

CHAPTER

# 4

2500 BC–250 BC

# Ancient India

## THE BIG PICTURE

Like Mesopotamia and Egypt, India and China were each home to an early river valley civilization. The people of India and China developed their own governments, languages, customs, and social structures as well as religions and philosophies that still shape life in Asia.



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# Section 1: The Indus and Ganges River Valleys

- India is a **subcontinent** or a large landmass that juts out from the continent
- The mountains and the deserts as well as the rivers and oceans separated the people of India from the rest of the world. These were known as **geographic barriers**.

Himalayan  
Mtns.

Hindu Kush

Indus River  
Valley

Thar Desert

Ganges River

Indian Ocean

# Map

Notice the arrows which show the winter and summer **monsoons**.

The summer monsoons bring moisture to the otherwise dry areas.

Without the monsoons the people would starve.



# India's Geography

- Indus River flows across northwest edge of Indian **subcontinent**—large landmass, part of a continent
- Home of one of ancient world's great river valley civilizations
- Indian subcontinent includes three major geographic zones
  - **Far north: Himalaya, Hindu Kush mountain systems, separating India from rest of Asia**
  - *South: Deccan Plateau, high plateau receiving less rain than other parts of subcontinent*
  - Between mountains, plateau are Northern Plains, where society first developed in India

# Floods and Annual Rainfall

## *Fertile Region*

- Flood deposits from Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra rivers enrich soil of Northern Plains, make it very fertile
- Heavy rains also add to fertility of plains
- Much of rain brought to India by seasonal winds, **monsoons**

## *Monsoon Winds*

- Summer, monsoon winds from southwest bring warm air, heavy rains from Indian Ocean; most of annual rainfall at this time
- Winter, northeast monsoons blow cool, dry air from Central Asia, drier months

# Positive and Negative Effects of Monsoons

## Water Critical Factor

The people of India's first civilizations depended upon the monsoons to bring the water that their crops needed.

### ***Monsoon Rains***

- Monsoon rains flooded rivers; rivers deposited fertile silt in which farmers could grow crops
- With abundance of rainfall came threat of devastation

### ***Devastating Effects***

- Monsoon rains too heavy—crops, homes, lives could be lost
- Monsoon rains too late, did not last long enough—people could not grow crops; famine became danger

# Geography Video Clip



# Geographical Influences

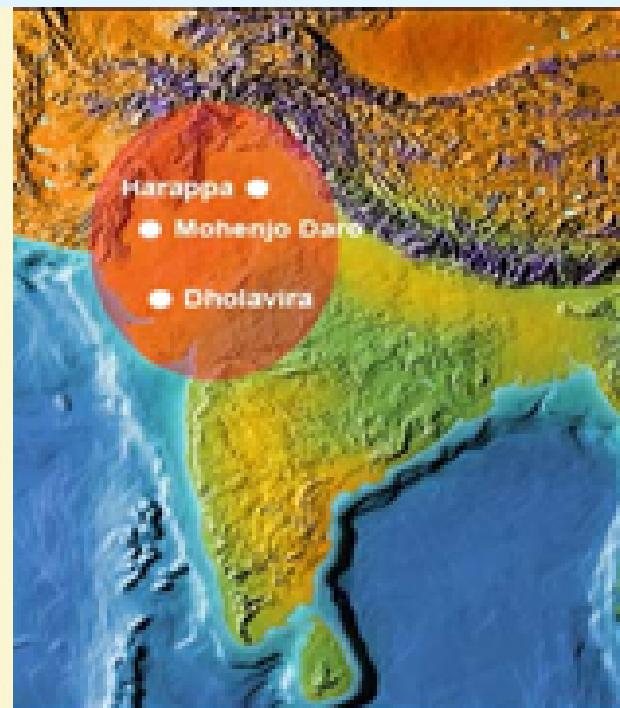
## Early India

### Main Idea

Early civilization arose in the Indus River Valley, flourished, and then mysteriously died out. Later India's Vedic civilization developed a culture based on old and new beliefs.

### Reading Focus

- How did India's geography affect the development of civilization there?
- What were the defining features of the Indus Valley Civilization?
- What do we know about life in India's Vedic period?



