There are two rows of six granaries with big platform found in Harappa.
- Mohenjo-Daro: It's on the banks of Indus River. It's one of the largest harappan site. Great bath and great granary found here.
- Rakhigarhi: It's located in Haryana. Recent excavations made it the largest harappan site excavated till today.
- Dholavira: It's located in Kutch region of Gujarat. Giant water reservoir, unique water harnessing system with dams and embankments, stadium located here.
- Lothal: It's located in gulf of khambat. Finding of dockyard and terracotta model of ship indicate Lothal used to be port city for sea trade.

**Conclusion**

This Indus valley civilisation had all the features of near to modern town planning and scientific thrust on architecture. This needs to be again brought in Indian town planning as there is less focus on town planning and ad hoc cities are getting created without efficient drainage system which has led to urban flooding and dumping of garbage on the streets. This will help India achieve the targets of UN habitat program which envisions urban life with ease of living.



**3. Recreation was an integral part of people's lives during ancient times. Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.**

**Approach**

It is a straightforward question. First define what is meant by recreational activity and what purpose does it serve. In next part write various examples of recreation which were present in India with help of examples. In conclusion write what was function of these recreational activities.

**Introduction:**

Recreation was inseparable part of human existence since prehistoric times even before the start of settled life and empire building. It played vital part to present different identity of human traits from other animals. Several games now familiar across the world owe their origins in India, particularly, the games of chess, ludo (including ladders and snake), and playing cards. The famous epic Mahabharata narrates an incidence where a game called Chaturang was played between two groups of warring cousins. This shows the emphasis given by people of ancient period to recreation.

**Body**

There were different ways of entertainment in ancient India such as painting, dancing, playing various games, singing and sculpturing.

- **Painting:** Cave paintings of Bhimbetaka continued since Palaeolithic times till 2nd century BCE. It evolved into complexity, scale and quality. Ajanta cave paintings are examples of mural painting; some of them are religious and some for recreational activities. The other caves paintings which are of importance are of Bagh canes, Sittanavasal caves, Ellora caves, these show how painting was practiced as recreational as well as with artistic fervour.
- **Dance:** Bronze sculpture of dancing girl from Harappan culture indicates dancing may have been prominent aspect of recreational activities during harappan times. Various classical dance forms evolved in temples such as Bharatnatyam, Mohiniattam which are mentioned in classical text of Natyashastra these were mainly for kings and courts. Various folk dances evolved over a period of time for entertainment of ordinary people. E.g. Chhau, Raslila.
- **Music:** India has rich tradition of music. Kings used to have royal musicians and singers in their courts for entertainment purpose. Gupta emperor Samudragupta issued coins with imprint of him playing veena- musical instrument. Indian classical music evolved into two schools such as hindustani and carnatic music. People used to enjoy folk music such as Baul, Powada, Lavani.

- Games: Mahabharata, Ramayana and various puranas mention about hunting expeditions of Kings for recreational activities. Ashokan inscriptions talk about ban on hunting of certain animals on certain occasions for recreation. Mahabharata mentioned chess like game which continued till it evolved into chess. Many historians believe chess is descendant of an Indian game played in the 7th century AD.
- Martial arts : Martial arts are known by different names all over India. The name of Kalaripayattu a martial art was a native of Kerala. Kalaripayattu consists of a series of intricate movements that train the body and mind. Others such as Thangta and Silamban are also famous.
- Puppetry: is one of the ancient forms of entertainment. It also used for educational and philosophical purpose in India. It became part of mass culture in India. Various festivals provided opportunity for people to come together and celebrate with various community activities.

**Conclusion:**

Recreation promoted a sense of joy and provided purpose to the life and living to people. Many times political changes made people's life miserable but easy access to popular recreational activities in rural areas isolated people from outside impacts. Further many of these recreational art forms are fading from public memories which are of immense heritage value. Therefore the government, civil society and local administration should form a repository of these ancient recreational elements and also include these in school syllabus to make new generation aware about the ancient heritage of India.