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Indus Valley Civilization Table 1: The Chronology of Indus Valley Civilization

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Indus Valley Civilization

The objective of this article is to understand the evolution of the Indo Valley Civilization, in comparison of other old history civilization flourished in Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia and China, and their association with Indo Valley Civilization. To understand the Indus Valley Civilization, we need to examine the evolvement of historical civilization. There are numerous theories and controversies in this subject. In this review, I tried to put together the most acceptable concepts in this difficult subject. The main objective of this article not to innovate new theories of the Indus Valley Civilization, but to re-examine the all available data and write in a concise form for ease of understanding of this controversial subject.

Six different stages shown in Table 1 is generally accepted show the historical ages and development of each civilization with time.

Table 1: The Chronology of Indus Valley Civilization

Stage 1:	7000-4000 BCE	Beginnings of village farming communities
Stage 2:	4300-3200 BCE	Developed farming and pastoral communities
Stage 3:	3200-2600 BCE	Agricultural surplus societies, urbanization
Stage 4:	2600-2500 BCE	The big leap. Advanced town-planning and scripts emerge
Stage 5:	2500-2000 BCE	Civilization in full bloom
Stage 6:	2000-1600 BCE	Dramatic decline in Sindh and resurgence in Punjab and Haryana. Back to the Farming Units

(Source: Wikipedia Public Domain)

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Table 2: The Timeline of the Indus Valley Civilization with Other Ancient Civilization

Name	Period	Area	Occupations	Writing	Religion
Indus Valley Civilization- Harappa / Mohenjo-daro	3000–1500 BC	Northwest India, Pakistan,	Potter's wheel, Agriculture, dams, city planning, seals	Pictographic	Unknown
Mesopotamian	3000–750 BC	Sumer, Babylonia, Assyric Highlands	Dairy farming, textile, metal working, potter's wheel, sexagesimal system	Cuneiform	Polytheistic
Egyptian	3000–800 BC	North Eastern Africa along River Nile	Egyptian Pyramids, Mummification, Decimal system, Solar calendar	Hieroglyphic	Polytheistic
Chinese	1600 BC–1 AD	China	Silk, Pottery, Chinaware, Metals, Great Wall, Paper	Chinese	Taoism, Confucianism
Persian	730 BC	Greater Persia	Agriculture, architecture, landscaping, postal service	Cuneiform, Pahlavi	Zoroastrianism
Greek	2700 BC - 1500 BC (Cycladic and Minoan civilization), 1600 BC – 1100 BC (Mycenaean Greece), 800 BC (Ancient Greece)	Greece (Peloponnese, Epirus, Central Greece, Western Greece, Macedon), later Alexandria	Agriculture, winemaking, architecture poetry, drama, philosophy, history, rhetoric, mathematics, political science, astronomy, physics, chemistry, Medicine	Greek	Polytheistic
Roman	600 BC	Italy	Agriculture, Roman calendar, concrete	Latin	Polytheistic
Mayan	1500 BC – 300 AD	Central America	Agriculture, cotton, dyeing, Mesoamerican pyramids	Hieroglyphic	Polytheistic
Aztecs	1325 AD – 1519 AD	Mexico	Agriculture, smelting, metal working	Pictographic	Polytheistic
Incas	1300 AD – 1532 AD	Ecuador, Peru, Chile	Textile looms, agriculture, Inca architecture	–	Polytheistic

(Source: Wikipedia Public Domain)

Indus Valley Civilization

Historical Perspective of Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization started in South Asia in at 7000 BCE -3200 BCE). Figure 1 depicts the location of the Indus Valley with respect to the early states of the old world.



Figure 1. Location of the Ancient World Civilization
(Source: www.harappa.com/indus2/timeline.html:
obtained copyright permission from Harrappa.com)

The earliest evidence of human civilization in South Asia is from the **Mehrgarh** region (7000 BC to 3200 BC) of Pakistan, located near the Bolan Pass, to the west of the Indus River valley and between the present-day Pakistani cities of Quetta, Kalat and Sibi. Mehrgarh was discovered in 1974 by an archaeological team directed by French archaeologist Jean-François Jarrige, and was excavated continuously between 1974 and 1986. The earliest settlement at Mehrgarh—in the northeast corner of the 495 acres (2.00 km²) site—was a small farming village

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dated between 7000 BC–5500 BC. Mehrgarh is now seen as a precursor to the Indus Valley Civilization.

The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the world's oldest urban civilizations (3300–1300 BCE), in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent, consisting of what is now mainly present-day Pakistan and northwest India. The civilization spread across the Indus River basin east, west, north and south over 500,000 square miles, making it the largest known ancient civilization and have had a population of five million people. Indus River Basin, also known as in the ancient “**Sarasvati**” River basin mentioned in the “**Rigveda**”[(Sanskrit *ṛgveda*, from *ṛk* '(sacred) stanza' + *veda* '(sacred) knowledge'] , runs between the Indus and the Yamuna Rivers.

The Indus Valley Civilization (also known as **Harappan culture**) has two greatest cities, **Mohenjo-daro and Harappa**, emerged circa 2600 BCE along the Indus River valley in Punjab and Sindh. The civilization, with a writing system, urban centers, and diversified social and economic system, was rediscovered in the 1920s after excavations at Mohenjo-daro (which means "*mound of the dead*") in Sindh near Sukkur, and Harappa, in west Punjab south of Lahore. A number of other sites stretching from the Himalayan foothills in east Punjab, India in the north, to Gujarat in the south and east, and to Baluchistan in the west have also been discovered and studied. **Harappa** is an archaeological site in Punjab,

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Figure 2. Major Cities during Indus Valley Civilization
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Northeast Pakistan, about 24 km (15 mile) west of Sahiwal. The site takes its name from a modern village located near the former course of the Ravi River. The current village of Harappa is 6 km (3.7 mi) from the ancient site. The site of the ancient city contains the ruins of a Bronze Age fortified city, which was part of the Cemetery H culture and the Indus Valley Civilization, centered in Sindh and the Punjab. The city is believed to have had as many as 23,500 residents and occupied over 100 hectares (250 acres) at its greatest extent during the Mature Harappan phase (2600–1900 BC), which is considered large for its time.

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Indus Valley civilization was mainly an urban culture sustained by surplus agricultural production and commerce, the latter including trade with Mesopotamia. Both **Mohenjo-daro** and **Harappa** are generally characterized as having "differentiated living quarters, flat-roofed brick houses, and fortified administrative or religious centers. Although such similarities have given rise to arguments for the existence of a standardized system of urban layout and planning, the similarities are largely due to the presence of a semi-orthogonal type of civic layout, and a comparison of the layouts of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa shows that they are in fact, arranged in a quite dissimilar fashion.

Archaeology

The excavators of the site have proposed the following chronology of Harappa's occupation:

1. *Ravi Aspect of the Hakra phase, c. 3300-2800 BCE.*
2. *Kot Dijian (Early Harappan) phase, c. 2800-2600 BCE.*
3. *Harappan Phase, c. 2600-1900 BCE.*
4. *Transitional Phase, c. 1900-1800 BCE.*
5. *Late Harappan Phase, c. 1800-1300 BCE.*

The first extensive excavations at Harappa were started by Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni in 1920. His work and contemporaneous excavations at **Mohenjo-daro** first brought to the world's attention the existence of the forgotten Indus Valley civilization as the earliest urban culture in the Indian subcontinent. There were earlier and later cultures, often called Early Harappan and Late Harappan, in the same area of the Harappan Civilization. The Harappan civilization is sometimes called the Mature Harappan culture to distinguish it from these cultures. Up to

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1999, over 1,056 cities and settlements have been found, out of which 96 have been excavated, mainly in the general region of the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra river and its tributaries. Among the settlements are the major urban centers of Harappa, Lothal, Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira, Kalibanga, and Rakhigarhi.

In this article, I am providing few of the artifacts that were excavated. More details of the pictures can be found in a book by Jonathan Mark Kenoyer in *Ancient Cities of Indus Valley*, Oxford Press, 1998, www.harappan.com/indus2/timeline.html and also from Wikipedia (free Encyclopedia)

Mohenjo-daro, simply means ***Mound of the Dead*** in Sindhi. The city's original name is unknown, but analysis of a Mohenjo-daro seal suggests a possible ancient Dravidian name, *Kukkutarma*. **Mohenjo-daro** was built in the 26th century BCE. It was one of the largest cities of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, also known as the Harappan Civilization, which developed around 3000 BCE from the prehistoric Indus culture. At its height, the Indus Civilization spanned much of what is now Pakistan and North India, extending westwards to the Iranian border, south to Gujarat in India and northwards to an outpost in Bactria, with major urban centers at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Lothal, Kalibangan, Dholavira and Rakhigarhi. Mohenjo-daro was the most advanced city of its time, with remarkably sophisticated civil engineering and urban planning. When the Indus civilization went into sudden decline around 1900 BCE, Mohenjo-daro was abandoned.

Mohenjo-daro is an archeological site in the province of Sindh, Pakistan. built around 2600 BCE and was one of the largest settlements of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, and one of the world's earliest major urban settlements,

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contemporaneous with the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete. Mohenjo-daro was abandoned in the 19th century BCE. The ruins of the city remained undocumented for over 3,700 years, until their discovery in 1922 by **Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay**, an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India and later a History Professor at the Benares Hindu University. He was led to the mound by a Buddhist monk, who reportedly believed it to be a stupa. In the 1930s, major excavations were conducted at the site under the leadership of John Marshall, D. K. Dikshitar and Ernest Mackay. Further excavations were carried out in 1945 by Ahmad Hasan Dani and Mortimer Wheeler.

