

Lesson 1 Geography and Indian Life

MAIN IDEAS

Geography In India, mountains and seasonal winds shape the climate and affect agriculture.

Government The earliest Indian civilization built well-organized cities near the Indus River.

Culture Harappan civilization produced writing, a prosperous way of life, and a widely shared culture.

Physical Geography of India

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How do mountains and seasonal winds shape the climate of India?

The Indian Subcontinent

- India is a **subcontinent**—large landmass like a continent, but smaller
 - includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, most of Pakistan
- Kite-shaped subcontinent is also known as South Asia
- Theory states it was a separate land that slowly moved toward Asia
 - two lands collided; mountains pushed up where lands joined

Mountains and Waterways

- **Hindu Kush, Himalayas**—high mountain ranges over India's north border
- Ganges and Indus rivers irrigate and deposit fertile silt on land
- Indus River valley was home to first Indian civilization
- Saraswati River once ran parallel to Indus, but dried up
- India surrounded by Arabia Sea, Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal
 - travel made possible by these waters encouraged trade

Climate

- Tall mountains block cold north winds, create warm Indian climate
- **Monsoons**—seasonal winds
 - create rainy summer season—good for crops, but can cause floods
 - also create dry winter season

REVIEW QUESTION

How do India's rivers and climate affect agriculture?

Cities in the Indus Valley

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Why was the earliest Indian civilization located near the Indus River?

Early Inhabitants

- Indus River valley civilization began with agriculture
 - raised wheat, barley
 - grew cotton and made fabric by 3000 B.C.; first Asians to do so
 - domesticated cattle, sheep, goats, chickens
- Replaced stone tools with copper, bronze tools
- Trade created wealth, led to more complex culture

Great Cities

- Some villages grew into great cities by 2500 B.C.
 - Indus, Saraswati valleys had hundreds of cities
- Largest cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, had 35,000 people each
- Ancient Indus Valley culture is called **Harappan civilization**
- **Planned cities** built by design with protective walls, street grids
 - public buildings possibly used for religious, government functions

Dealing with Problems

- Harappan cities had sewers, houses with bathrooms and toilets
- Complex cities required planning, organization, powerful leaders
 - Harappan government—structure unknown, but must have been strong
 - may have had priests, kings, or combination of both

REVIEW QUESTION

How was Harappan civilization similar to other ancient civilizations?

Harappan Culture

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What were the cultural features of Harappan civilization?

Harappan Writing

- Harappan writing remains mysterious, has never been translated
 - had 500 pictographs—picture signs—for words or sounds or both
- Until writing is translated, must use artifacts to study Harappans

Harappan Religion

- No temples found for specific gods, but found evidence of religion
 - Mohenjo-Daro public bath may have been used for cleansing rituals
 - figurines of holy animals (bulls) and women (perhaps goddesses) found

A Widespread and Prosperous Culture

- Harappan culture spread across wide region
 - cities with common design spread across 500,000 square-mile area
- People used standard weights and measures
- Trade wealth allowed luxuries like bronze statues, clay toys
- Traded timber, ivory, and beads with Mesopotamians
 - received silver, tin, woolen cloth in return

Challenges to Harappan Life

- Earthquakes shook region around 2000 to 1500 B.C.
 - possibly caused Saraswati River to dry up
 - may also have caused Indus River to flood
- Disasters caused Harappan people to leave cities
 - Harappan civilization declined

REVIEW QUESTION

How is the Harappan writing similar to hieroglyphs?

Lesson Summary

- The rivers of India and the seasonal monsoons helped make agriculture possible.
- Agricultural wealth led to the rise of a complex civilization in the Indus Valley.
- The prosperous Harappan culture lasted for about 800 years.

Why It Matters Now . . .

Ancient Indians developed products that are still important today. They were the first people to domesticate chickens and the first Asians to produce cotton cloth.