# Cities and How India Prospered

## Indus Valley Civilization

People have lived in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years. At first people lived as hunter-gatherers, but slowly people began to settle down in farming communities.

### ***First Civilization***

- Farm communities gave rise to India's first civilization
- Developed in valley of Indus River
- Began 2500 BC, when people first developed writing system

### ***Cities, Settlements***

- 1920s, remains of two large cities first ruins found
  - Harappa
  - Mohenjo Daro
- Civilization called Harappan
- Other cities, towns since uncovered

### ***Indus Society***

- Settlements well planned, carefully laid out
- Streets ran in grid pattern; major avenues twice as wide as minor streets

# Mohenjo- Daro



# *People of India*

## **The Vedic Period**

Sometime after 2000 BC, a new people took control of India. Historians often refer to this group as the Aryans, from a Sanskrit word meaning "noble." Eventually the Aryans ruled over most of India, except for the far south.

### ***Origin of Aryans***

- Historians not sure when Aryans arrived, where they came from
- Some assume they moved from area between Caspian, Black seas
- Others argue Aryans developed in northern India, did not move into area

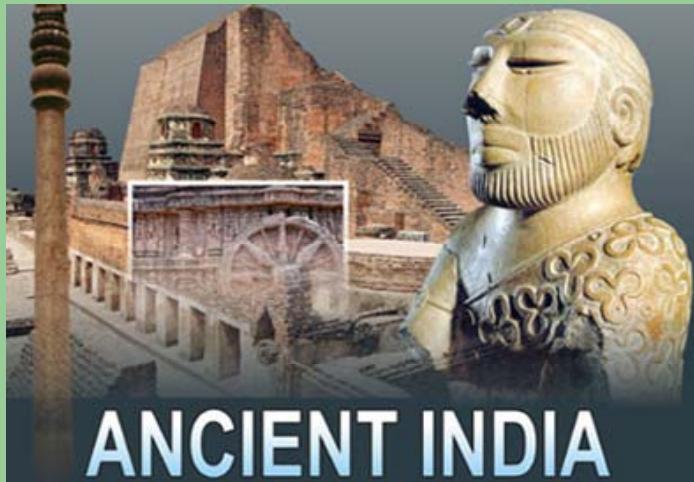
### ***Archaeological Evidence***

- Little archaeological evidence remains to document early Aryan period in India
- Most comes from sacred writings called the **Vedas**
- Include many details about Aryan history, society

This period in Indian history is often called the **Vedic** period.

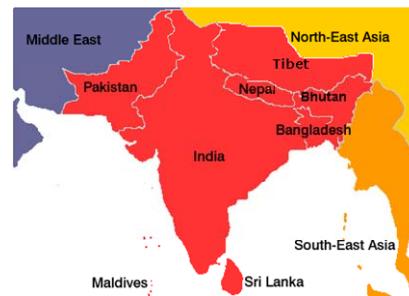
# Ancient India

Mr. Moore's 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Social Studies



# Key Terms

- **Subcontinent**-a large landmass that juts out from a continent; India was considered a **subcontinent**.
- **Migrate**-is to relocate or to move from one place to settle in another area.
- **Monsoon**-a strong wind that blows across a region at a certain time of the year.
  - October- May winter **monsoons** blow from northeast spreading dry air
  - Middle of June wind blows from Indian ocean summer **monsoons** brought rain if none=famine; if too much=deadly floods



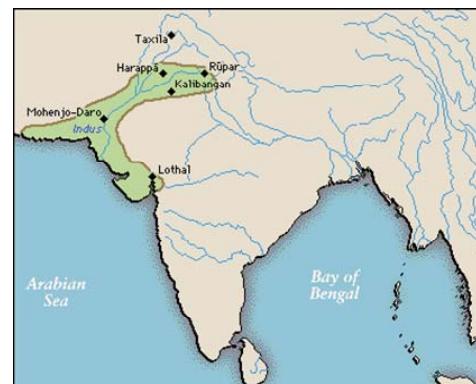
# Key Terms

- **Caste**- a type of social class
  - Had to stay in caste of parents
  - Each **caste** had special work and duties
- **Citadel**-a fortress in the center of a city
  - A **citadel** is a group of public buildings enclosed by high brick wall