Mohenjo-daro has a planned layout based on a street grid of rectilinear buildings. Most were built of fired and mortared brick; some incorporated sun-dried mud-brick and wooden superstructures. The sheer size of the city, and its provision of public buildings and facilities, suggests a high level of social organization. At its peak of development, Mohenjo-daro could have housed around 35,000 residents. The city is divided into two parts, the so-called Citadel and the Lower City. The Citadel – a mud-brick mound around 12 meters (39 feet) high – is known to have supported public baths, a large residential structure designed to house 5,000 citizens, and two large assembly halls. The city had a central marketplace, with a large central well. Individual households or groups of households obtained their water from smaller wells.

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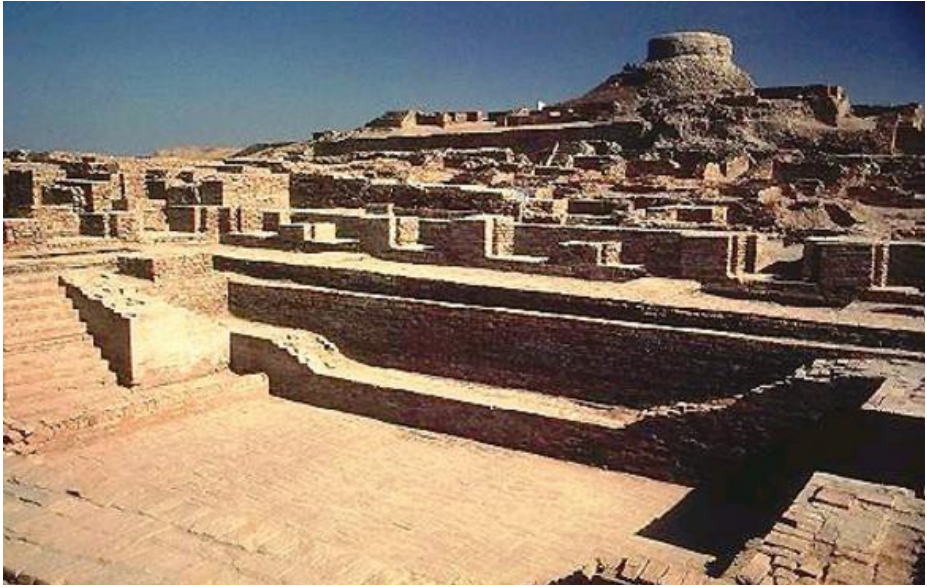


Figure 3. View of the high western mound made up of a massive mud brick platform and brick houses of the Harappan period (2600 to 1900 BCE.). On top of the Harappan structures is a Buddhist period stupa made of mud brick that dates to the first century A.D. and Great Bath in the front (Source. Wikipedia Commons Distribution)

Waste water was channeled to covered drains that lined the major streets. Some houses, presumably those of wealthier inhabitants, include rooms that appear to have been set aside for bathing, and one building had an underground furnace (known as a hypocaust), possibly for heated bathing. Most houses had inner courtyards, with doors that opened onto side-lanes. Some buildings had two stories.

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Figure 4. The “Great Bath of Mohenjo-daro.” This is the earliest public water tank in the ancient world. The tank itself measures approximately 12 meters long and 7 meters wide, with a maximum depth of 2.4 meters with two wide staircases lead down into the tank. The tank is water tight due to finely fitted bricks laid on edge with gypsum plaster. (Source: www.harappan/indus2/time.html; obtained copyright permission from Harrappa.com))

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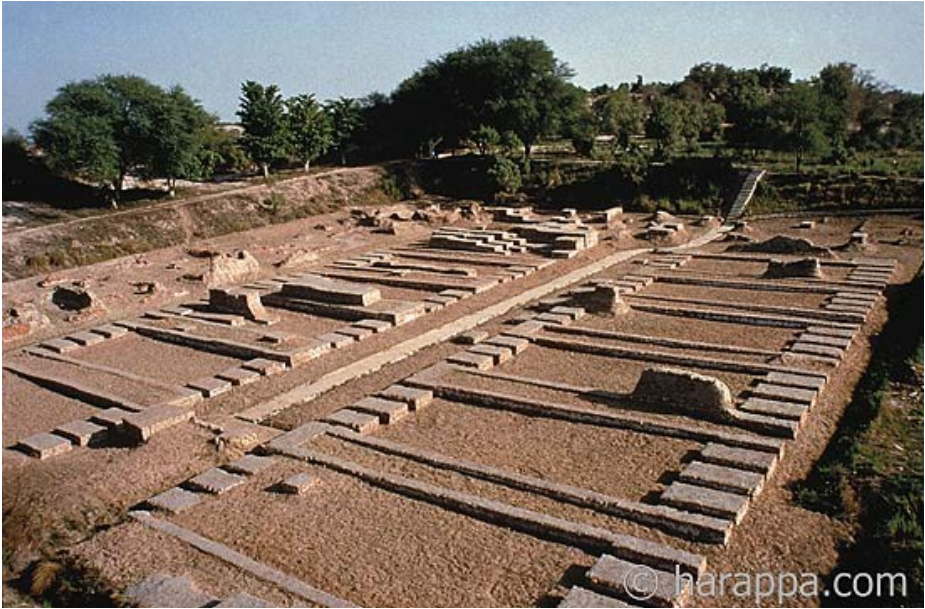


Figure 5 The "Granary" of Harappa". It is a brick structure that was built on a massive brick foundation. Two rows of six rooms that appear to be foundations are arranged along a central passageway that is about 7 meters wide and partly paved with baked bricks. (Source: [www.harappan/indus2/ time.html](http://www.harappan/indus2/time.html) ; obtained copyright permission from Harrappa.com)

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Figure 6. "Private Wells of Mohenjo-daro."
(Source: www.harappan/indus2/time.html;
obtained copyright permission from Harrappa.com)

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Indus Valley Script

Indus script (also **Harappan script** refers to short strings of symbols associated with the Indus Valley Civilization used during the Mature Harappan period, between the 26th and 20th centuries BC. It is not generally accepted that these symbols form a script used to record a language, and the subject remains controversial. The writing system is largely pictorial but includes many abstract signs as well. The script is thought to have been mostly written from right to left, possibility derived Dravidian languages.

It is often presumed that Dravidians were the creators of the Indus River Valley Civilization and that they were occupying the entire Indian subcontinent when the Indo-Aryans invaded from Afghanistan (ca2000 BCE). The Dravidians were probably subjected by the Indo-Aryans and are the “**dasus**” of Vedic scriptures. Other Dravidians remained in a tribal state in central and southern India. Dravidians in general were gradually became Hindus, but retained their languages. The present day belief indicates that the Indo-Aryans language is agglutinative (clustered together), like the **Dravidian** languages.

Between 400 and as many as 600 distinct Indus symbols have been found on seals, small tablets, ceramic pots and more than a dozen other materials, including a "signboard" that apparently once hung over the gate of the inner citadel of the Indus city of Dholavira (in the Kutch district of Gujarat). Indus inscriptions are no more than four or five characters in length, most of which (aside from the Dholavira "signboard") are tiny; the longest on a single surface, which is less than 1 inch (2.54 cm) square, is 17 signs long; the longest on any object (found on three different faces of a mass-produced object) has a length of 26 symbols Ten known Indus script is shown here.

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Figure 7. Seals and Scripts used in Ancient Indus Valley
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

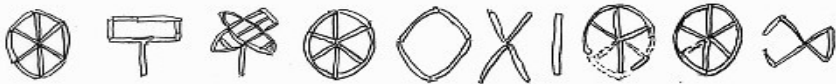


Figure 8. Inscription of Ten Characters from [Dholavira](#)
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Arts and Crafts

In **Indus Valley Civilization**, various sculptures, seals, pottery, gold jewelry, and anatomically detailed figurines in terracotta, bronze, and steatite have been found at excavation sites. A number of gold, terra-cotta and stone figurines of girls in dancing poses reveal the presence of some dance form. Also, these terra-cotta

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figurines included cows, bears, monkeys, and dogs. The animal depicted on a majority of seals at sites of the mature period has not been clearly identified. As yet, there is insufficient evidence to substantiate claims that the image had religious or cultic significance, but the prevalence of the image raises the question of whether or not the animals in images of the are religious symbols or not. Many crafts "such as shell working, ceramics, and agate and glazed steatite bead making" were used in the making of necklaces, bangles, and other ornaments from all phases of Harappan sites and some of these crafts are still practiced in the subcontinent today.



