

## Discussion 10

# What are symbols and symbolic objects?

**Objectives:** To define symbols and symbolic objects. To learn about the possible or intended meanings of a range of signs and symbols from the Indus Valley civilization.

**Materials:** Examples of symbols, photographs of symbolic objects, or elements of Indus script that could be interpreted as symbolic.

**Class set-up:** Whole group discussion or small groups brainstorming then sharing ideas.

**Vocabulary:** Symbol, symbolic

**Discussion:** Ask pupils to think about what symbols are, and share their comments. Create a class definition using the pupils' comments.

Send children (homework activity?) off on a 'symbol safari', to find as many symbols as they can in as many contexts with as many uses as possible. Ask pupils to think about the message/s intended to be conveyed by the symbol. How is it being conveyed? What attributes or characteristics is it drawing upon?

What are the benefits of succinctly conveying a message about an idea,

a place or a relationship? *Why are symbols important? How and where do symbols appear?*

Ask pupils to think about what a symbolic object is, and share their comments. Create a class definition using the pupils' comments. *What is a symbolic object?*

Ask pupils to think about why symbolic objects are important. What is their purpose? Discuss what makes an object symbolic or not, and some examples of symbolic objects. *Why are symbolic objects important?*

Ask pupils to think about how ideas and relationships are conveyed through symbols and symbolic objects. *What can we tell about the Indus Valley people by looking at their symbols and symbolic objects?*

**Background information:**

**Early Hinduism**

**Teachings of the Buddha**

**The Buddha**

**Seals**

**Ashoka and the Mauryan Empire**