

Discussion 5

How far would you travel to trade something?

Objectives: To explore which forms of transport were available in ancient India. To investigate how useful these forms of transport would have been in different areas and what they could carry. (Extend to look at trade routes and animals used for trade)

Materials: Physical map of ancient India (the Indus Valley specifically), pictures of different forms of transport from the era and animals used for transport and trade.

Class set-up: Teacher presentation / Class discussion

Vocabulary: trade route, transport

Discussion: Describe the physical geography of the Indus Valley. Get the pupils to think about the difficulties of travelling within and across the different regions.

- What will affect how far you decide to travel?
- What will stop you travelling easily in any particular direction?
- How would you quickly travel to other countries / lands?
(Examine trade routes to Mesopotamia and Arabian peninsular.)

- What would be the problem with travelling by boat up the rivers?

Explore other problems of travel in ancient India such as bandits and wild animals.

- What might attack you as you travelled?

Describe the different forms of transport available at different times. Discuss what differences these would make in how far people could travel and at what speed. Consider if the different forms of transport would allow people to transport different materials.

- Could you carry more by cart/boat than by zebu?
- What sort of things could a zebu or a cart carry that would be difficult for a person?
- What sort of problems would traders/travellers encounter at different times of year? (weather, monsoons, mud/landslides, heat, drought, etc)

Get the pupils to draw spider diagrams of the advantages and disadvantages of travelling via each of the forms of transport.

Think about how distance of transportation would make materials and goods more expensive.

- Would you charge the same if you carried some dried fish to your neighbour or to the other end of the Indus?

Finish by discussing how most of the forms of transport are still used in some parts of India and Pakistan.

Background information:

Trade

River Indus

River Saraswati

River Ganga

Cities of the Indus

How Indus towns developed

Subsistence economy