Figure 9. Painted Pottery Harappa. Source : www.harappan/ obtained copyright permission from Harappa.com)

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Figure 10. This collection of gold and agate ornaments includes objects found at both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. At the top are fillets of hammered gold that would have been worn around the forehead. The other ornaments include bangles, chokers, long pendant necklaces, rings, earrings, conical hair ornaments, and broaches. Such ornaments were never buried with the dead, but were passed on from one generation to the next. (Source: www.harappan/indus2/time.html; obtained copyright permission from Harappa.com))

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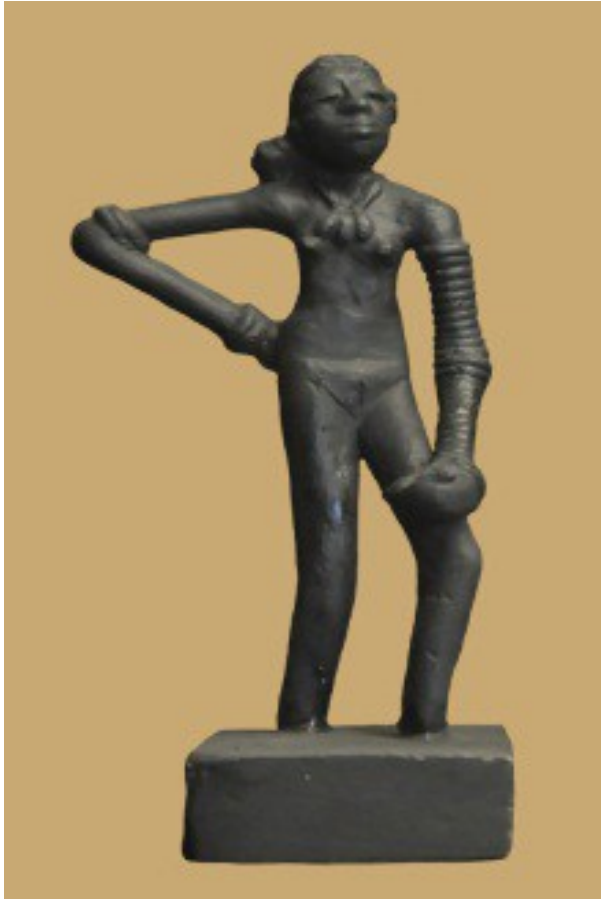


Figure 11. The Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro
(Source: [Wikipedia Commons Attribution](#)
Author Joe Ravi- License CC-BY-SA 30)

Indus Valley Religion

Some Indus valley seals show “**Swastikas**”, which are found in other religions worldwide, especially in Indian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and

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Jainism. The earliest evidence for elements of Hinduism is alleged to have been present before and during the early Harappan period. Swastikas have also been used in various other ancient civilizations around the world. However, in East Asia, Swastika is a tantric symbol to evoke **Shakti** (sacred force or empowerment) or the sacred symbol of auspiciousness and originated from the Sanskrit Svastika as "being with higher self". The Swastika symbol became a popular symbol of luck in the Western world in the early 20th century. Although the Nazi Party adopted the symbol in the 1920s, it continued in use in Western countries with its original meaning until the Nazi association became dominant in the 1930s. The term *swastika* is first attested in English in 1871, and first refers to the Nazi emblem in 1932.

Many Indus valley seals show animals. One motif shows a horned figure seated in a posture reminiscent of the Lotus position and surrounded by animals was named by early excavators "**Pashupati**" (lord of cattle), an epithet of the later Hindu god Shiva.

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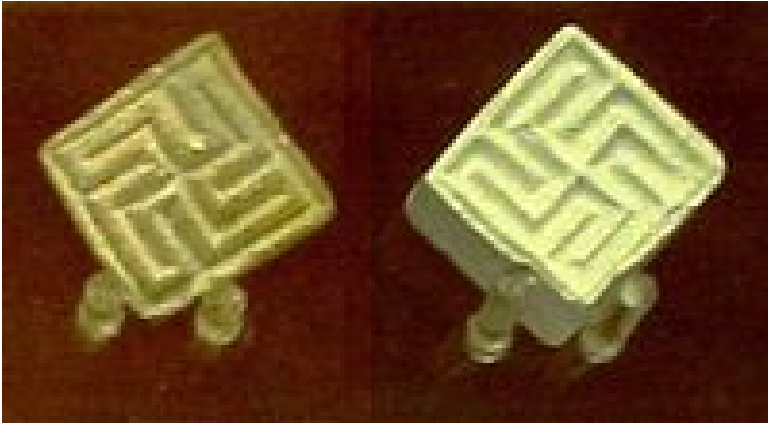


Figure 12. Swastika Symbols during Indus Valley Civilization in British Museum (Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)



Figure 13. Shiva Pashupati Seal of Ancient India (Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

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Indus Valley Civilization Language

The Indus script appears to have been developed indigenously and was not borrowed from West Asia. It has its foundation in early written symbols dating to the Ravi Phase (3500–3300 B.C.) at the site of Harappa and at approximately the same time from other sites in the greater Indus Valley region. This script became more standardized during the Kot Diji Phase (c. 2800–2600 B.C.) into what can be called the Early Indus script. By 2600 B.C. a fully developed Indus script was being used throughout the Indus Valley in an area that was twice the size of ancient Mesopotamia or Egypt.

The Indus script was usually written from right to left. This is confirmed through an analysis of sign sequences carved on seals and on the basis of writing on pottery shards that shows the sequence of strokes. More than 4,200 objects containing Indus script have been discovered, and most of these come from the sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa (over 3,700). Scholars have defined between 400 and 450 distinct Indus script signs or graphemes. Most scholars agree that the writing is based on a logo-syllabic system in which each sign means a word, a syllable, or a sound. However, some signs appear to represent pictographs (of a man or a fish, and so on) and when used alone they might represent an idea or an entire story. The use of ideographs with a logo-syllabic writing system suggests that there were many different ways of using the writing.

The Indus Valley civilization is the unknown language or languages of the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BCE) Harappan civilization (Indus Valley Civilization). The language being unattested in any readable contemporary source, hypotheses regarding its nature are reduced to purported loanwords and substratum influence, notably the substratum in Vedic Sanskrit and a few terms recorded in

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Sumerian cuneiform (the earliest known systems of writing) in the southern Mesopotamia, modern Iraq.

Late Harappa and its Decline

Around 1800 BCE, signs of a gradual decline began to emerge, and by around 1700 BCE, most of the cities were abandoned. It was assumed that the decline of the Indus Civilization was caused by the invasion of an Indo-European tribe from Central Asia called the "Aryans". A group of 37 skeletons was found in various parts of Mohenjo-Daro, and passages in the Vedas referring to battles and forts. However, scholars showed that the marks on the skulls were caused by erosion, and not violent aggression. Today, many scholars believe that the collapse of the Indus Civilization was caused by drought and a decline in trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia. It has also been suggested that immigration by new peoples, deforestation, floods, or changes in the course of the river may have contributed to the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Recent archaeological excavations indicate that the decline of Harappa drove people eastward. After 1900 BCE, the number of sites in India increased from 218 to 853. Excavations in the Gangetic plain show that urban settlement began around 1200 BCE, only a few centuries after the decline of Harappa and much earlier than previously expected. Archaeologists have emphasized that, just as in most areas of the world, there was a continuous series of cultural developments. These link "the so-called two major phases of urbanization in South Asia".

A possible natural reason for the Harappa's decline is connected with climate change that is also signaled for the neighboring areas of the Middle East: The Indus valley climate grew significantly cooler and drier from about 1800 BCE, linked to a general weakening of the monsoon at that time. Alternatively, a crucial

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factor may have been the disappearance of substantial portions of the Ghaggar Hakra river system. The actual reason for decline might be any combination of these factors.

The Aryans Arrival to India

“Aryan” is derived from the Sanskrit and Avestan term *arya-*, the extended form *aryana-*, *ari-* and/or *arya-* of which the word Iran is a cognate. (Source: Wikipedia) Precisely who the Aryans were and exactly where they came from is a puzzle still debated today. Historians have generally used the word “Aryan” to denote those peoples who spoke the Indo-European languages, which include English, German, Latin, Greek, Russian, Persian, and Sanskrit. There are many theories about where Aryans first came from. A common hypothesis is that Aryans originated in the steppes (plains) of Russia. From there they may have migrated to Europe and down into Mesopotamia. Others believe that the Aryans arose in Europe and migrated eastward. Some theorists, occasionally for racist reasons, claim that Aryans were the founders of the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations and were therefore the world’s first civilized peoples. This theory was promoted during the brutal Nazi regime of Germany to bolster its “Aryan supremacy” idea. The Nazis even claimed that Aryans were originally created by Godlike super-humans from a different world. A similar belief was expressed earlier in history. However, some recent archeological discoveries in India, Russia and Japan have pushed back the antiquity of the Aryans to at least 6000BC and proved beyond doubt that the ancient Aryans were not nomadic tribes from central Asia but had very advanced urban civilizations. Russian archeologists and linguists also proved that the Aryans have migrated not from the Russian steppes but came to Russia via Armenia and Georgia. Recent discovery of the ruins of Alkaim confirmed that it was a very

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advanced civilization to be at least 4000 years old of Indo-Aryan origin. **(Source: [www.ivarta.com/columns/OL 051212.htm](http://www.ivarta.com/columns/OL_051212.htm))**

It is not well-understood why the so-called Aryans migrate. The best answer seems to be there could have been a big climate change (or like Noah's flood) in the part of their proto-Indo-European homeland, and there was a mass migration. As part of the mass migration of people over many thousands of years, proto-Indo-European people migrated westward into much of Europe, taking their language with them. Not all these people migrated westward, and a proto-Indo-Iranian culture developed in the south of Russia, probably around 2500 BCE. It is most likely that after a few centuries, a group migrated south-east into India, taking both language and the early Hindu religion with them. A later group also migrated south, to the east of the Caspian Sea, into eastern Iran, also taking language and the Zoroastrian religion. A third group migrated south, around the western edge of the Caspian Sea into western Iran. This last group, which was to become the Medes and Persians, took an older religion with them but converted, centuries later, to Zoroastrianism

The map of Indo European migrations from ca. 4000 to 1000 BC according to the Kurgan model is depicted above. The Anatolian migration (indicated with a dotted arrow) could have taken place either across the Caucasus or across the Balkans. The magenta area corresponds to the assumed to be Samara culture which was a Neolithic culture (new stone age) of the late 6th and early 5th millennium BC at the Samara bend region of the middle Volga, discovered during archaeological excavations in 1973 near the village of Syezzheye (Съезжье) in Russia. The red area corresponds to the area that may have been settled by Indo-European-speaking peoples up to ca. 2500 BC, and the orange area by 1000 BCE.

