

invading Aryans. The invaders extended their conquests from the Indus Valley across the entire northern plain of India. As Aryan civilization evolved, it created traditions that have shaped Indian culture up to the present.

Thousands of miles northeast of India, in the Yellow River valley of China, small agricultural settlements formed the basis for the first Chinese civilization. Like the Aryans in India, the Chinese established enduring traditions.

1 The First Civilization in India

In India, as in Egypt and Sumer, farming villages in a fertile river valley gave birth to the first civilization. From 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C., the great cities of Harappa (hah RAP ah) and Mohenjo-Daro (Moh HEHN joh DAHR roh) dominated a prosperous civilization in the Indus River valley. To understand the development of civilization in ancient India, it is necessary to look first at the geographic setting.

Geographic Setting

The Indian subcontinent is a large peninsula, surrounded on three sides by bodies of water—the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal. In the north, the Himalaya (HIH muh LAY uh) Mountains separate India from the rest of Asia. The towering Himalayas form a nearly impassable barrier 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) long. The rugged Hindu Kush Mountains to the northwest also presented barriers to travel. (See the map on page 64.)

Geographic barriers limited contact with other parts of the world and allowed the first Indian civilization to develop mostly on its own. Yet India was not totally isolated. Steep passes, such as the Khyber (KI ber) Pass through the Hindu Kush, gave determined invaders access to the subcontinent. Hardy Indian traders carried goods through the mountain passes to the Middle East and China. Furthermore, the surrounding seas served as highways for commercial and cultural contact.

Three regions of India. Diverse geography characterizes the Indian subcontinent. There are three major geographical regions of India: the northern plain, the Deccan (DEHK uhn) Plateau, and the coastal plains. These geographic divisions have contributed to the development of diverse cultures.

Three great rivers—the Indus, Ganges (GAN jeez), and Brahmaputra (BRAH muh POO truh)—flow through the crescent-shaped northern plain. These broad, slow rivers originate in the snow-covered Himalayas. Together with their tributaries, they supply water for farming and for transportation across the northern plain. The fertile soil of the river valleys supports extensive farming. For these reasons, the northern plain became the home of the first Indian civilization. Later, invaders pushed across the northwestern frontier and established powerful empires in the northern plain. The area has played a dominant role in the history of India ever since.

The Deccan Plateau is the triangular-shaped heart of the subcontinent. The Vindhya (VIHND yah) Mountains separate the plateau from the northern part of the subcontinent. The plateau is bordered on the west and east by long mountain ranges, the Western and Eastern Ghats. Because it lacks the numerous snow-fed rivers found in the north, the Deccan Plateau suffers from droughts, which make farming difficult.

Along the eastern and western coasts of India lie narrow coastal plains, which support both agriculture and fishing. Although India has few good natural harbors, many



■ Geography played an important role in the development of civilization in India as it did elsewhere. Mountains to the north helped isolate India from other areas, but as you can see from the map, invading Aryans found their way through passes in the Hindu Kush.

coastal peoples of India were seafarers who traded with peoples in other parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

The monsoon. The chief feature of the Indian climate is the *monsoon*, a seasonal wind. The monsoon regulates Indian life much as the different seasons affect life in North America. From June until September, the summer monsoon blows from the southwest, picking up moisture over the Indian Ocean and dropping torrential rains on the coast and the northern plain of India. From October to May, the winter monsoon blows from the northeast. These hot, dry winds raise temperatures to over 100°F (38° C), shrivel crops, and make outdoor work nearly impossible.

Every year, the people of India wait anxiously for the summer monsoon to bring desperately needed moisture to the parched

farmlands. When the rains come, temperatures drop and crops spring to life. If the monsoon is late, crops fail and food shortages result. Occasionally, the heavy rains cause destructive floods, especially in the lower Ganges Valley.

Discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization

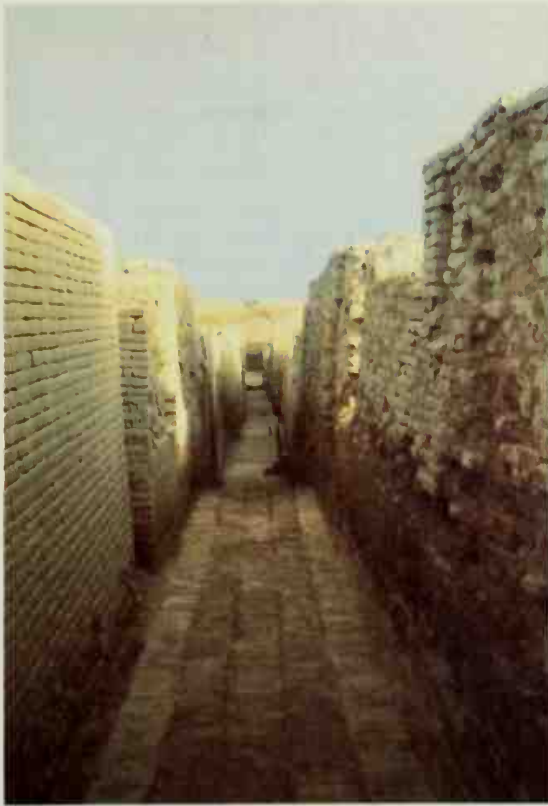
In 1921, archaeologists discovered traces of an ancient civilization in the Indus River valley. Since then, excavations have revealed that this civilization developed about the same time as the early Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations. The Indus Valley civilization stretched for 950 miles (1,500 kilometers), covering an area larger than the Old Kingdom in Egypt. Each of its chief cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, was larger than any Sumerian city-state. Yet scholars know little about the Indus Valley civilization compared to what they know about ancient Egypt and Sumer.

Two factors have left scholars with many unanswered questions. First, efforts to decipher the written language of the Indus Valley people have so far been unsuccessful. Second, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro can be only partially excavated. Because these cities lie close to rivers, deep trenches cannot be dug without the danger of flooding. Despite these handicaps, archaeologists have uncovered some valuable information about the Indus Valley civilization.

A Planned Urban Society

The ruins of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro reveal that they were the products of the first city planning in history. Wide, straight streets divide residential areas into square city blocks. Archaeologists have uncovered houses, granaries, public halls, and shops. Both cities had extensive sewer systems. Walled fortresses with towers provided protection.

To create such well-planned cities, the people needed a knowledge of surveying and geometry. Furthermore, only a strong central government in Harappa and Mohenjo-



The large cities of the Indus Valley civilization enforced strict building regulations. This photograph shows walls uncovered at Mohenjo-Daro. Notice the regular bricks used on the left. The rough, uneven wall on the right may have been built at a later date when the city had declined and orderly architecture had given way to careless work.

Daro could have supervised the practical details of planning and construction.

Government and religion. Scholars are not certain who ruled the Indus Valley cities, but they suggest that a priest-king probably headed the government of each city. The rulers must have had considerable power because the governments exercised strict control over the cities. For example, they regulated construction of new buildings and established standards of weights and measures. Because of the tight control, writing, building styles, street plans, and even the size of bricks remained unchanged for nearly 1,000 years.

Like the Egyptians and Sumerians, the Indus Valley people were polytheistic. Stat-

ues and masks show that they worshipped a mother-goddess and a three-faced god. They also revered sacred animals such as the bull and certain sacred trees.

Economic life. The Indus Valley civilization had a thriving agricultural economy. On the lands surrounding the cities, farmers constructed dams and levees to channel water from the rivers to crops of wheat, barley, melons, and dates. Food surpluses supported the large city populations and prompted the growth of trade. Indus Valley farmers were the first people to grow cotton, and cotton cloth became an important item of trade.

Trade and commerce supported a prosperous merchant class in the cities. Merchants exported cotton cloth to Mesopotamia in exchange for precious metals. In turn, wealthy citizens hired artisans to make furniture inlaid with the precious metals. Artisans also crafted fine gold jewelry and realistic stone carvings of monkeys and birds.

Decline of the Indus Valley civilization. Archaeological evidence shows that the Indus Valley civilization began to decline many years before it ended about 1500 B.C. Builders abandoned the uniform standards

About 4,000 years ago, merchants of Mohenjo-Daro probably used carved stone seals like the one shown here to stamp their possessions. Stone seals may also have had a religious meaning. This one shows a bull, a common religious symbol, standing by an incense burner.



of earlier times, and the quality of work declined. The arts showed less creativity, and trade with Mesopotamia dwindled. These signs of decay indicate that the government had lost some of its power.

Most authorities believe that about 1500 B.C. Aryan invaders struck the final blow to the Indus Valley civilization. When the Indus Valley cities fell, the people fled to other parts of India. Thus, while the river valley civilizations of Egypt and Sumer profoundly affected later peoples, the Indus Valley civilization had little lasting impact. After 1500 B.C., it was virtually forgotten until modern times.

