

Chapter 4

Central Asia and India's Beginnings

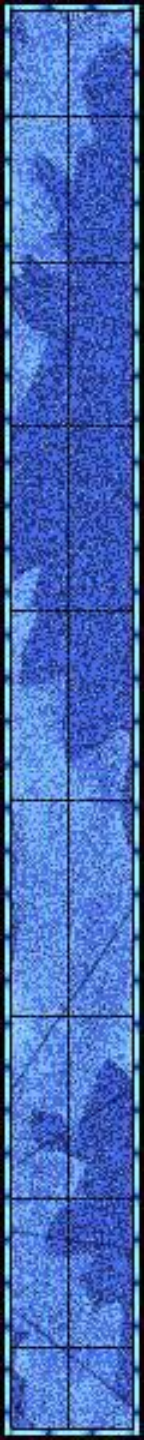
c. 2500–1900 B.C.E.	Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa flourish
c. 1500 B.C.E.	Invasion of Aryans
c. 1500–500 B.C.E.	The Vedic Epoch
563–483 B.C.E.	Life of the Buddha
326 B.C.E.	Invasion by Alexander the Great
320–232 B.C.E.	Mauryan Dynasty



Indus Valley Civilization and Early Trade

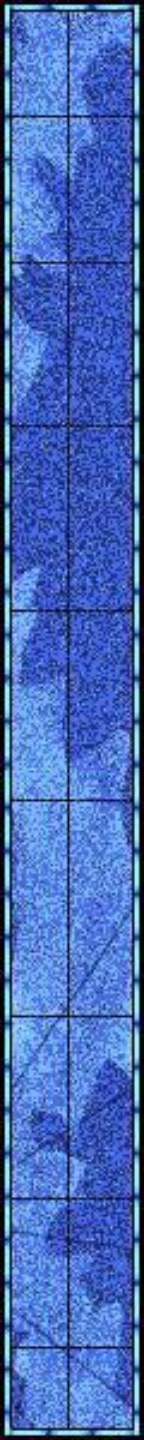
- Earliest Indian civilization found in plains of Indus and Saraswati Rivers
- Trade with north and west before agriculture
- Farming began 6000 BCE
- By 4000 BCE, region had dense population and fortified farming villages
- 3000 BCE, explosive growth - towns became cities
- Huge trade network linking eastern Mediterranean, East Africa, Arabia, Asia





Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa

- 2 cities on Indus River with over 100,000 people
- Many smaller towns
- Physical layout
 - Fired brick structures
 - Wide streets at right angles
 - Buildings 2 to 3 stories high
 - Sewage canals from houses to larger canal
 - Citadel with granary, Great Bath
- Regularity suggests powerful government



Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa

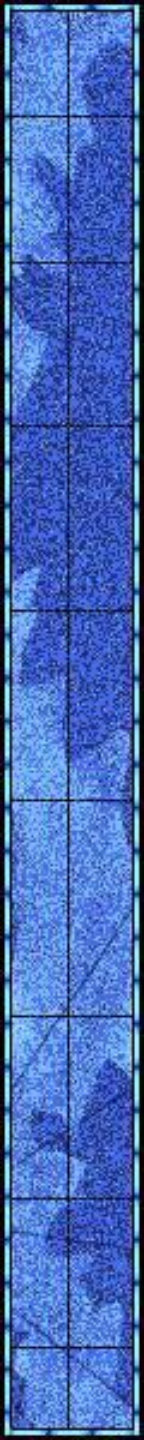
- Both cities constitute one civilization: Dravidian
- Writing not yet been deciphered
- Know almost nothing about religion, government, society, scientific and intellectual accomplishments
- Prosperous from at least 2500 BCE to about 1900 BCE
- Decline:
 - Abandonment of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa
 - Natural catastrophes made land nonproductive
 - Migrations of Aryan nomads



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Luca Tettoni/Robert Harding World Imagery



Central Asian Steppe Lands

- Prairie grasslands not suitable for farming
- Inhabited by nomadic pastoralists
- Relationship with agriculturalists
 - Mutual dependence
 - Periodic raids or conquest into settled areas.
- Major ethnic groups
 - Indo Iranians
 - Turko-Mongols



Robert Harding World Imagery/Getty Images





The Vedic Epoch

Aryans

- Early Indo-European nomadic, horse-breeding people of ancient Asia
- Use of the chariot allowed them to overwhelm remnant of the Indus Civilization.
- Dominate agriculturalists
- In time, ruled all northern India with center on Ganges River
 - Gradually settled down as farmers, townspeople
 - New iron technology and introduction of rice cultivation