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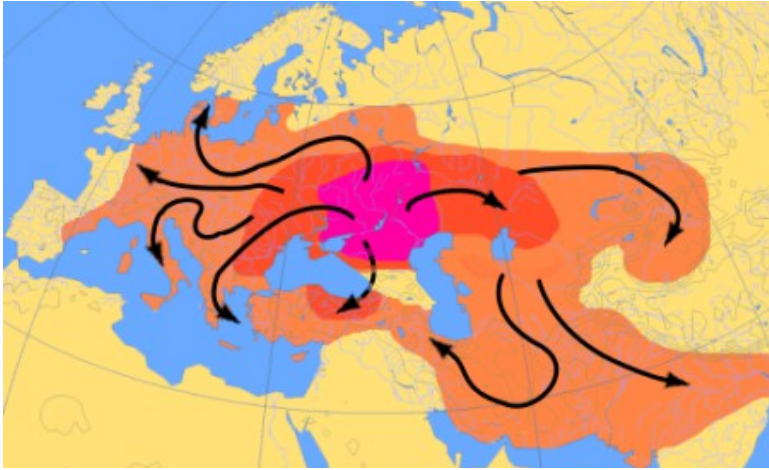


Figure 14. European Migration Hypothesis per Kurgan model
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Aryans Migration to Indus Valley

A group of warrior nomads, the Aryans, began to migrate into the Indus Valley region around the time that the Harappan Civilization began to decline. Scholars disagree about whether the Aryans overtook the Harappan Civilization by force, or simply moved in and coexisted with them during their decline. Regardless, the nomadic Aryans were predominately a cattle-breeding society, and they learned how to live as settled agriculturists from the remaining Harappan people. Therefore, the Aryans absorbed remnants of the Harappan Civilization and integrated them into their own culture to form the Vedic culture. Since the Indus Valley Civilization left no written records, the nature of the transition from the Harappan culture to the resulting Vedic culture is that much more a mystery.

There are several possible arguments against the idea of Aryan invasions. According to the invasion theory, the Aryans were a group of primitive nomads who came out of Central Asia with chariots, iron weapons, and superior battle

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tactics; and thus overthrew the Indus Valley culture. However, this theory can be called into question for several reasons. First, there has been no evidence of horses, chariots, or iron discovered at the Indus Valley excavation sites. Also, the idea of Aryans using chariots has been questioned since they are not typically the vehicles of nomads, and chariots would not have been suitable for crossing the mountainous terrain that an Aryan invasion would have required. Further, some scholars assert that excavation evidence points to internal factors and floods as the cause of destruction of the Harappan culture rather than outside invasion.

However, other scholars argue that the Aryans were undoubtedly a conquering people when they first spread into India, then they gradually mixed with the indigenous Harappan culture. According to this view, the Aryans were a fierce and conquering people whose culture was oriented around warfare. Their religion also reflected their culture, as it was dominated by warring storm-gods and sky-gods. This warlike nature was preserved in the later Vedic religion (see the "**Rig Veda**"), where the god Indra was portrayed as a conquering deity who smashed cities and killed enemies. In the "Hymn to Parusha" in the "Rig Veda", the god Parusha sacrificed himself to himself, and out of his parts came the different classes of Indian peoples. This became the basis for the socially stratified caste system. Perhaps the Aryans used this creation myth to subjugate the darker-skinned people they conquered (the **Harappans**). Further, the Aryans saw themselves as superiors to the people they conquered as evidenced in the Indo-European root word of their name, "ar", meaning "noble" or "superior".

Therefore, the two sides of the argument are clear enough. Either the Aryans and Harappans mixed together and became peaceful, or the Aryans came in as a

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conquering people, became the ruling class, and instituted the caste system to maintain control. Scholars still debate, however, as to what actually occurred.

Myth of Aryan Invasion

To interpret the ancient history of India, we need to understand the theory of the Aryan invasion. According to this theory, India was invaded and conquered by nomadic light-skinned Indo-European tribes (Aryans) from Central Asia around 1500-1000 BCE. They overran an earlier and more advanced dark-skinned Dravidian civilization from which they took most of what later became Indian civilization. In the process they never gave the indigenous people whom they took their civilization from the proper credit but eradicated all evidence of their conquest. All the Aryans really added of their own was their language (Sanskrit, of an Indo-European type) and their priestly cult of caste that was to become the bane of later Indic society.

The Aryan invasion theory has become the basis of the view that Indian history has primarily been one of invasions from the West, with little indigenous coming from the subcontinent itself either in terms of populations or cultural innovations. The history of India appears as a series of outside invasions: Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Huns, Arabs, Turks, Portuguese, British, and so on. The so-called pre-Aryan or Dravidian civilization is said to be indicated by the large urban ruins of what has been called the "**Indus Valley culture**" (as most of its initial sites were on the Indus river), or "**Harappa and Mohenjo-daro**," after its two initially largest sites extended far beyond the Indus river. It is now dated from 3100-1900 BC. By the invasion theory Indic civilization is proposed to have been the invention of a pre-Vedic civilization and the Vedas, however massive their literature, are merely

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the products of a dark age following its destruction. Only the resurgence of the pre-Vedic culture in post-Vedic times is given credit for the redevelopment of urban civilization in India.

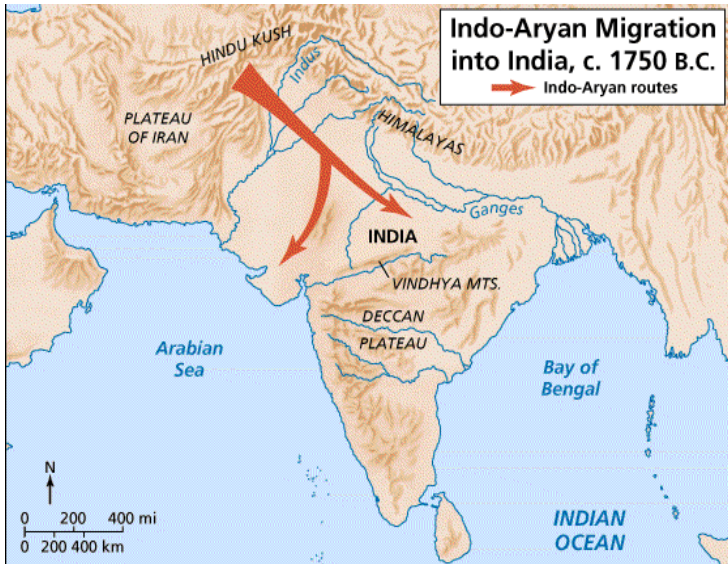


Figure15. Indo-Aryans Migration Route
(Source: [www. GO.HRW.Com](http://www.GO.HRW.Com), Holt, Rinehart, Winston)

The Aryan invasion theory is not a mere academic matter, of concern only to historians. In the colonial era the British used it to divide India along north-south, Aryan-Dravidian lines, and an interpretation various south Indian politicians have taken up as the cornerstone for their political projection of Dravidian identity. The Aryan invasion theory is the basis of the Marxist critique of Indian history where caste struggle takes the place of class struggle with the so-called pre-Aryan indigenous peoples turned into the oppressed masses and the invading Aryans turned into the oppressors, the corrupt ruling elite. Christian and Islamic

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missionaries have used the theory to denigrate the Hindu religion as a product of barbaric invaders and promote their efforts to convert Hindus.

The Aryan invasion theory was similarly applied to Europe and the Middle East. It proposed that the Indo-Europeans were invaders into these regions in the second millennium BC as well. Thereby it became the basis for maintaining a Near Eastern view of civilization, which places the earliest civilization in Mesopotamia and tries to derive all others from it. Thereby the invasion theory has been used to try to subordinate Eastern religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, to Western religions like Christianity and Islam, which are supposed to represent the original civilization of the world from Adam, the Biblical original man, who came from Mesopotamia. This is the case even though the ancient civilization which has been found in Mesopotamia resembles far more the Hindu, with its Gods and Goddesses and temple worship, than it does these later aniconic traditions.

The **Rig-Veda** is a collection of over 1,000 hymns, which contain the mythology of the Hindu gods, and is considered to be one of the foundations of the Hindu religion. While the Rig is the oldest of the Vedas, there are three other Vedas. There is the Sama Veda, which is the "knowledge of chants" or a number of basic hymns recited at sacrifices. There is also the Yajur Veda or "knowledge of rites" which serve basically as a "how to make sacrifices" book. The final Veda is the Athara Veda, this Veda represents the knowledge given by Athara who was a sage. These Vedas were passed on orally for many generations. When they were written down, they were first written in Vedic, an early form of Sanskrit. Then around 300 BCE the Vedas were written down in the form we have them today.