SECTION REVIEW

1. Locate: Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, Himalaya Mountains, Hindu Kush Mountains, Indus River, Ganges River, Brahmaputra River, Deccan Plateau, Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro.
2. Define: monsoon.
3. (a) What are the three major geographical regions of India? (b) Which region was the home of the first Indian civilization? Why?
4. Why is the summer monsoon important to the people of India?
5. What evidence suggests that the Indus Valley cities were the result of careful planning?

2 The Aryans

About 1500 B.C., Aryans swept into India through the passes of the Hindu Kush Mountains. These fierce nomadic herders had come originally from the region between the Black and Caspian seas north of the Caucasus Mountains.* The Aryans used horses, which were unknown in the Indus Valley, and superior weapons to overpower the people of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

The Aryan Conquest

Like many nomadic people, the Aryans did not move as a single unit. Rather, they were loosely organized into tribes. A *tribe* consists of groups of related families who recognize a common ancestor, speak the same language, and share the same traditions and beliefs. In each Aryan tribe, a *rajah* (RAH juh), or elected chief, served as the leader in war. He governed the tribe with the aid of councils

made up of elders and other free men. The rajah was not worshipped as a god, nor did he have power to impose taxes. His wealth depended on gifts from the people and plunder taken in war.

Under the rajahs, Aryan tribes fought their way into the Indus Valley and destroyed villages and cities. Between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C., they pushed eastward, clearing the jungles of the Ganges Valley and bringing the northern plain under their control. Gradually, the Aryans gave up their nomadic way of life and settled into villages.

The chief enemies of the Aryans during the conquest of the northern plain were the Dravidians (druh VIHD ee uhnz), who were probably survivors of the Indus Valley civilization. Eventually, the Dravidians retreated into southern India, where their powerful kingdoms later rivaled those that rose in the north.

Even after the Aryans conquered the northern plain, warfare continued to dominate their life. Between 1000 B.C. and 700 B.C., local rajahs battled for control of the region. Slowly, the more successful rajahs forged strong, independent kingdoms. By 700 B.C., the wealthiest and most powerful rajahs were building large capital cities and encouraging trade with the Middle East.

* The Aryans were only one group of people who migrated out of that area between about 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. Some, such as the Hittites, invaded the Middle East. Others, such as the ancestors of the Greeks and Romans, moved into Europe. Because of the common origins of these groups, historians have called them Indo-Europeans.

Aryan Beliefs

Most information about the early Aryans comes from oral religious traditions contained in the Vedas (VAY duh-z). The Vedas, composed between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C., include sacred hymns, prayers, and magic spells used by priests in religious ceremonies. They represent one of the world's oldest surviving religious literatures. Priests memorized the Vedas and carefully handed them on to each new generation.

According to the Vedas, the early Aryans worshipped gods of nature, the sun, sky, thunder, and fire, but Indra, the warrior god, generally led the others. Pictured as courageous, youthful, and invincible, Indra reflected the optimism and confidence of the Aryans. In return for sacrifices to the gods, the Aryans sought long life, prosperity, and healthy sons. They were more interested in day-to-day concerns than in an afterlife.

Aryan religious beliefs gradually changed. For example, the Rig Veda, the oldest of the Vedas, consists of over 1,000 hymns addressed to different gods. But later Vedic hymns suggest a growing belief in a single unifying force.

Further changes in religious beliefs appear in the Upanishads (oo PAN ih SHADZ), oral teachings composed between 800 B.C. and 600 B.C. In the Upanishads, priests sought to answer philosophical and religious questions about the meaning of life and the creation of the world. They introduced new doctrines such as the belief in *reincarnation*, or the rebirth of the soul in another bodily form.

As you will read in Chapter 9, both the Vedas and the Upanishads form part of the sacred literature of Hinduism, the religion that developed out of early Aryan beliefs.

Epic literature. The power struggles between rival Aryan kingdoms from 1000 B.C. to 700 B.C. gave rise to a new oral literature. Stories about civil wars and great heroes formed the basis of two long epic poems: the *Mahabharata* (muh HAH BAH ruh tuh) and the *Ramayana* (rah MAH yuh nuh).

Like most epics, the *Mahabharata* mixes fact and fiction and magnifies the deeds of heroes. The *Ramayana* tells the story of one

hero but also contains numerous short stories that illustrate the duties and ideals of Aryan warriors. While both epics focus on worldly concerns such as success in battle, they also weave in significant religious themes. Because of their religious teachings, both epics became part of the sacred Hindu texts.

