

History of India and Southeast Asia-A Reading

Mohenjo-Daro profits from success in regional and international trade

2300 - 1750 BCE

The great city of Mohenjo-Daro, with more than 35,000 inhabitants, becomes one of the wealthiest trading centers in the Indus Valley. The fine cotton, exquisite jewelry and pottery, and distinctive metal goods created by the city's artisans as well as lumber from nearby forests are sought by merchants as far away as Mesopotamia. Blessed by abundant water from the Indus and Hakra rivers, Mohenjo-Daro and the other cities of the Indus Valley civilization also produce a bounty of agricultural products.



The Indus Valley civilization breaks up into smaller cultures



Main changes in the patterns of two mighty rivers play a major role in the collapse of the once highly unified Indus Valley civilization. Severe drops in the water level of the Hakra River leave some farmland dry and barren, while changes in the course of the Indus River cause destructive floods. Facing starvation, many families leave the valley for more fertile lands.

Arya invaders extend their rule over most of India

1750 – 1000 BCE

The Arya people gain control of all of India except some southern areas. Originally livestock herders from central Asia, these warlike invaders gradually conquer the native Dravidians and settle in villages. The Arya establish ranks for various *castes* (social classes determined by birth). The Brahmans, the highest-ranking caste, are known for speaking an elegant form of Sanskrit, the language of the Arya, and for performing elaborate religious rituals.



Mahavira preaches nonviolence toward all creatures

1000 – 500 BCE



After living a life of self-denial for 12 years, a religious teacher finds *enlightenment* (an understanding of spiritual truth) and preaches kindness toward all living creatures. The teacher, known as Mahavira (The Great One), contends that all creatures, even the smallest insect, have an eternal soul. He urges his followers to become vegetarians so that animals will not be killed for food. Because of Mahavira's ban on killing animals, his movement attracts few farmers. Most of his followers are city-dwellers engaged in business activities.

King Cyrus of Persia conquers part of India

Military forces under King Cyrus of Persia seize part of northwestern India along the upper Indus River. The great Cyrus, who founded his vast empire about 15 years ago, is renowned for respecting local customs and religions. He frees the Jews from their 45-year captivity in Babylonia and allows them to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem.



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A holy man known as Buddha founds a new religion



Spiritual leader Siddhartha Gautama, the son of an Aryan prince, attracts a growing number of disciples. His new religion teaches that people can find complete happiness and peace, known as *nirvana*, by freeing themselves from all desires and worldly things. Known by the title Buddha (Enlightened One), Gautama preaches how he found *enlightenment* (an understanding of ultimate truth) under a shady bo tree near the village of Gaya.

Fierce opposition in India helps cause rebellion in Alexander's army

326 BCE

Faced with widespread resistance by his army, famed general Alexander of Macedonia stops his eastward march into Asia at the Beas River in the upper Indus River Valley. Still on the move five years after conquering the Persian Empire, Alexander's troops are homesick, exhausted, and weakened by disease. Unexpectedly strong opposition from Indian forces, including those of King Porus and his war elephants, help hinder Alexander's plan to conquer the world. The realization that India is larger than believed contributes to the rebellion.



Chandragupta Maurya expands the Mauryan Empire to its greatest extent yet

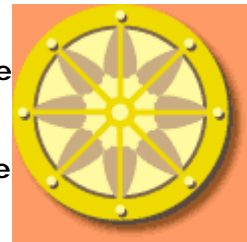
324 – 200 BCE



Military victories and the wise use of mineral and agricultural resources enable King Chandragupta Maurya to create a mighty empire. The Mauryan Empire includes nearly all of northern India as well as parts of the area north of the Himalaya and in central Asia. Chandragupta Maurya wins praise from his subjects by improving irrigation canals and roads. He maintains tight control of his empire through spies and informers

King Ashoka gives up war

King Ashoka adopts a life of peace after being stricken with sorrow and regret at the bloodshed caused by his conquest of the nearby kingdom of Kalinga. The war results in the death of 100,000 people and the capture of 150,000. Ashoka decides to follow the teachings of Buddha, which stress nonviolence and the importance of duty. Many of Ashoka's subjects follow his example. At the same time, the king promotes tolerance of traditional Hinduism and other beliefs.



King Chandragupta II promotes the arts and sciences

320 – 550 CE/AD



The Gupta Empire reaches impressive heights of learning and culture under King Chandragupta II. He promotes art, literature, mathematics, philosophy, and science. Textile manufacturing and trade, particularly with southeast Asia and China, provide a solid economic base for the empire. The king remains a devout Hindu. But the extensive libraries and excellent teachers of Buddhist monasteries attract many students.

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Muslims invade from Central Asia and rule Northern India

700 – 1858 CE/AD

Muslims begin to dominate life and culture in northern India. They establish the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. They built wonderful palaces and public buildings. They create universities and had influence for centuries. They taught mathematics and developed new technology. Their architecture is known around the world, particularly the Taj Mahal (p. 149). The Mughals traded with the entire continent, sailing the Indian Ocean and traveling the silk road with goods.



European traders come to India

1498 - 1600 CE/AD

Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French traders and merchants come to the coastal areas of India and establish trade centers. These foreigners work to gain more and more power. The East Indian Trading Company gains strength and exports Indian products to the rest of the world.



British begin to rule India

1800 – 1947

The British take over the government in India and bring India into the British Empire. They introduce the English language, European culture, government, and technology. They build urban centers and maintain control with a large military. The British weaken the Mughal power and dominate life in India. Trade is the most important link. Cities like Bombay (Mumbai) are filled with British buildings.

India becomes independent and Pakistan is created

1947 – present

Led by Mohandas Gandhi and others the British finally left India in 1947. The country of Pakistan was created in the Northern part of India. Today India is the world's largest English-speaking democracy with almost 1,000,000,000 (billion) people. Pakistan is a largely Muslim nation to the north.