The **Rig Veda** was written by the Aryans who entered the Indus Valley toward the end of the Harappan Civilization. They wrote this Veda between 1300 and 1000

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BCE, during the period of the Aryan Migrations. However, there may be possible Harappan influences on these works. This is because the Vedas were actually being developed before the Aryans arrived around 2000 B.C. Although there are many Vedas written, the most important is the Rig, which contains over 1,000 hymns directed to the gods. The content of these hymns includes praises, blessings, sacrifices, and curses. These hymns are the major way in which the Aryan people praised their gods. The subject of the hymns is the personification of the powers of nature. The hymns were written in poetic language. This can be chanted, creating a worshipful mood in a person. When you chant these words, you are transported into another state of mind. In fact, this and other hymns were probably chanted by the Aryan people at one of their religious ceremonies.

The oldest Scriptures in all of India and the most important are called the Vedas. All Hindus recognize the Vedas as the true origin of their faith because of the spiritual meaning behind them. The Scriptures served as a base for inner searching among the Indo-Aryan people as they were composed by seers or ancient prophets while in a state of inspiration. There are four Vedas: **Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda**. Each is divided into two groups: works and knowledge. The first is made of hymns and instructions regarding rights, ceremonies and rules of conduct. The latter is concerned with knowledge of who is god.

Although in all probability the Rig-Veda was composed between 1500 BC and 900 BC, the writings of the Vedanta (meaning "end of the Vedas") were completed during 800 BC to 400 BC. Although the Vedas were still held in high regard, several "seekers" felt that people were still searching for the meaning of life. The people

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needed something more than the Vedas to fulfill their needs. After deep contemplation, these seekers compiled the wise words and sayings of the gurus from whom they attained spiritual knowledge and wisdom. This collection of teachings became known as the **Upanishads** and the seekers themselves were given the name Upanishads that literally meant "came near to" the gurus.

It seems that the Upanishads were created as an Indo-Aryan reaction to the previous sacrificial rituals they were finding unsatisfactory. The Upanishad texts were writings comprised to further develop spiritual knowledge already attained in the Vedic scriptures. The spiritual doctrine of these additional texts attempted to reach beyond the traditional Vedic concept of reality which was more of a physical concept. The major concepts of the Upanishads are ultimately man's greatest dilemmas: the nature of god and man, the soul and god, man's role in the world and how they relate, the purpose of existence, and true salvation. The difference between the Vedas and the Upanishad scriptures seems to be that the Vedas are held as the true foundation of their faith (the Hindu faith) and the Upanishads are the actual vehicle to attaining this enlightenment which brings them to one's oneness with existence.

Throughout history, the Hindu people have constantly been seeking the meaning of life. This search can be seen through the Vedas and Upanishads as they seek to relate to god and the world and to find true salvation. The Hindu faith stems mainly from the ancient Vedic scriptures and evolved to include the Upanishads. Modern Hindus would agree that the Upanishads are a necessary addition to the Vedas. The evolving of these texts was the first consistent expression that directed the people to a philosophical solution to their spiritual dilemmas, questions, and problems.

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Indus Religion and Belief Systems

Without the aid of written texts it is difficult to reconstruct the Indus religion. They made clay figurines of animals, men, and women that probably were used in special rituals. Some of the female figurines are thought to represent Mother Goddess images, while others are possibly toys for children. Soft limestone was used to carve small sculptures of deities or important people such as the famous "**Priest-King**" found at Mohenjo-Daro. Harder stone was carved into nude male sculptures that have been found at the site of Harappa. These images were probably used in special domestic rituals to represent deities.

Many of the seals have narrative scenes that appear to represent ceremonies and mythological scenes. One famous seal from Mohenjo-Daro shows a deity with horned headdress and bangles on both arms, standing in a pipal (sacred fig) tree. Seven figures in procession and a kneeling worshiper sit before the deity, with a human head resting on a small stool. Since no temples have been identified, it is possible that worship took place under trees as depicted on this seal. Some terra-cotta tablets have narrative scenes stamped on both sides. At Harappa, one such tablet shows a figure, possibly a female deity, grasping two tigers by the throat and standing above an elephant. On the reverse is a narrative scene depicting the killing of a water buffalo in the presence of a priest or deity seated in yoga position. Such narrative scenes indicate the presence of a highly developed mythology and iconography; similar motifs are widespread at sites throughout the Indus Valley. The Indus deity with wild animals has often been compared to later Hindu representations of Siva as "Lord of the Beasts."

The Indus people buried their dead in wooden coffins along with many pottery vessels that were probably filled with food for the afterlife. Most individuals, both male and female, were buried with some simple ornaments, such as shell bangles

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or copper rings and agate beads. Elaborate ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones were never included in the burials and must have been inherited by the living relatives.

Some of the iconography seen on Indus seals and the use of specific symbols, such as **the *Swastika* and *Mandalas***, were incorporated into later Vedic, Brahmanical, Jain, and Buddhist religious traditions. Even though there is no direct historical connection, some Indus symbols and narratives do appear to have been incorporated into religious traditions that are today collectively referred to as Hinduism.



Figure 16. Priest-King of Mohenjo-daro
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

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Hindu Caste Systems

There are different theories about the establishment of the caste system. There are religious-mystical theories. There are biological theories. And there are socio-historical theories. The theology of the Vedas was later developed in the Upanishads. At the end of the Rig and all of the Vedas, the Hindu “**Brahmins**” added a summary of the philosophy of the Veda. The Upanishads became the basis of Hinduism. For the Hindu person, they serve as a summary of all of the knowledge of the Veda as well as a commentary on them.

According the Rig Veda, the primal man - Purush - destroyed himself to create a human society. The different Varnas were created from different parts of his body. The Brahmins were created from his head; the Kshatrias from his hands; the Vaishias from his thighs and the Sudras from his feet. The Varna hierarchy is determined by the descending order of the different organs from which the Varnas were created. Other religious theory claims that the Varnas were created from the body organs of “Brahma”, who is the creator of the world. Brahmin (also called Brahmana; from the Sanskrit brāhmaṇa) is a term for a scholar class in the traditional Hindu societies of India and Nepal.

According to one school of thought, the present day Brahmins are the descendants of Aryans who invaded India from central Asia around 6000 BCE, settled in the Gangetic plain and established their way of life, after driving out the local inhabitants called the Dravidians, to the South. Aryan society was initially divided into three classes, the priestly class, the warrior class and the rest. Over the millenniums intermixture took place and the Dravidian priestly class adopted the Brahmin norms of the conquerors.

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Another school of thought that has gained ground in recent times, challenges the Aryan invasion theory as a biased view of Western archeologists. Not denying that people from central Asia might have come to India, as have several successive waves, this hypothesis says that a highly evolved culture already existed which assimilated the Aryans. This view is supported by archeological findings at Harappa (now in Pakistan). This period is recognized as the Indus (Sindhu River) valley civilization.

The Indus Valley culture had a form of writing, as evidenced by numerous seals found in the ruins. It was also assumed to be non-Vedic and probably Dravidian, though this was never proved. Now it has been shown that the majority of the late Indus signs are identical with those of later Hindu Brahmin and that there is an organic development between the two scripts. Prevalent models now suggest an Indo-European base for that language.

It was also assumed that the Indus Valley culture derived its civilization from the Middle East, probably **Sumeria**, as antecedents for it were not found in India. Recent French excavations at Mehrgarh have shown that all the antecedents of the Indus Valley culture can be found within the subcontinent and going back before 6000 BCE. In short, some Western scholars are beginning to reject the Aryan invasion or any outside origin for Hindu civilization.

Current archeological data do not support the existence of an Indo Aryan or European invasion into South Asia at any time in the pre- or proto- historic periods. Instead, it is possible to document archeologically a series of cultural changes reflecting indigenous cultural development from prehistoric to historic periods. The early Vedic literature describes not a human invasion into the area, but a fundamental restructuring of indigenous society. The Indo-Aryan invasion as

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an academic concept in 18th and 19th century Europe reflected the cultural milieu of the period. Linguistic data were used to validate the concept that in turn was used to interpret archeological and anthropological data.

It should be noted that the period of the composition of "**Rigveda**" and the subsequent literature up to the "**Upanishads**" is approximately 1000 years. This period is divided into two parts - The Vedic (from 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE) and the Later Vedic (from 1000 BCE to 600 BCE). In this article, I would like to cover the most important aspects in the development of other religions in the Indian subcontinent in a chronological order.

Gautama Buddha and Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama was born about 583 BCE, in a royal Hindu family to King Śuddhodana, the leader of Shakya clan, whose capital was **Kapilavastu**, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of Kosala during the Buddha's lifetime. Gautama was the family name. His mother, Queen Maha Maya and Śuddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess. Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant with six white tusks entered her right side and ten months later Siddhartha was born. As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became pregnant, she left Kapilvastu for her father's kingdom to give birth. However, her son is said to have been born on the way, at **Lumbini**, in a garden beneath a Sal tree.

When Prince Siddhartha was a few days old, a holy man prophesied the Prince would be either a great military conqueror or a great spiritual teacher. The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated called "Buddha Poornima" in India as Buddha is believed to have been born on a full moon day. Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later. The

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infant was given the name Siddhartha, meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit seer Asita journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king or a great holy man. King Suddhodana preferred the first outcome and prepared his son accordingly. He raised the boy in great luxury and shielded him from knowledge of religion and human suffering. The Prince reached the age of 29 with little experience of the world outside the walls of his opulent palaces.

