



Ancient India

TERMS & NAMES

Mohenjo-Daro

Aryan

Sanskrit

Hinduism

Vedas

caste

Ashoka

MAIN IDEA

The people of ancient India established social and cultural practices that became widespread throughout the region.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The scientific and cultural contributions of ancient India affect our lives today.

DATELINE

MAURYAN EMPIRE 232 B.C.—The great Emperor Ashoka died yesterday. He was dearly loved by his people, and millions will mourn his death. Horrified by the suffering and bloodshed he saw at the battle of Kalinga in 262 B.C., Ashoka embraced the teachings of Buddhism.

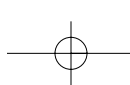
From that point on, he put his beliefs into action and ruled his people without violence. Who can possibly step forward to take the place of our great leader?



Place • Three lion figures top this pillar at Sarnath, one of many pillars Ashoka had erected during his reign. ▲

The Indus River Valley Civilization

Ashoka's empire was built on a civilization whose roots were more than 2,000 years old. Around 2500 B.C., a brilliant civilization developed in the Indus River valley. Sometimes called the Harappan civilization after one of its major cities, it flourished until about 1700 B.C. in an area that is mostly in present-day Pakistan. This civilization, which existed at the same time as ancient Egyptian civilization, stretched west to what is now Kabul, Afghanistan, and east to what is now Delhi, India. Its center was the rich farmland along the Indus River and its tributaries. The map on page 387 shows the extent of this civilization.



The civilization of the Indus River valley came to an end around 1700 B.C. No one knows for sure why the civilization ended. Some think the cause was a climate change—like a severe decrease in rainfall—while others think the urban centers were conquered and destroyed.

Hundreds of towns existed in the Indus River valley. There were two major cities: Harappa and **Mohenjo-Daro** (moh•HEHN•joh•DAHR•oh). Mohenjo-Daro was a large city with well-built homes and public buildings. Canals brought water from wells to farms outside the city walls.

Reading Social Studies

A. Making Inferences Why do you think this civilization developed in the Indus River valley rather than on the plains?

The Aryan Influence on South Asia

Around 1700 B.C., the **Aryans** (AIR•ee•uhn•z) came to South Asia. These people migrated from southern Russia through passes in the Hindu Kush. The time of the Aryan arrival suggests that the Aryans played a role in the fall of the Harappan civilization, although there is no proof. Over time, the Aryan people and the people of the Indus River valley produced a new blend of culture in northern India.

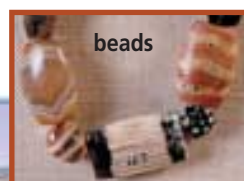
A New People, a New Civilization The Aryans were different from the people of the Indus River valley. They spoke another language called **Sanskrit**.



Life in Mohenjo-Daro Mohenjo-Daro's streets were wide and laid out in a grid design. A thick brick wall with gateways surrounded the city. Houses were made of brick with stone foundations and had several rooms, a toilet, and a well. Drainage systems ran from the houses into brick-lined sewers.

The people of Mohenjo-Daro were skilled engineers and builders. They built a system of ditches and canals around the city to irrigate farms. A public bathhouse with a sunken courtyard was built on an artificial hill. A large building near the bathhouse might have been used as a storage area for grain or as a meeting hall.

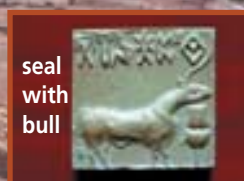
Archaeologists have not yet been able to decode the writing of these people. Most of what is known about the city is based on what archaeologists have learned from digging in the ruins. Some of the artifacts they have found are shown at the right.



