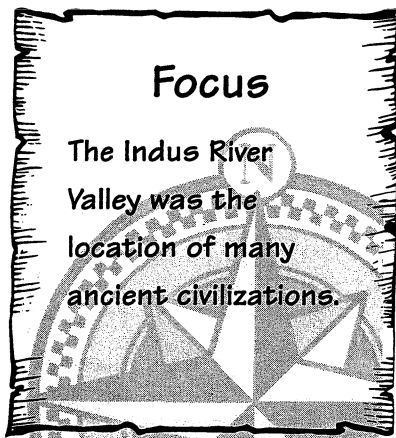


The Aryans, Persians, and Indians

Brief #1



The Indus River Valley is located in South Asia. It is where the countries of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan come together. In about 3500 B.C., human beings settled there. Archeologists have discovered many artifacts from about 2500 B.C. that showed that a great civilization existed there.

The ruins of two great ancient cities were found by archeologists in the 19th century. **The cities were called Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.** Scientists found ancient writing and many statues of what might have been gods and goddesses. There were roads, brick homes, and public baths. These ancient people had domesticated cats and dogs, as well as livestock like pigs and buffalo. Agriculture was important to their way of life. They grew barley, wheat, and cotton.



The Aryans

The Aryans were a group of people who migrated to the Indus River Valley in about 1500 B.C. They came from the area that we currently call Russia. For a time, the Aryans were nomads. **Nomads are people who have no permanent home.**

The Aryans lived by herding cattle and sheep. They lived in small groups or clans and were ruled by a rajah. Like some other cultures, they rode horse-drawn chariots.

The language that the Aryans spoke is called Sanskrit. **Sanskrit is a very ancient language. The Aryans were great storytellers. Their stories, poems, and songs are collected in a book called the Vedas.**

There are four Vedas: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Athara. Veda means *knowledge* in Sanskrit.

After a time, the Aryans began to settle in one place. They farmed and traded with each other. Clans of Aryans often fought battles with one another. The Aryan culture spread over a large area of India.



Persians

The Aryans were not the only people who migrated to the Indus River Valley. Persians came too. People back then migrated for the same reasons people do nowadays: to find a better life.

Vocabulary

1. Indus River Valley
2. Harappa
3. Mohenjo-Daro
4. Aryans
5. nomads
6. Sanskrit
7. Vedas

The Aryans, Persians, and Indians

Brief #1 (cont.)

Persians (cont.)

The Persian people were from the area that we call Iran. They migrated south to the Indus River Valley.

Cyrus II is thought to be the father of the Persian Empire. He was a great leader and warrior. By conquering the Babylonians, Phoenicians, and the Assyrians, he was able to create one of the largest empires in the ancient world. The Persian Empire was at its height in about 500 B.C. and lasted until about 640 A.D.

The Persians made many contributions to the civilized world. They excelled at mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The religion of Zoroastrianism began in ancient Persia. This religion is still practiced today. Zoroastrianism is monotheistic. Monotheism is the belief in one god.

Vocabulary (cont.)

8. Cyrus II
9. Zoroastrianism
10. monotheism
11. Mauryan Empire
12. Ashoka the Great
13. Gupta Empire

The Mauryan Empire

The first Indian empire was the Mauryan Empire. It comprised almost the whole of the area that we know as India. In about 320 B.C., an Indian soldier named Chandragupta Maurya conquered many smaller kingdoms and unified them under his rule.

Maurya's grandson Ashoka came to power in 270 B.C. He is known as Ashoka the Great. Ashoka the Great built huge columns out of sandstone. These columns were kind of like ancient newspapers. On them he would carve out important information about his political policies.

Ashoka the Great practiced the religion of Buddhism. (You will learn more about Buddhism in the next brief.) He sent missionaries all over his empire to teach about the religion. He also built monuments in places that were important in the life of the Buddha. Ashoka was a strong leader, but after his death, the Mauryan Empire slowly fell apart. It ended in about 320 A.D.

The Gupta Empire

The next great empire in ancient Indian history is the Gupta Empire (about 280 A.D.-550 A.D.) The Guptas excelled in music, mathematics, and astronomy. They invented the decimal number system that we currently use. They also made advancements in medicine. They knew how to fix broken bones and how to use herbs to help the sick.