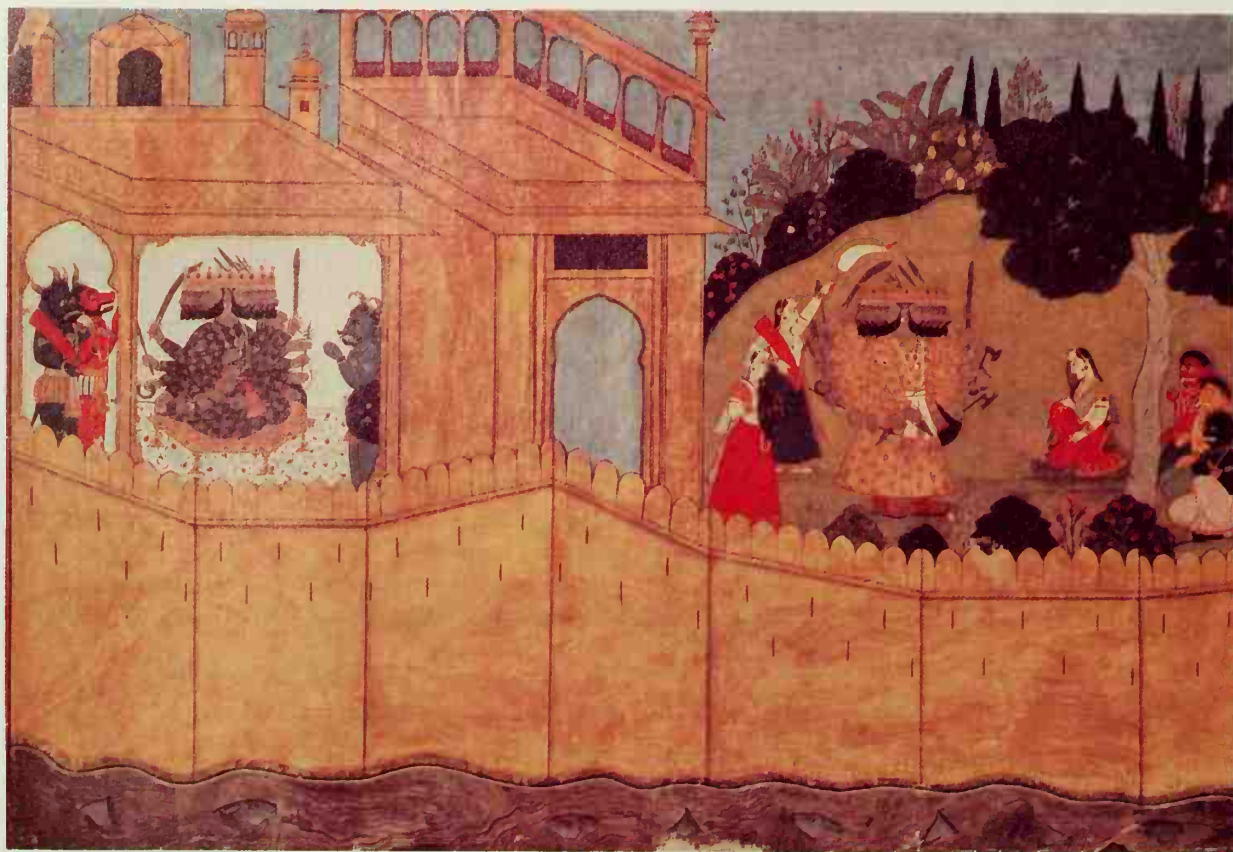
Sanskrit. By about 700 B.C., almost 1,000 years after their arrival in India, the Aryans had developed a written language called Sanskrit. Knowledge of Sanskrit belonged almost solely to priests, who used the language to record sacred texts. Despite the introduction of a written language, priests continued to memorize the ancient hymns and epics and to recite them for the people. In this way, the oral traditions were preserved.

Life in Aryan Villages

As the nomadic Aryans settled into villages, they established patterns of life that have given order and stability to Indian culture down to the present. Although a rajah ruled all the villages within a region, most villages enjoyed a measure of self-government. A headman, usually a wealthy farmer, had overall responsibility for a village. Appointed by the rajah, the headman worked with a village council to settle disputes. He also oversaw the maintenance of community irrigation ditches and canals.