When he was older, his father found a woman for Siddhartha to marry at the age of 16. He married the woman named Yashodhara, and they had a son, Rahula. Although Gautama had everything he could want, he still was not happy. He wanted to learn the meaning of his existence.

He got out of the castle against his father's orders. He saw the **"Four Passing Sights"**: an old crippled man, a sick man, a dead man, and a holy man with no home. Right then, Gautama knew that nothing can stop people from being born, becoming old, getting sick, and dying. He decided to give up his worldly life. He would not keep his wives, his children, his wealth, or his palace. He would become a holy man with no home. He would look for the answer to the problem of birth, old age, sickness, and death. He left his home in the middle of a dark and stormy night. For six years, Siddhartha submitted himself to rigorous ascetic practices, studying, and following different methods of meditation with various teachers. But he was never satisfied. One day, however, he was offered a bowl of rice from a young girl and he accepted it. In that moment, he realized that physical austerities were not the means to achieve liberation. From then on, he encouraged people to follow a path of balance rather than extremism. He called this **"The Middle Way"**.

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Following this incident, Siddhartha seated under a Pipal tree—now known as the **Bodhi tree**—in Bodh Gaya, India and vowed never to arise until he had found the truth. After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained **Enlightenment**. According to some traditions, this occurred in approximately the fifth lunar month, while, according to others, it was in the twelfth month. From that time, Gautama was known to his followers as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One" ("Buddha" is also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One"). That night Siddhartha sat under the Bodhi tree, and meditated until dawn. He purified his mind of all defilements and attained enlightenment at the age of thirty-five, thus earning the title Buddha, or "**Enlightened One**". For the remainder of his eighty years, the Buddha preached the Dharma in an effort to help other sentient beings reach enlightenment.

According to Buddhism, at the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. These discoveries became known as the "Four Noble Truths", which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching. Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or **Nirvana**, is believed to be possible for any being. The Buddha described Nirvāna as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states, or "defilements" (kilesas).

Four Noble Truths

The **Four Noble Truths** are regarded as the central doctrine of the Buddhist tradition, and are said to provide a conceptual framework for all of Buddhist thought. These four truths explain the nature of **dukkha** (Pali; commonly

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translated as "**suffering**", "anxiety", "stress", "dissatisfaction"), its causes, and how it can be overcome.

The **Four Noble Truths** are a Buddhist teaching.

1. *The First Noble Truth: **Dukkha**: Life is full of suffering. Dukkha usually is translated as suffering. In life, we have illness, poverty, disease, old age and death. We cannot keep what we like and cannot avoid what we do not like. If this is all we know we suffer.*
2. *The Second Noble Truth: **Samudaya**: There is a cause for suffering. The cause of suffering is desire and illusions that are based on ignorance. Because of ignorance wanting something leads clumsy actions, which in turn lead to suffering. Wanting life, wanting death, wanting things, wanting pleasure - all lead to suffering.*
3. *The Third Noble Truth: **Nirodha**: There is a state of mind free from suffering. By stopping the cravings, the suffering is stopped*
4. *The Fourth Noble Truth: **Marga**: There is a way to end suffering. To end suffering we must end our cravings. The way to ending cravings is the Eightfold Path*

The life as a Buddha

When the Buddha became **enlightened**, he knew the answer to **suffering**, and he knew how to defeat *suffering*. This answer was called the Four Noble Truths. He was not sure if he should teach his new ideas or not. He asked himself if the world was ready for such a deep teaching. But in the end, he decided to travel to a town called **Sarnath** in India to teach the people his new way. He taught about the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The people listened to him.

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When he taught, he did not pretend to be a god. He said he was just a man who had found the meaning of life (enlightenment), and that any person can also find the meaning of life. For the rest of his life, he walked all over Southern Nepal and parts of India to teach people what he believed. He started a Sangha, which is a group of Buddhist monks and nuns. Many people became enlightened because of him. At the age of 80, Gautama Buddha died of food poisoning.



Figure 17. Sarnath in India where the Buddha first taught
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Ancient Buddhist Art

Buddhist art originated on the Indian subcontinent following the historical life of Siddhartha Gautama, 6th to 5th century BC, and thereafter evolved by contact with other cultures as it spread throughout Asia and the world. Buddhist art followed believers as the dharma spread, adapted, and evolved in each new host country. It developed to the north through Central Asia and into Eastern Asia to

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form the Northern branch of Buddhist art, and to the east as far as Southeast Asia to form the Southern branch of Buddhist art. In India, Buddhist art flourished and influenced the development of Hindu art, until Buddhism nearly disappeared in India around the 10th century in part to the vigorous expansion of Islam alongside Hinduism.



**Figure 18. (Left) Statue from a Buddhist Monastery Maitreya, 443 AD
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)**

**Figure 19. (Right) A Chinese Northern Wei Buddha 700 AD, Afghanistan (Source:
Wikipedia Commons Attribution))**

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Figure 20. A Mandalay-style Statue of Buddha in Myanmar
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Vardhman Mahavir and Jainism

Mahavira was born in a place called Kuṇḍagrama. It is a place said to be near Vaishali. He was the son of Siddhartha and Trishala. He was born on the 13th day under the rising moon of **Chaitra** (12 April according to the Gregorian calendar. While still in his mother's womb it is believed he brought wealth and prosperity to the entire kingdom, which is why he was named **Vardhaman**. An increase of good things, like the abundant bloom of beautiful flowers, was noticed in the kingdom

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after his conception. Trishala had a number of auspicious dreams before giving birth to Vardhaman foretelling the advent of a great soul. Vardhaman's birthday is celebrated as Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, the most important religious holiday of Jains around the world.

As the son of King Siddhartha, he grew up as a prince but, even at that tender age he exhibited a virtuous nature. He started engaging in meditation and immersed himself in self-contemplation. He was interested in the core beliefs of Jainism and began to distance himself from worldly possessions.

At the age of thirty, Mahavira renounced his kingdom and family, gave up his worldly possessions, and spent twelve years as an ascetic. During these twelve years he spent most of his time meditating. He gave utmost regard to other living beings, including humans, animals and plants, and avoided harming them. He had given up worldly possessions including his clothes, and lived an extremely austere life. He exhibited exemplary control over his senses while enduring the penance during these years. His courage and bravery earned him the name Mahavira. These were the golden years of his spiritual journey at the end of which he achieved arihant status.

Ascetic Practices

Vardhaman spent 12.5 years in deep meditation and self-control. This course of penance's comprehended 'uninterrupted meditation, unbroken chastity, and the most scrupulous observance of the rules concerning eating and drinking.'

He meditated day and night, undisturbed and non-perturbed. Avoiding women and giving up the company of householders, he realized singleness. He lodged in workshops, assembling places, manufactories, shed of straw, towns, garden-

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houses, in cemeteries and burial grounds, or at the foot of a tree, wherever shelter was available. He did not care for sleep for the sake of pleasure and he slept only for 3 hours in his 12.5 years of spiritual pursuit. In winter when cold winds blew, he did not seek sheltered places or kindle wood or seek to cover himself with clothes. In the cold season he meditated in the shade, in summer he exposed himself to the heat.

He would meditate with his eyes fixed on a square space before him of the length of a man. While meditating he would concentrate on the things above, below, or beside. He meditated free from sin and desire, not attached to sounds or colors, and never acted carelessly. Being averse from the impressions of the senses, he spoke very little and was always calm.

‘Thoroughly knowing the earth-bodies and water-bodies and fire-bodies and wind-bodies, the lichens, seeds and sprouts’ and comprehending ‘that they are, if narrowly inspected, imbued with life’, he abstained from sinful activities. He did not use other’s robe, nor did he eat out of other’s vessel. He did not rub his eyes or scratch his body. Knowing measure in eating and drinking he was not desirous of delicious food, nor had he a longing for it.’ For more than a couple of years he led a religious life without using cold water. He completely abstained from indulgence of the flesh; whether wounded or not, he took no medical treatment. He lived on rough food-rice, pounded jujube and beans. Sometimes he ate stale food. He accepted moist or dry or cold food, old beans, old pap, or bad grain, whatever was available. But where there were hungry birds, animals or thirsty beings or beggars standing in his way, he would go past that place without begging alms. He kept fasts; sometimes he ate only the sixth meal, or the eighth,

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or the tenth, or the twelfth; sometimes he did not drink for half a month or even for a month or for more than two months or even six months

In accordance with the rules of the order he wandered about unceasingly, except for the four months of the rainy season. During the rest of the year, he lived in villages only a single night and in towns only five nights. He was indifferent alike to the smell of ordure and the sweet scent of sandal, to straw and jewel, dirt and gold, pleasure and pain, his world and the world beyond, to life and death. His mind was completely free from attachment. Circumspect in his thought, words and acts, he moved without wrath, pride, deceit and greed. Like water in a vessel, he was unattached in the midst of sin. During the course of his travels, he visited the pathless country of the Ladhas, in Vajrabhumi and in Subbhabhumi; and here his troubles were endless. The rude natives of the place attacked him and set dogs to bite him. He endured the abusive language of the rustics and bore pain, free from desire. "When he approached the village the inhabitants met him on the outside and attacked him, saying 'Get away from here'. He was struck with a stick, the fist, a lance, hit with a fruit, a clod a potsherd. Once when he sat in meditation, without moving his body they cut his flesh, tore his hair under pains, or covered him with dust. They disturbed him in his religious postures". But like a hero at the head of a battle, bearing hardships he reached on his path wholly undisturbed.

