

Dholavira

[UPSC Notes]

What is Dholavira?


The existence of Dholavira dates back from the 3rd to the 2nd millennium BCE. Dholavira is a major Indus Valley civilization site that depicts a highly advanced civilization in water management, art, manufacturing, construction techniques, urban planning, trading, social governance, trading, development, and belief system.

During the Harappan era, people lived in the well-planned and impressively built towns of Dholavira. Because of its well-planned structure and proper manufacturing system, Dholavira became a center for trade and commerce in the Indus Valley Civilization.

As per the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), excavations at this Harappan site revealed that this site had witnessed the rise and fall of seven cultural stages of Indus Civilisation.

Dholavira Insights

Here is an overview of Dholavira, which is India's 40th World Heritage Site:



Highlights	Details
Dholavira location	Rann of Katch, Gujarat
Dholavira was discovered by	Archaeologist Jagat Pati Joshi
Dholavira Considered a Heritage site on	July 27th, 2021
Dholavira Seasonal Streams	Manhar (in the south) and Mansar (in the north)
How old is Dholavira	more than 4500 years

Where is Dholavira located?

Dholavira is believed to be 4500 years old. Archeologist Jagat Pati Joshi discovered it on a hillock in 1967. However, its systematic excavation occurred in 1990.

Dholavira is located on the Tropic of Cancer near the present-day village of Dholavira (it got its name from the Dholavira village), which is located on Khadir bet island. This island is situated in the Kutch district of Gujarat.

While most Harappan towns were found near rivers or other water sources, Dholavira is located on an island. The major reasons behind this are-

- To strategically harness raw material and several minerals (Steatite, copper shell, agate-carnelian, lead, banded limestone, etc.).
- For facilitating a smooth trade within the region and for trading externally with the Mesopotamian regions and Megan.

Dholavira UNESCO World Heritage Site

India is a land of world treasures with 40 world heritage sites. It includes 7 natural sites, 32 cultural sites, and one mixed property, and Dholavira is one among them. It is the 5th largest metropolis of IVC out of the thousands of sites discovered.

Dholavira, one of the major Harappan sites, has been on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 2014. In January 2020, a nomination dossier was submitted by India for Dholavira to the World Heritage Center. Later, on July 27th, 2021, Dholavira was considered one of the World's Heritage Sites.

This consideration helped India enter the Super 40 club along with the other countries, including France, China, Germany, Italy, and Spain. This has proved to be a milestone in Indian culture and heritage.

Is Dholavira a Harappan site?

Harappan site of the Indus valley civilization is famous for its well-planned grid system that became a milestone in history. Dholavira is considered one of the major sites among them. Here is why-

- Just like the other Harappan sites, do you also have two parts. One was the walled city, and the other was the cemetery to the west of the city.
- The walled city consists of a fortified Castle with attached Bailey and Ceremonial Ground, a fortified Middletown, and a Lower Town.
- A series of reservoirs are found east and south of the Citadel.

What is Dholavira famous for?

Dholavira is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, discovered by Archeologist Jagat Pati Joshi and is famous for its architecture and archeological findings. These include:

- Various artifacts have been found, and these include- gold and copper, fish hooks, seals, beads, terracotta pottery, urns, animal figurines, etc.
- The wood fossils were preserved in a fossil park near the ancient city.
- The Archeologists have found the 10 large stone inscriptions. These are believed to be the World's earliest sign boards, carved in the Indus Valley Script.
- There were no mortal remains found.

Apart from these findings, Dholavira is famous for its features that include

- Outer fortifications.
- 9 uniquely designed gates.
- Cascading series of water reservoirs.
- Two multipurpose grounds.
- Multi-layered defense mechanism.
- Hemispherical structures.

Decline of Dholavira

Several reasons seem to be responsible for the decline of Dholavira. These are

- Due to the changing climate conditions, Dholavira got trapped in a phase of extreme aridity.
- Since the rivers like Saraswati were drying up, it resulted in drought-like situations. People were compelled to migrate to the south of Gujarat, towards the Ganges valley and nearby areas of Maharashtra.
- Harappan faced a loss of a huge market with the collapse of Mesopotamia.
- The sea surrounding the khadir receded gradually, and the area of Rann transformed into a mudflat.