The Vedic Epoch

Vedas, ancient oral epics, written after invasion describe Aryans as:

- Indo-European speakers, worshipped gods of sky and storm, used bronze weaponry and horse-drawn chariots
- Rigveda (oldest Vedas) says raja led his war-loving, violent folk, and magic-working priests

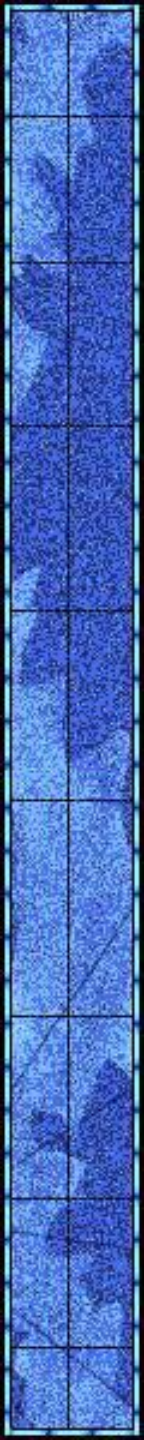
Beginnings of Caste System

- Varna caste system secure dominance of Aryans over original Indians.
 - Brahmins - priests, highest rank
 - Kshatrija - warriors
 - Vaishya - freemen, farmers, traders
 - Shudra - non-free serf

Untouchables-Denied any caste standing whatsoever

Caste System

- Classes evolved into thousands of complex castes called *jatis*
- Jati caste determines
 - employment
 - marriage
 - dietary restrictions
- Inhibits individual social mobility
- Indian society became highly stratified, immobile



Brahmanism and the origins of Hinduism

- Fourth largest religion in the world – one billion
- A way of life, philosophical system, inspiration for art, basis of all Indian political theory
- Earliest form called Brahmanism
 - Importance of Vedic ritualism
 - Brahmanical priesthood
 - Emphasis on Varna caste



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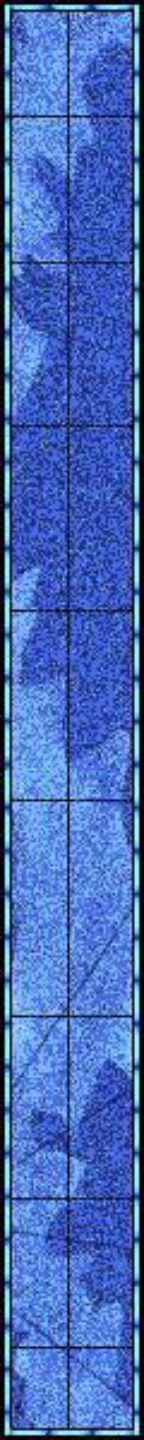
Hinduism

- Mix of Aryan Vedic ritualism and native agrarian cultures
- Aryan social structure (caste) remains
 - Laws of Manu
- New elements forming basic principles of Hinduism
 - Non-material unseen world is the real and permanent
 - Universe works as a Great Wheel (*samsara*) in which the individual soul is born and reborn
 - Karma or works determines the quality of the next life
 - Good karma accrues from following one's Dharma: code of morals based on one's caste and station
 - Moksha: Ultimate goal to be free from birth and rebirth



Religious Reform

- All emerge around the fifth century BCE
- Three new modes of thought appeared
 - Jainism- Emphasizes sacredness of all life
 - Buddhism
 - Bhakti Hinduism
 - gods have more personal attributes, more approachable
 - Individual seek spiritual fulfillment by devoting to individual gods
 - Most Hindus worship some form of Vishnu or Shiva



Daily Life and the Position of Women

- Rural misery today is recent phenomenon
- Laws of Manu established “proper relations” between sexes:
 - Sati (suicide of widows) and
 - Purdah (isolation from non-family males)
 - A woman’s dharma was to obey, serve husband and sons