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Figure 21. A Statue of Mahavira
(Non-violence and kindness to living beings is kindness to oneself)
(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

It was the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Vaishakh. Twelve years five months and fifteen days had passed since the beginning of Mahavira's spiritual practices. Mahavir sat in mediation under a Shala tree in a garden on the back of the river Rijuvaluka (river Barakar in modern times). Sitting on both feet with knees touching his chest, he was feeling calm even in the scorching summer sun. Focusing his physical, mental and spiritual energies he was engrossed in deep and pure meditation (shukla dhyana). Gradually the sun was setting in the west and within him the sun of omniscience was rising. He became omniscient or, or Arihanta. He became a Jina, the victorious over attachment and aversion. At that

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time he was 42 years of age. Lord Mahavira's attainment of Absolute Knowledge or Omniscience is mentioned in the Kalpasutra as below:

"During the thirteenth year, in the second month of summer, in the fourth fortnight, the light (fortnight) of Vaisakha, on its tenth day, when the shadow had turned towards the east and the first wake was over, on the day called Suvrata, in the Muhurta called Vigaya, outside of the town Grimbhikagrama on the bank of the river Rjupalika, not far from an old temple, in the field of the householder Samaga(shyamak), under a Sal tree, when the moon was in conjunction with the asterism Uttaraphalguni, (the Venerable One) in a squatting position with joined heels, exposing himself to the heat of the sun, after fasting two and a half days without drinking water, being engaged in deep meditation, reached the highest knowledge and intuition, called Kevala, which is infinite, supreme, unobstructed, unimpeded, complete, and full."

"He knew and saw all conditions of the worlds, of celestial beings, men and animals and hellish beings; whence they came, whither they are born as men or animals or became celestial beings or hellish beings, the ideas, the thoughts of their mind, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all the livings in the whole world; the Arhat, for whom there is no secret, knew and saw all conditions of all living beings in the world, what they thought, spoke, or did at any

Later Years of Mahavira

Mahavira devoted the rest of his life to preaching the eternal truth of spiritual freedom to people around India. He traveled barefoot and without clothes, enduring harshest of climates, meeting people who came to listen to his message.

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Mahavira's preaching and efforts to explain Jain philosophy is the real catalyst to the spread of this ancient religion throughout India.

At the age of 72 years and 4 and a half months, he attained **Nirvana** in the area known as Pawapuri on the last day of the Indian and Jain calendars, Diwali. Jains celebrate this as the day he attained liberation or moksa. Jains believe Mahavira lived from 599–527 BCE.

Jainism Philosophy

Mahavira's philosophy has eight cardinal principles – three metaphysical and five ethical. The objective is to elevate the quality of life. Mahavira preached that from eternity, every living being (soul) is in bondage to karmic atoms accumulated by good or bad deeds. In a state of karmic delusion, the individual seeks temporary and illusory pleasure in material possessions, which are the root causes of self-centered violent thoughts and deeds as well as anger, hatred, greed, and other vices. These result in further accumulation of karma.

To liberate one's self, Mahavira taught the necessity of right faith (*samyak-darshana*), right knowledge (*samyak-gyana*), and right conduct (*samyak-charitra*).

At the heart of right conduct for Jains lie the **five great vows**:

1. *Nonviolence (**Ahimsa**) – to cause no harm to living beings;*
2. *Truthfulness (**Satya**) – to speak the harmless truth only;*
3. *Non-stealing (**Asteya**) – to take nothing not properly given;*
4. *Chastity (**Bramacharya**) – to indulge in no sensual pleasure;*
5. *Non-possession/Non-attachment (**Aparigraha**) – to detach completely from people, places, and material things.*

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The most important of these was the first one. This applied to not even injuring animals, insects, or even plants. A Jainist could not even be a farmer, because of the danger of killing insects. The five great vows were too stiff for most people so the Jains provided a less strict spiritual practice for those people which were called, the twelve vows.

These Vows Are:

1. *To Not take human or animal life*
2. *To not be unfaithful to one's spouse*
3. *To not lie, steal or cheat*
4. *To give alms*
5. *To practice self-denial*
6. *To guard against evil*
7. *To meditate regularly*
8. *To avoid needless travel*
9. *To not be greedy*

Jainism began as a conscious effort to reform Hinduism, however, became a new religion instead. Mahavira was very much against the caste system and taught that all his ascetics were equals. He was also very much against animal sacrifice of those ancient times, and believed that kindness was a better replacement.

Mahavira taught that men and women are spiritual equals and that both may renounce the world in search of moksha or ultimate happiness.

Mahavira organized his followers into a four-fold order; monk (*sadhu*), nun (*sādhvī*), layman (*Śrāvaka*), and laywoman (*Śrāvikā*). This order is known as *Chaturvidh Jain Sangha*.

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Mahavira's sermons were preserved orally by his immediate disciples known as Ganadharas in the *Jain Agamas*. Through time *Agama Sutras* have been lost, destroyed, or modified. About one thousand years after Mahavira's time the *Agama Sutras* were recorded on palm leaf paper. Svetambaras accept these sutras as authentic teachings while Digambaras use them as a reference.

Jainism existed before Mahavira, and his teachings were based on those of his predecessors. Thus Mahavira was a reformer and propagator of an existing religion, rather than the founder of a new faith. He followed the well-established creed of his predecessor Tirthankara [Parshva](#). However, Mahavira did reorganize the philosophical tenets of Jainism to correspond to his times.

A few centuries after Mahavira's Nirvana, the religious order grew more and more complex. There were schisms on minor points, although they did not affect Mahavira's original doctrines. Later generations saw the introduction of rituals and complexities that is criticized as placing Mahavira and other Tirthankaras on the throne similar to those of Hindu deities.

Mahajanapadas

Mahājanapada (Sanskrit: *Mahājanapada*), literally "great realm", (from *maha*, "great", and *janapada* "foothold of a tribe", "country") refers to ancient Indian kingdoms that existed between the sixth and third centuries BC. The sixth century BC is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history

There were many states of the Aryans in North India, around the 6th century B. C. These states were called the 'Mahajanapadas'. The Mahajanapadas of Anga, Kashi, Kosala, Chedi, Vatsa, Matsya, Shursen, Ashmak, Avanti, Gandhar and Magadha were ruled by kings or monarchs. The kings in these states had the supreme

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authority. The Mahajanapadas of Vriji, Malla, Kuru, Panchal and Kamboj were republican states and so were other smaller states like Lichhavi, Shakya, Koliya, Bhagga, Moriya. These republican states had a 'Gana-parishad' or an Assembly of senior and responsible citizens. This, Gana-parishad had the supreme authority in the state. All the administrative decisions were taken by this Parishad. Of all these states, Kashi, Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha were the most important ones.

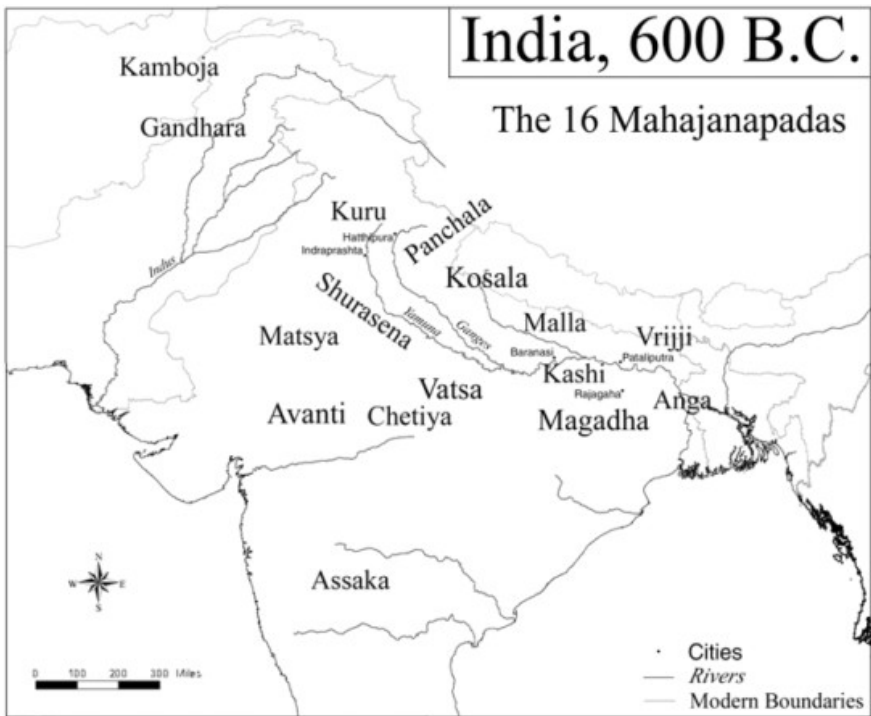


Figure 22 : Map of the 16 Mahajanapadas in India

(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

Kashi was located in the region around Varanasi (modern Banaras). The *capital* of Kashi was at Varanasi. The city was bounded by the rivers Varuna and Asi in the

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north and south which gave Varanasi its name. Before Buddha, Kashi was the most powerful of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Several Jatakas bear witness to the superiority of its capital over other cities of India and speak highly of its prosperity and opulence. The Jatakas speak of a long rivalry of Kasi with Kosala, Anga and Magadha. There was a long struggle for supremacy between them. King Brihadratha of Kashi had conquered Kosala but Kashi was later incorporated into Kosala by King Kansa during Buddha's time.

