

Summary: Ancient India

An Ancient Land

India is a subcontinent of Asia. It has many different landforms. Mountains, plains, deserts, and marshes stretch across India. The Himalayas, the world's highest mountains, are on India's north border. The Indus River flows from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean.

Every summer heavy rains fall in the wet season. The Indus River flooded each year, making the land along its banks good for farming.

A civilization started in the Indus Valley more than 4,500 years ago. It lasted around 700 years. There are signs of more than 1,500 ancient cities and towns in the Indus Valley.

Civilizations Change

No one knows why the Indus Valley civilization ended. Around 1500 B.C.E. the Aryans spread their culture to the area. They believed in a caste system. People in each caste had different jobs. There were four castes. A fifth group, the outcastes, had no caste. They did work no one liked.

Over time, Aryan and Indus Valley beliefs became the Hindu religion. Hindus believe people live many lives before they become one with their god. The Buddhist religion also started in India. Buddhists believe that living simply and respecting all living things leads to peace and happiness.

New civilizations grew in India. King Asoka ruled from 273 B.C.E. to 232 B.C.E. He became a Buddhist and spread his belief across his kingdom. The ancient Indians developed the number system we use now. We call them Arabic numbers.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

subcontinent *noun*, a large mass of land that is part of a continent

caste *noun*, a social class into which people are born



After You Read

REVIEW In what way did the flooding of the Indus River affect ancient Indians?

Underline the sentence that tells the effect of flooding on the land.

REVIEW What were some of the ideas that emerged in India after the Indus Valley civilization ended?

Circle the names Aryans, Hindus, and Buddhists, and highlight the sentences that tell about their beliefs.