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.