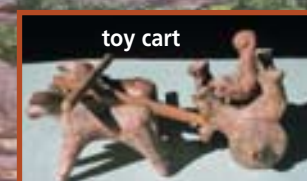
beads



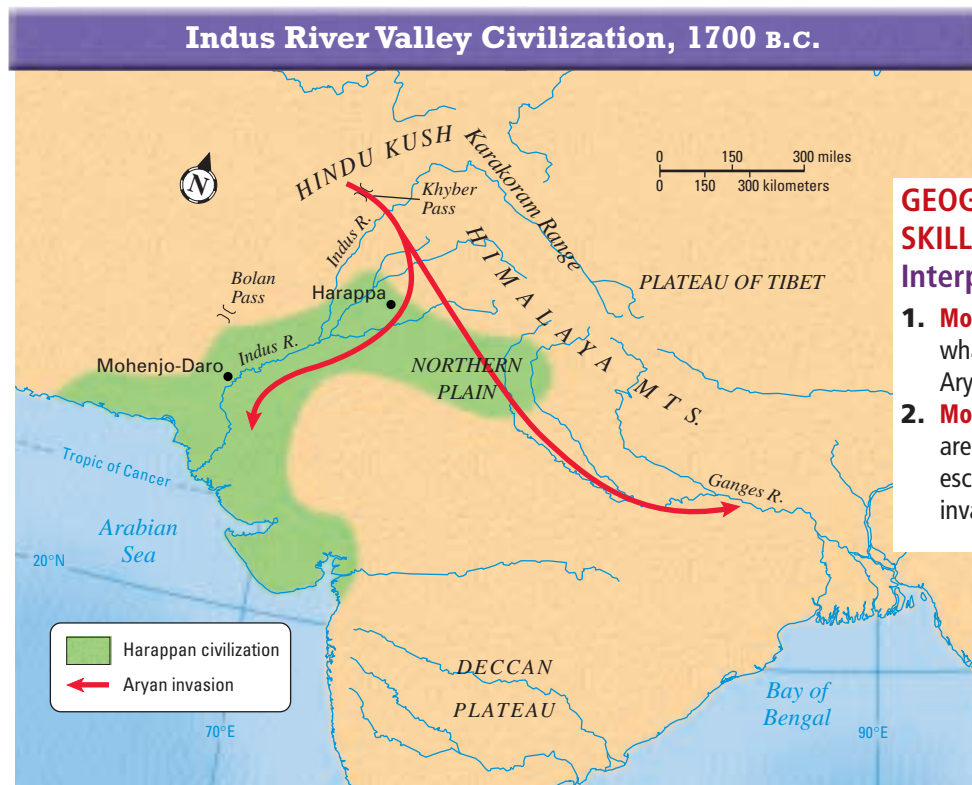
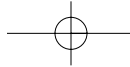
painted pot



seal with bull



toy cart



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

1. **Movement** • From what direction did the Aryans come?
2. **Movement** • Which area of South Asia escaped the Aryan invasion?

The Aryans had not settled in cities but were nomads and herders. Because the Aryans got their food and clothing from the animals they raised, they measured wealth by the number of cattle a person owned.

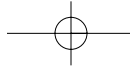
New Technology The Aryans brought new technology, animals, and ideas with them to South Asia. Sometime after 1000 B.C., the Aryans discovered iron ore in the Ganges River valley. Iron plows improved agriculture, and with the Aryan adoption of some local ways—like growing rice—they began to settle in towns. The Aryans also developed new iron weapons. These weapons were stronger than those of the Harappan people. Improved weapons and the introduction of the horse enabled the Aryans to rule northern India.

Reading Social Studies

B. Drawing Conclusions How did the Aryans' use of iron help them settle and control India?

Hinduism—A Way of Life

People of ancient India developed the religion of **Hinduism**, based on certain Aryan practices. Aryan priests chanted hymns in praise of their gods. For a long time, these hymns were passed down through oral tradition. Later, these hymns and other Aryan religious beliefs were written down and became part of the **Vedas** (VAY•duhz), or Books of Knowledge. The Vedas contain writings on prayers, hymns, religious rituals, and philosophy.



Culture • The god Vishnu is said to take ten forms, including a fish, a tortoise, and a boar. Here, he is half man and half lion. ▲

Karma and Reincarnation

The ideas of karma and reincarnation are central to Hinduism. Karma is the idea that a person's actions determine what will happen after his or her death. Reincarnation is the idea that after death a person's soul is reborn into a different body. Hindus believe that the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth occurs many times.

BACKGROUND

Hindus worship many gods and goddesses. Most Hindu families have a shrine to a god or goddess set up in their homes.

Each person's status in life is determined by his or her behavior in previous lives. A person who leads a virtuous life may be reborn as a wealthy or wise person. A person who lives an immoral life may be reborn as a poor or sick person.

The Caste System One of the main characteristics of Hinduism is the caste system. A **caste** is an inherited social class. Each person is born to a particular caste for his or her lifetime. Caste determines a person's job, marriage partner, and friends. The Hindu caste system was strongly influenced by the Aryan tribal social system, which was organized around the belief that people are not equal.

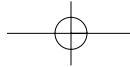
The Hindu caste system is based on four major classes—priests, warriors and princes, merchants and farmers, and laborers. Another group, once known as untouchables, has traditionally been considered inferior to the four major castes. Untouchables did the work that no one else wanted to do and were generally shunned by society. Today, the Hindu caste system is made up of thousands of castes and subcastes, but the four major castes are still the most important. The government and other groups are working to reduce the influence the caste system has on society.