Aryan villages depended on a mixed herding and farming economy in which cattle had a prominent place. Aryans had valued cattle since their nomadic days, when a major goal of Aryan warriors had been to seize cattle from their enemies. In fact, their word for war meant "the desire for cattle." In the village barter economy, cattle retained their value. People measured their wealth in terms of cattle and used them as the medium of exchange. Thus, the value of land and tools was expressed in heads of cattle. In the villages, cattle were used for food, plowing, and transportation.*

* In early Aryan society, cattle were killed for food. Later, the slaughter of cattle was forbidden, and people used only the milk.



An ancient Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*, has inspired artists for centuries. Its hero, Rama, hurtles from one lively adventure to the next. Rama is sent to earth by the gods to overcome the ten-headed Ravanna, the powerful king of the demons. Disguised as a monk, the evil Ravanna kidnaps Rama's beautiful wife Sita, shown in this illustration from the 1700s A.D. Aided by the monkey god, Rama eventually rescues his wife and defeats Ravanna.

The extended family. The extended family was at the heart of village life. An *extended family* includes a husband and wife, their unmarried children, their married sons, and the sons' wives and children. The several generations of an extended family generally live under the same roof. Among the Aryans, joint ownership of land and cattle encouraged strong ties within the family. Family members looked after each other and provided for the weak, the old, and even the lazy.

As head of the family, the oldest man had many responsibilities. He performed the family's religious rituals and was its spokesman in village affairs. He arranged marriages for his daughters, educated his sons, and managed the family income.

The status of women. In early Aryan society, women apparently enjoyed relatively high status. When the Aryans invaded India, women warriors fought alongside the men. Women composed hymns in the Vedas, and the Upanishads mention one learned woman who asked her teacher so many searching questions that he exclaimed, "You mustn't ask too much, or your head will drop off!"

As Aryan civilization developed, the status of women declined. At first women were active in village life and joined in public debates. Later, they were forbidden to attend public meetings, although they still were free to walk unattended in the village. Women eventually became subordinate to men. As a child, a girl obeyed her father. In

her teens, she married the man chosen by her family and moved into her husband's household. A young wife owed the same respect and obedience to her husband and his family that she once had owed to her own family.

Social Classes

The Aryan social structure gradually changed as the nomadic Aryans settled into villages. The early Aryans were loosely divided into three classes: warriors, priests, and commoners. Because the classes were not strictly defined, it was possible to rise from a lower class to a higher one. By the time powerful rajahs established united kingdoms, a new social organization had emerged.

In the new social structure, the Aryans recognized four classes: Kshatriyas (KSHATree uhz), or warriors; Brahmans (BRAHmuhnz), or priests; Vaisyas (VĪS yuhz), or landowners, merchants, and herders; and Sudras (SOO druhz), or servants and peasants tied to the land. As religious rituals grew more complicated, the Brahmans strengthened their position in society and eventually replaced the Kshatriyas as the highest class. This class system gradually became rigid. Birth alone determined a person's place in society.

Scholars think that the social structure became more rigid because the Aryans wanted to maintain a separate racial and cultural identity. During their conquests, some Aryans had intermarried with the Dravidians, and a few Dravidians had found a place in Aryan society. But as the new social sys-

tem developed, the top three classes were reserved for Aryans, and the lowest class was comprised of non-Aryans, such as the Dravidians.

In time, the four main social classes were further divided into *castes*, or social groups based on birth. Children belonged to the same caste as their parents. As the caste system evolved, a strict set of rules emerged that prohibited marriage between members of different castes and specified the jobs caste members could hold.

The caste system grew immensely complex. Over 3,000 subcastes, or groups, eventually developed. There were also many people outside the caste system. Because they were considered to be impure, these people were called "untouchables." They had the lowest status in society. In Chapter 9, you will read how the developing caste system was closely tied to Hindu religious beliefs.

SECTION REVIEW

1. Identify: Dravidian, Vedas, Upanishads, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, Sanskrit.
 2. Define: tribe, rajah, reincarnation, extended family, caste.
 3. What had some Aryan rajahs accomplished by 700 B.C.?
 4. What new religious belief did the Upanishads contain?
 5. How did the status of women in Aryan society change?
 6. (a) List the four main classes in Aryan society.
(b) What occupations were identified with each class?
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3 Beginning of Chinese Civilization

You have read about three ancient civilizations that rose in the river valleys of the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Indus. A fourth civilization developed in the Yellow River valley of northern China. Between 5000 B.C. and 3000 B.C., Stone Age

farmers began building permanent villages in northern China. As they discovered more effective ways to produce food, they developed a more complex social and economic system, which by 1600 B.C. gave rise to the Shang civilization.