

Ancient Asian Empires

Ancient Indian Empires

Early India (c. 2600-1700 B.C.E.)

- First settlements around Indus River
 - o Spread over modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Northwest India
 - o Major Settlements at Harappa and Mohenjodaro
 - Sophisticated water drainage and storage system
 - Developed system of weights and trade
 - Made jewelry and other craft items
 - Writing system still not deciphered
 - o Permanent cities made of brick
 - Archaeology suggests large well planned cities
 - o Developed Agriculture
 - Cotton, sesame, peas, barley
 - o Merchant Class
 - Heavily connected with other civilizations

Vedic Period(c. 1700-500 B.C.E.)

- Aryan Migration (c. 1700-1100 B.C.E.)
 - o Came in as Harappan civilization declined
 - Originally from Black Sea/Caspian Sea Area
 - Not known if forceful migration
 - o Combined traits of Harappan Culture with Aryan Culture
 - Formed Vedic Culture
 - Religious
 - Linguistic
 - Agriculture
 - o Disputed impact of Aryans
- Writing of Sacred Texts
 - o *Rig Veda*
 - o Written in Vedic Sanskrit
 - o 1017 poems
 - Mythological Stories
 - Include stories of Aryan Gods
- Change in Living Style
 - o Tribal villages with herds not cities
 - o Bronze
 - Iron comes later from Hittites
 - o Chariots
 - o Bows and Arrows



Indian Caste System

- Linked to Hinduism
 - o The higher in the caste you are the pure pure/holy you are
- Different Caste = Different Species
- Cannot move up in Caste (Limited Social Mobility)
 - o Cannot marry out of caste
 - Would be seen the same as a human trying to marry a dog
 - o Certain Jobs reserved for certain castes

- Dictated the way they dressed, acted, ate, etc...
- Karma – What comes around goes around, if you are bad, bad things will happen to you. If you are good, good things will happen to you. If you lead a good life you will be rewarded once you are reincarnated.
 - Reincarnation: Hindu believed that when you die you are re-born as a different person. This is the only way to move up in caste. Members of the highest caste are there because they had good karma and dharma in their past lives
- Dharma – the religious and moral duties of an individual. Varies depending on caste.
- Caste creates sense of identity
 - Members of caste helped out and bonded with each other within the caste
 - Each caste depended on the other castes
- As India changed they changed the caste system to accommodate new groups of people.

Main Hindu Castes

Brahman (Priests, scholars, Teachers)

Kshatriya (Soldiers, Kings, Administration)

Vaishya (Merchants, Agriculturists)

Shudra (non-Hindu and Artisans)

Harijan (Untouchables = Street Sweepers, Garbage collectors)

The Mahajanapadas States (c. 600-424 B.C.E.)

- 16 different kingdoms had developed during Vedic Period
 - Some hereditary rulers
 - Some elected rulers
- By 500 Kingdoms absorbed into 4 Empires
 - Vatsa, Avanti, Kosala and Magadha
- Seen as Philosophical Golden Age
 - (537 B.C.E.) Siddhartha Gautama reaches Nirvana
 - Gains Name Buddha
 - Comes up with idea of "Four Noble Truths"
 1. Suffering exists and pleasure is only temporary
 2. Origin of suffering comes from not understanding suffering
 3. Once you fully understand suffering only then can you rid yourself of it (Nirvana)
 4. Noble Eightfold path
 - Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration
 - Ideas of Karma and Reincarnation
 - (510 B.C.E.) Mahavira founds Jainism
 - Non-Violence (to all living organisms)
 - Truthfulness
 - Non-Stealing
 - Celibacy
 - Non-Materialism
- Magadha started as most powerful of dynasties. (684-320 B.C.E.)
- Magadha replaced by Shishunaga dynasty which, in turn, was overthrown by the Nanda dynasty in 424 BC.
- Nandas replaced by Maurya dynasty.