Reading Social Studies

C. Analyzing Issues How do the caste system and the idea of reincarnation work together?



Culture • The god Shiva may be represented in various forms. Here he is shown as the Lord of the Dance. ►

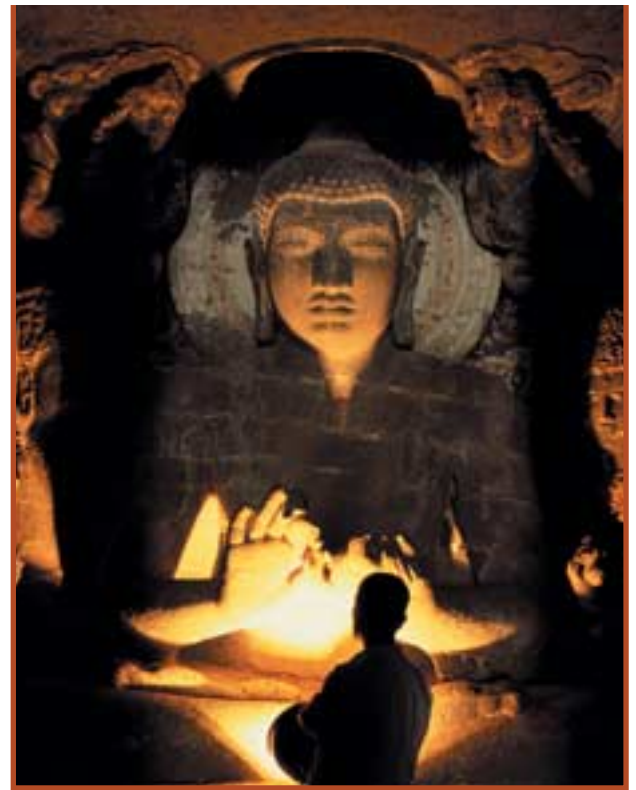


The Maurya and Gupta Dynasties

Two dynasties made important contributions to India. These dynasties were the Maurya and the Gupta. The contributions made by the people of these cultures still affect our lives today.

The Mauryan Empire The first Indian empire was called the Maurya (324–185 B.C.). It was founded by the descendants of the Aryans who moved eastward from the region of the Indus River valley civilization. One of its emperors, **Ashoka**, created a unified government. He built a palace of stone and religious monuments. The Mauryans were known for their fine sculpture and sandstone carvings.

The Golden Age and the Gupta Dynasty The Gupta Dynasty (A.D. 320–500) ruled during India's golden age in science, art, and literature. Most Gupta rulers were Hindus. However, both Hinduism and Buddhism were practiced throughout the empire at that time. Hindu and Buddhist beliefs inspired many artists. They created sculptures and paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses. Many temples were built that contained images of characters from Hindu mythology. Gupta architects hollowed out the solid stone of mountainside cliffs to create Buddhist temples. In the city of Ajanta, 30 Buddhist temples are carved into the side of a mountain.



Place • The Buddhist temples at Ajanta are carved into granite cliffs. The walls inside are covered with beautiful paintings. ▲

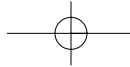
Biography



Ashoka Ashoka has been called one of the greatest emperors in world history. He ruled India's Mauryan Empire from 269 B.C. until his death in 232 B.C.

As a ruthless conqueror, Ashoka extended the Mauryan Empire over almost the entire sub-continent of South Asia. However, during one bloody battle, Ashoka became horrified at what he saw. He wrote, "150,000 persons were . . . carried away captive, 100,000 were [killed] and many times that number died." Ashoka vowed that this would be his last war, and he converted to the Buddhist religion.

He began to preach nonviolence and compassion for all living things and appointed "Officers of Righteousness" to relieve suffering among the people. Throughout the kingdom, the "principles for a just government" were carved in stone (shown at left) and displayed for all to see.



Literature Sanskrit literature blossomed during the Gupta Dynasty. Kalidasa, who lived during the fifth century A.D., was the greatest poet and playwright of his age. His plays were used to teach moral principles and were filled with creativity and mystery.

Mathematics Gupta mathematicians made many important discoveries. They developed the concept of zero and the numerals that we use today. Centuries after the Gupta Empire fell, Europeans learned these numerals and the concept of zero from the Islamic civilizations of Southwest Asia. Europeans called this number system *Arabic*, the name still used today.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER:

Interpreting a Map

- Location** • How far north did the Gupta Empire reach?
- Movement** • In which part of the Deccan Plateau would you expect to find influences from the Gupta Empire?

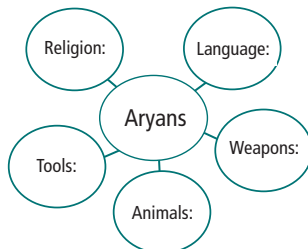
SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

- Identify:** (a) Mohenjo-Daro (b) Aryan (c) Sanskrit (d) Hinduism
(e) Vedas (f) caste (g) Ashoka

Taking Notes

- Use a spider map like the one below to record information about changes the Aryans brought to ancient India.



Main Ideas

- (a) Describe the city of Mohenjo-Daro.
(b) Describe three aspects of Hinduism.
(c) Why is the Gupta Dynasty considered a golden age in science, art, and literature?

Critical Thinking

4. Analyze

Why do you think the originally nomadic Aryans settled in India?

Think About

- where the Aryans came from and the geography of the subcontinent
- the civilization the Aryans encountered
- the discoveries the Aryans made in India

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Suppose you could go back in time to visit Mohenjo-Daro, the Mauryan Empire, or the Gupta Dynasty. Write a **paragraph** explaining which period you would visit and why.