

Chapter 4: Central Asia and India's Beginnings: 4-8 Chapter Review  
Book Title: World Civilizations  
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## 4-8 Chapter Review

### 4-8a Summary

Settled life is now known to have emerged in India much earlier than previously believed. By 2500 B.C.E., people of the Indus River valley had developed irrigated fields and good-sized towns that traded widely with both the surrounding villagers and distant neighbors to the west. These towns seem to have been governed by a priesthood, but information on their history is still sparse. The civilization was already in decline, possibly from natural causes, when it fell to Aryan nomads, who instituted the beginnings of the caste system.

In the thousand years after the Aryan conquest—the Vedic Epoch (1500–500 B.C.E.)—the Hindu religion was gradually constructed from a combination of Aryan beliefs and the Indus Valley faith. However, this ritualistic Hinduism gave way when it was challenged by other, more ethically conscious doctrines such as Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism in particular became an international religion and philosophy; several variants took root throughout East and Southeast Asia through India's growing trade networks.

Although arts and sciences flourished, the cultural and political unity of India was only sporadically enforced by a strong central government. Many invasions from the northwest kept India in a frequent state of political fragmentation. Religious belief, rather than government, was the cement that held its people together and gave the basis for their consciousness of being a nation.

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