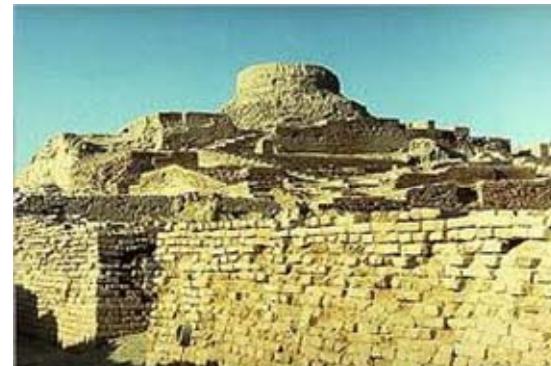
# Key Places

- **Himalaya Mountains-** mountain system of south central Asia extending along the border between India and Tibet through Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan
  - Highest mountain range in the world. Was the wall that cut off India from the rest of the ancient world
- **Indus River Valley**-a valley of early civilizations along the Indus River, one of the longest rivers in the world
  - From rich soil, farmers got to harvest a surplus of wheat and other grains
  - Because of the surplus, the population grew and produced cities such as Mohenjo-Daro



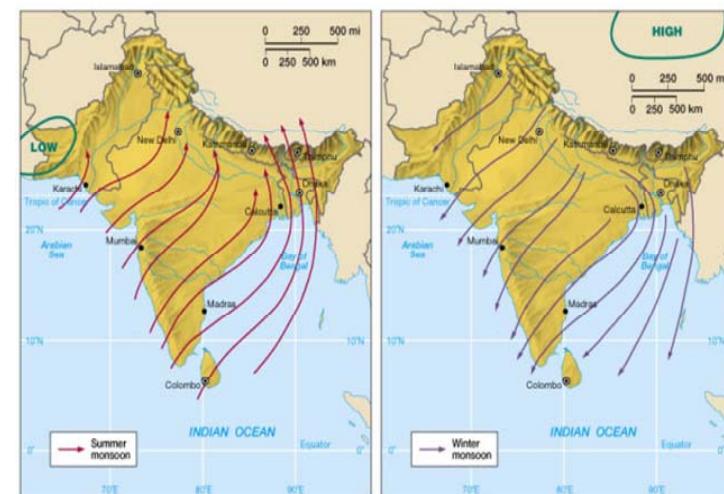
# Key Places

- Mohenjo-Daro- a large ancient city on the banks of the Indus River in the northwest of India
- Ganges River- a river in northern India flowing from the Himalaya Mountains to the Bay of Bengal



# India's Geographic Setting

- India is a subcontinent or a large landmass that juts out from a continent
- Shaped like a kite, it pushes out of Asia into the Indian Ocean.
- India's history and culture have been influenced by the fact that it has been isolated by bodies of water (Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea) as well as the Himalaya Mts.
- India's climate is controlled by monsoons. Winter monsoons (October to May) spread dry air, while the summer monsoon picks up moisture from the ocean. People depend on the summer monsoon to provide life giving rain.



# Life in the Indus River Valley

- Thanks to the fertile soil of the Indus River, valley farmers got a surplus of wheat and other grains.
- With that surplus, the population grew.
- Well-planned cities flourished in the valley.
- Mohenjo-Daro lay along the banks of the Indus River.



# Conquest by the Aryans

- The Aryans easily conquered the people of the Indus River Valley and many of them became slaves for the Aryans.
- The Aryans gradually moved into the Ganges River Valley
  - Using tools and axes that they made out of iron, they cleared areas of the thick rainforest and built, farms, villages and cities.

## ***ARYAN LIFE***

- *Were herders and warriors*
- *Had no written language but priests called Brahmins, performed religious services composed of hymns and prayers*
- *Organized their society around three classes – priests, warriors & ordinary people*
- *Gradually added a fourth class to include the people they conquered (servants, laborers, farm workers)*



