

# Summary: Ancient India

## The Indus River Valley Civilization

The Harappan civilization developed around 2500 B.C. Its center was the rich farmland along the Indus River. This civilization ended around 1700 B.C. Around the same time, Aryans came to South Asia from Russia. Over time, Aryans and people of the Indus River valley created a new culture.

The Aryans brought new technology, animals, and ideas to South Asia. They also discovered iron ore in the Ganges River valley. As the Aryans learned to grow rice and use iron plows, they began to settle in towns. Better iron weapons and the introduction of the horse helped the Aryans rule northern India.

## Hinduism—A Way of Life

The people of ancient India developed Hinduism. The ideas of karma and reincarnation are central to this religion. Karma is the idea that a person's actions determine what will happen after his or her death. Reincarnation is the idea that after death a person's soul is reborn into a different body. Each person's status in life is determined by his or her behavior in previous lives. Hindus believe the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth occurs many times.

One of the main characteristics of Hinduism is the caste system. Each person is born into a particular caste for his or her lifetime. Caste determines a person's job, marriage partner, and friends. Today, the government is trying to reduce the caste system's influence on society.

## The Maurya and Gupta Dynasties

The Maurya and Gupta dynasties in India made important contributions that still affect Indian life. The first Indian empire was the Maurya Dynasty (324–185 B.C.). The emperor Ashoka created a unified government. The Mauryans were known for sandstone carvings and sculpture. The Gupta Dynasty (A.D. 320–500) ruled during India's golden age in science, art, and literature. Hindu and Buddhist beliefs inspired artists. Sanskrit literature blossomed during the Gupta Dynasty. The Gupta Dynasty was one of the early civilizations that developed the concept of zero. Gupta mathematicians also developed the numerals we use today.



### Before You Read

Find and underline the vocabulary word.

**caste** *noun*, an inherited social class



### After You Read

**REVIEW** How did the Aryans' use of iron help them settle and control India? Underline the sentence that tells how the Aryans' use of iron helped them settle and control India.

**REVIEW** In Hinduism, how do the caste system and the idea of reincarnation work together? Highlight the sentences that tell about how the caste system and reincarnation work together.

**REVIEW** From which Indian empire did we get our system of numerals and the concept of zero in mathematics? Draw a box around the sentences that tell from which Indian empire we got our system of numerals and the concept of zero.