

Study Material Details

Commission:	UNION PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (UPSC)
Category:	Civil Services Examination (CSE)
Sub Category:	Preliminary
Subject:	HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA
Chapter:	GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND SOURCES, PRE- HISTORIC PHASE IN INDIA, HARAPPAN CULTURE
Material Type:	Combined Chapter Based
Language:	English
Title:	PRE-HISTORIC TO VEDIC PERIOD
Short Description:	"The journey from the Prehistoric to the Vedic period marks India's cultural evolution. hymns, philosophy, and early governance, laying the foundation of Indian civilization's enduring identity."
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Detail Content

Geographical Background in Indian History

- Himalayas in the North
- Indo-Gangetic Plains
- Deccan Plateau
- Coastal Regions
- Deserts and Arid Zones

Sources of Geographical Knowledge in Indian History

- Ancient Texts
- Foreign Accounts
- Archaeological Sources
- Cartographic & Survey Sources

1. GEOGRAPHICAL BACK GROUND AND SOURCES

Geographical Background in Indian History

- **Himalayas in the North**

- Acted as a natural barrier against invasions, but passes like Khyber and Bolan allowed entry of Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Kushans, and others.
- Protected India's cultural core while also enabling selective interaction.

- **Indo-Gangetic Plains**

- Fertile alluvial soil supported early civilizations like the Indus Valley Civilization and later the rise of powerful kingdoms (Mauryas, Guptas).
- Rivers like Ganga and Yamuna became cultural and religious centers.

- **Deccan Plateau**

- Rich in minerals and resources, fostering powerful dynasties like the Satavahanas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, and Vijayanagara.
- Its geography created distinct cultural and political identities compared to the north.

- **Coastal Regions**

- Western and eastern coasts facilitated maritime trade with Rome, Southeast Asia, and later Arab traders.
- Ports like Muziris, Calicut, and Masulipatnam became gateways of cultural exchange.

- **Deserts and Arid Zones**

- The Thar Desert influenced settlement patterns and trade routes in Rajasthan.
- Limited agriculture but encouraged caravan trade and fortified cities.

Sources of Geographical Knowledge in Indian History

- **Ancient Texts**

- *Rigveda*, *Puranas*, and *Epics* (Ramayana, Mahabharata) describe rivers, mountains, and regions.
- *Arthashastra* by Kautilya gives insights into resource distribution and strategic geography.

- **Foreign Accounts**

- Greek historians like Megasthenes (*Indica*) described the geography of Mauryan India.
- Chinese travelers like Faxian and Xuanzang recorded detailed observations of Indian landscapes and cities.
- Arab geographers like Al-Biruni provided scientific descriptions of India's geography.

- **Archaeological Sources**

- Excavations of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro reveal settlement planning based on river systems.
- Rock-cut inscriptions and temple architecture reflect adaptation to local geography.

- **Cartographic & Survey Sources**

- Ancient maps and later British surveys (like the Survey of India) systematically documented India's geography.

- Modern archaeology and satellite imagery now confirm ancient settlement patterns.

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