

# INDIA

## I. GEOGRAPHY

2,000 miles north to south

huge Deccan plateau to south (Deccan means "south") where most rivers flow east

Ganges and Indus valleys to north

walled off by mountains (Himalayas) to north, but never a complete barrier

summer wet monsoon season in June to October, winds off water into mountains

by April, hot dry, parched, 110 degrees

## II. PREHISTORY

paleolithic and ice ages there

after 10,000 neolithic nomadic hunter-gatherers

cultivation of plants about 7,000 bce

by 3,000 bce climactic conditions allowed development of Indus River valley, but then decreasing rainfall destroyed it

Aryans (noble-ones), cattle-rearing nomads, were just the final straw

chakravartin, the ruler who tries to conquer the world (the Indian model)

## III. HARRAPA, 2500-1500

autonomous development

Indus River (Pakistan)  
arose in 3rd millennium

with Sumeria

trade relation to Mesopotamia (perhaps contact

provided model)

great river complex to form Indus

now much of the valley is an arid desert, but not 5000

years ago,

by then agriculture of wheat and barley  
centralized developments

first large-scale organized government, but seems was not

a military

empire, but a priestly state

vanished around 1500 (key date in old times, about same

time as fall of

Hammurabi's dynasty)

resembled Egypt!

knew writing and bronze

no longer center of civ

did it happen because of aryan nomadic invaders?

nomads had no use of agriculture

eventually settled down

in 1850s discovered remains of city of Harrapa in valley to north

not much remains, not much known

archeological excavation has shed little light on

the rise of these

cities (just suddenly they were there

writing not yet deciphered, mostly just have small, family

seals surviving

Mohenjo-daro in south

very great cities

square grid pattern, not much change over

hundreds of years

city walls, kiln dried bricks

very much planned, very logical checkerboard

pattern of city (so

somebody laid them out!)

large citadels and granaries

house structures similar to each other

cultivation of wheat, rye, peas, cotton, sesame (for oil)

animals, fish and irrigation

city as trade center

bronze weapons only

priest class dominant

coordinate defense

intermediaries to gods

mother goddess figures (how do you interpret such

remains?

some small art forms survive (mostly on seals), these bulls, and carts  
obsession  
with fertility?

very slow demise  
evidence of short term floods  
shift in monsoon began desertification  
waves of aryan nomadic invaders  
there, is evidence of some violence

evidence of Horse-raiding invaders in Baluchistan villages  
in 2000  
slow conquest (Better weapons and use of horse)  
cities broke down under strain  
by 1600 collapse

#### IV. **VEDIC, or ARYAN, PERIOD, 1500-500**

A. Early Period, 1500-900, composition of Rg veda

called themselves Aryas, root of Iran and Eire  
Central Asian nomads, tall, fair and long-haired  
used horses and light chariots  
migrated south, west and east, conquered villages as they went

gradually merged into near east and europe  
big blank, 1500-500, mostly village life

by 1000 vedic hymns collected, rig veda, oral tradition  
but they tell us little about past India

is mention of Dasas, or dasyus, survivors of harrapan culture dark, bull-lipped, snub-nosed  
dasa later acquired meaning of slave  
intermixing

tribes ruled by hereditary chiefs called raja (related to Latin rex)  
tribal council, sabha or samite  
chief priest and a chief general  
king was a war leader, not divine at first

aryans had a class structure: kshatra, the nobility, vis, ordinary tribesmen

eventually four classes emerged: brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya (peasant) and shudra (serf),  
varna means colour

cows very important for economy

did have strong drinks (soma) and liked to gamble  
highly skilled bronze tools and weapons

## B. Late Period, 900-500, brahmanas and Upanishids

Later vedic age  
1000-500!

aryans moved east down ganges  
almost only source is still religious texts

battle of Kurukshetra, near Delhi, formed basis of Mahabharata (dynastic dispute in the Kuru tribe), but difficult to use as a historical document  
an another kingdom set up in Banaras, where ranma lived, (Ramayana), but not even certain that he was king of Kosala

little aryan kingdoms  
councils diminished in importance in face of king and brahman

rise of the sacrificial cult

rice now, iron too  
specialized artisans emerged  
but no mention of coins or writing

approximately 1500 bce

related to Iranians and Hyksos, 3 branches of same

people,

iranian, hyksos, aryan  
copper age, semi-nomadic  
had domesticated the horse

overran the riverine civilization and conquered North India

a linguistic term

herders from caspian sea region, Black/Aral Sea region

had to be a major climactic change to push  
them south (note that

they also moved west--we are all part of the same family  
moved into indus and ganges plains

eventually began to do agriculture too since so fertile

A. led to Vedic religion  
in some ways resembled Homeric religions

Note that Zoroastrianism became more and more

monotheistic;

Zaruthstra emerged as a prophet, very typical of Near Eastern religion

an ultimate

Vedic became more mysticism (goal was to become part of

being)  
evolutionary process from 1500 on

vedas, simple polytheism

could

Aranyakas, "to rest" books, where people in isolated places

contemplate

6th century

veda, warrior hymns were only finally written down late in

very clear about the

songs in praise of deities (vedas), though not

different gods

oral tradition

written down into uniform version as the Rig Veda  
FIRST stage in the development of Indian religion

B. Literature followed religious evolution

oldest texts are the Vedas

a kind of early sanskrit

1200-900 bce, proper performance of sacrifice

Vishnu, a minor god, Budhra, storm god

how to appease and gain their benevolence

Rig veda is the oldest, and still used, which does begin to

explain the

Varna system

warlike people in tribes

Remember only highly fragmentary evidence

Indra, god of war and lightning  
gods still described in human terms  
polytheists

gods like ancient Greeks!  
sacrifice and ritual by priests  
huge pot belly, liked to drink

#### Classes

warriors, priests and commoners at first  
added slaves as a fourth  
very rigid distinction between aryan who described  
themselves as light-  
skinned and slaves  
marriages forbidden  
caste system?

slowly four varnas emerged  
Dasa, dark skinned outcast?

patrilineal, conquest, military prowess lauded  
after death (World of the fathers) while bad went to the (House of Clay)

no defined civ by 1500 left, lot of small kingdoms gradually emerged  
thus, with disappearance of Harrapa, had to start all over again, did not  
pass on  
fundamental social and cultural things  
why disintegrate

#### V. **Post-aryan** arrival was NOT a heroic age like mycenae

transfer of civ east to Ganges plain and use of iron  
after 800 started clearing jungle  
by 600 seat of power  
to do rice needed irrigation, to do irrigation needed  
kingdoms (Kosala and  
Magadha)

slow emergence of caste system  
ceremonial purity  
aryan prejudice  
with earlier social guidelines  
brahman theory that divine divided into four castes, sudras  
were non-  
aryan  
became very complicated