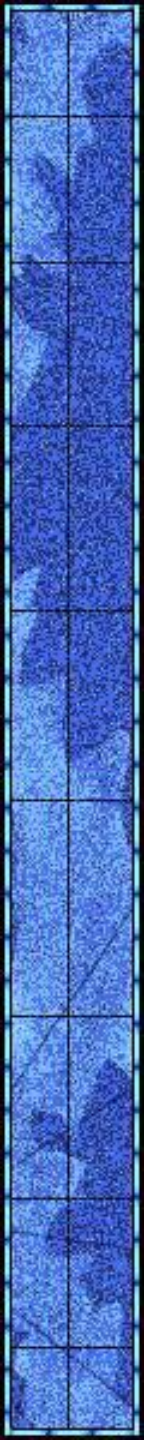


Buddhism

- Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE)
 - The Buddha, or Enlightened One
 - Indian aristocrat
 - A long period of wandering in search of answers to riddle of life and suffering
 - Became teacher of large group of disciples after extensive meditation
 - His teachings eventually were more important in China and Japan
 - In India, Buddhism was practically extinct by 1000 CE

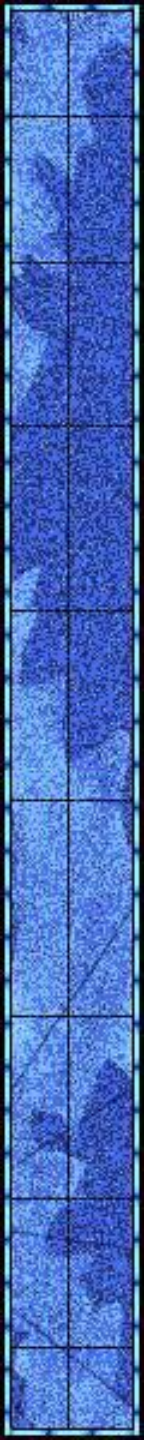


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Teachings of the Buddha

- Four Noble Truths
 - All life is permeated by suffering
 - All suffering is caused by desire
 - Desire can only be overcome by attaining nirvana
 - Way to nirvana is guided by eight principles
- Eightfold Path
 - Right (righteousness) ideas,
 - Right thought,
 - Right speech,
 - Right action,
 - Right living,
 - Right effort,
 - Right consciousness,
 - Right meditation



Teachings of the Buddha

- Anyone who follows these steps – Eightfold Path
- will conquer desire, be released from suffering
- Suffering and loss are caused by desire for
illusory power and happiness
- Once one sees these are not desirable,
temptation will vanish
- Then will find serenity of the soul, harmony with
nature and people



Buddhism

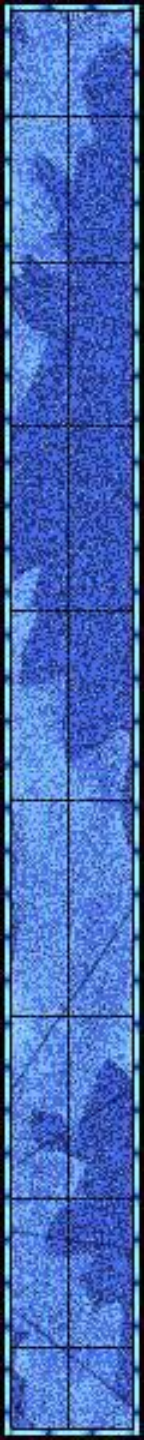
- Buddhism spread among Indians of all backgrounds
 - Popularity from its democracy of spirit
 - Everyone can discover path to nirvana – no caste restrictions
- After his death, Buddhism split
 - Theravada
 - Stricter version
 - Claims to be the pure form of his teachings
 - Emphasizes life in a monastery (sangha)
 - Mahayana
 - More liberal, sees doctrines as initial step, not the ultimate word
 - Many ways to salvation
 - There are many buddhas, many more will appear
 - Followers far outnumber stricter adherents

The Mauryan Dynasty

- Political vacuum with retreat of Alexander the Great
- Founded by Chandragupta Maurya - political unity
- Ashoka (ruled 269-232 BCE) – 3rd emperor
 - Founding spirit of Indian unity and nationhood
 - Spread Buddhism in India, encouraged religious tolerance
 - Period of internal prosperity, external peace
 - Became a devout Buddhist and pacifist
- Decline:
 - Successors were weak, conquered by invaders
 - New peoples became sedentary, adopted Buddhism
 - Political unity disintegrated



Archaeological Museum, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India/Dinodia/The Bridgeman Art Library



Trade And The Spread Of Buddhism

Buddhism

- Pastoralist tribes adopt Mahayana Buddhism
- Export of Buddhism to China through Silk Road trade
- Buddhism entered Chinese cultural life, blended new ideas with traditional Confucian practice and ethics

Trade

- Buddhists taught that trade contributed to everyone's welfare
- Extension of trade along sea-lanes to Southeast Asia: port of Tamluk, and monsoon winds