Kosala was located to the north-west of Magadha with its capital at Savatthi (Sravasti). It was located about 60 miles north of modern Ayodhya at the border of Gonda and Behraich districts in the Sahet-Mahet region in i.e Central and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It had the river Ganges for its southern, the river Gandak (Narayani) for its eastern and the Himalaya mountains for its northern boundary. It finds mention as the center of Vedic Dharma. Its kings allied with Devatas in various wars against Daityas, Rakshas and Asuras. Koshala and Ayodhya hold a central place in the Hindu scriptures, Itihas and Purana. Raghuवंशा- Ikshvakuवंशा was the longest continuous dynasty, Lord Rama was a king in this dynasty. Other great kings were Prithu, Harishchandra, Dilip who find mention in different Puranas, Ramayan and Mahabharat. According to these texts, Kosala was the most powerful and biggest kingdom ever in the recorded history. Later, the kingdom was ruled by king Prasenjit during the era of Mahavira and Budhha followed by his son Vidudabha. There was a struggle for supremacy between king Pasenadi (Prasenjit) and king Ajatasatru of Magadha which was finally settled once the confederation of Lichchavis became aligned with Magadha. Kosala was ultimately merged into Magadha when Vidudabha was Kosala's ruler. Ayodhya, Saketa, Benares and Sravasti were the chief cities of Kosala.

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Magadha was one of the most prominent and prosperous of Mahajanpadas. The capital city Pataliputra (Patna, Bihar) was situated on the confluence of major rivers like Ganga, Son, Punpun and Gandak. The alluvial plains of this region and its proximity to the iron rich areas of Bihar and Jharkhand helped the kingdom to develop good quality weapons and support the agrarian economy. These factors helped Magadh to emerge as the most prosperous state of that period. The kingdom of the Magadhas roughly corresponded to the modern districts of Patna and Gaya in southern Bihar and parts of Bengal in the east. The capital city of Patna was It was bounded in the north by river Ganges, in the east by the river Champa, In the south by the Vindhya mountains and in the west by the river Sona. During Buddha's time its boundaries included Anga. Its earliest capital was Girivraja or Rajagriha (modern Rajgir in Patna district of Bihar). The other names for the city were Magadhapura, Brihadrathapura, Vasumati, Kushagrapura and Bimbisarpuri. It was an active center of Jainism in ancient times. The first Buddhist Council was held in Rajagriha in the Vaibhara Hills. Later on, Pataliputra became the capital of Magadha.

Kuru was the name of an Indo-Aryan tribe and their kingdom in the Vedic civilization of India. Their kingdom was located in the area of modern Haryana. They formed the first political center of the Indo-Aryans after the Rigvedic period, and after their emergence from the Punjab, and it was there that the codification and redaction of the Vedic texts began.

Their capital was Indraprastha, which may have been the most powerful city in India, prior to the rise of the Magadhan city of Pataliputra. The Kuru kingdom

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figures prominently in the list of Mahajanapadas. At the time of Buddha, the Kuru realm was only three hundred leagues in extent, but was a cultural hub. The kingdom corresponds in name to the Kuru dynasty mentioned in the Indian epic Mahabharata.

Kalinga is mentioned in the ancient scriptures as Kalinga the Braves (Kalinga Sahasikha). During the 3rd century BCE, the Greek ambassador Megasthenes in his tour of India had mentioned about the military strength of the Kalinga army of about one lakh which consisted of 60 thousand soldiers, 1700 horses and thousands of elephants. Kalinga was also powerful in the naval force. The vast military strength of Kalinga was the cause of jealousy for the Magadha Empire. According to the historians the Magadha Emperor Ashoka invaded Kalinga in 261 BCE. Nearly one lakh soldiers lost their lives in the Kalinga War and one and half lakh soldiers were captured.

During Ashoka's invasion the capital of Kalinga was Toshali near Dhauli. The vast wealth, military power and the maritime activities of the Kalinga was the cause of jealousy for the Magadha empire. Though both Emperor Chandragupta Maurya and Bindusara wanted to conquer Kalinga, neither ventured a war with Kalinga.

After the death of Ashoka, the Great Kharavela became the emperor of Kalinga. He was the monarch of the Chedi Dynasty. The inscription found in the Elephant Caves of Khandagiri and Udaigiri mountains near Bhubaneswar describes in detail the reign of Emperor Kharavela

Alexander Invasion to India

In 327 BC Alexander the Great entered the borders of India with his army hoping to conquer the great eastern continent that had been a fabulous country of legend to the Greeks since at least the time of Herodotos. The Father of History

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described it as a vast desert land full of gold, fantastic tribes of men and giant ants. The Makedonians found India and the Indians to be far less supernatural than they had been led to expect, although the land was very wealthy and the people ready for war. Despite some victories and a favorable alliance with the powerful king, Poros (Parvataka or Parvatesha in Sanskrit), India at last broke the formerly undefeated Makedonian army. Alexander would have pushed further into the subcontinent beyond the Punjab but in 325 BC his weary troops, fearful of the rumors of the strong king of Magadha, mutinied on the bank of the river Hyphasis. The Makedonian king was forced to return west with India largely unconquered.

Alexander left behind agents in order to control the territories that he had overrun and to maintain the alliance with Poros who quickly abused their authority. With the treaty broken thus, Poros joined the cause of Chandragupta (Sandrakottos in Greek) Maurya, (320-298 BCE) a powerful king who defeated the great Nanda king of Magdha in 323 - 322 BCE. Together they overthrew the remaining Makedonians and lay the foundation for what would become one of the largest empires to ever exist in India. By the time Seleukos I Nikator made his own attempt to annex India in 305 BCE the Mauryan Empire of Chandragupta encompassed most of modern Pakistan and India north of the Vindhya mountain range.

Chandragupta met Seleukos in battle somewhere in Gandhara and beat back the forces of the Successor king. A treaty was made between the two rulers in which Seleukos ceded authority over the eastern satrapies of Aria, Arachosia, Gedrosia and the Paropanisadai and Chandragupta gave Seleukos a gift of 500 war elephants. These animals were instrumental in the defeat of Antigonos

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Monophthalmos in 301 BCE. Chandragupta also received the hand of a daughter of Seleukos. The kings parted on good terms with Seleukos maintaining an ambassador named Megasthenes at the Mauryan court in Pataliputra.

Nanda Dynasty

The first Magadha dynasty was overthrown by the usurper Mahapadma, founder of the Nanda dynasty, son of a low-caste woman. He established his capital in Pataliputra (eastern Bihar) at the time that Alexander was campaigning in the Indus river valley (327-324). The Nandas ruled Magadha between 364 BCE. and 324 BCE. Dhanananda was the last of the Nanda Kings. Magadha had become a very powerful kingdom by that time. It had expanded up to the Punjab in the West.

In the history of India, the Nanda period is considered to be important from many points of view. The Nanda kings had set up a good administrative system necessary to run the huge empire. This system continued even during the Maurya period. The Nanda Kings had a huge four-fold army of two lakh infantry, twenty thousand cavalry, two thousand chariots and three thousand elephants. The Nandas introduced the system of standard weights and measures. The Nanda Kings were lovers of art and literature. They provided patronage to many scholars. The well-known grammarian Panini belongs to this period.

Mauryan Empire

After Alexander went back to Babylon in 324 BCE, a man named **Chandragupta** was able to overthrow the old Aryan kingdom of Nanda and form a big new empire over all of northern India and into Afghanistan. When people asked him how he had done it, he said (according to Greek historians) that he got the idea from Alexander. Chandragupta conquered the Indus valley back from the Greeks

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and as part of the peace treaty he married the daughter of Seleucus, who had succeeded Alexander.

Travelling in exile through the Vindya mountains afterwards, Chanakya (a proud and fiery man of the high Brahmin class who was expelled from Pataliputra by the Nanda King , Dhanananda) met Chandragupta Maurya, a young man who too had deep personal grudges against the Nandas. Chandragupta Maurya's background is obscure. He was either the son of a Nanda prince and a maid-servant called Mura, or came from the Moriya Tribe of Peacock-tamers; the last might explain why the Peacock later on became his principal emblem. Anyway, whatever his origin, Chandragupta's spirited personality impressed Chanakya and he decided that he would make a far better King than the oppressive and debauched Dhanananda.

Together they set about provoking the people of Magadha against Dhanananda and, as there happened to be many amongst the populace that Dhanananda had offended in some way, it was not long before they had managed to amass a considerable force. The new Mauryan Army was still numerically inferior to that of Dhanananda, but, under its inspired leaders, lacked neither in courage nor persistence. Which was just as well as success came only after many severe setbacks and also apparently after Chanakya overheard a mother telling her child to eat his hot meal from the sides inwards. Taking hint, the Mauryan Army stopped trying to seize Pataliputra and began attacking first the outlying regions of Magadha instead. The tide turned in their favor now. By 321 BCE. Chandragupta had succeeded the Nandas and the long reign of the Mauryans had begun.

The advent of the Mauryans brought them into conflict next with the Greek General Seleucus I Nicator, who had inherited both Alexander's Asian holdings and

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his Empire-building dreams. These, Chandragupta shattered in 303 B.C. The resulting treaty gave the loser 500 war-elephants and granted to the victorious Chandragupta the Seleucid Provinces of Trans-Indus (Afghanistan), Seleucus's daughter Helen in marriage, and the future Court presence of the Seleucid Ambassador Megasthenes. The latter's fascinating account of his tenure, 'Indika', has survived in fragments down the centuries.

Extending from Afghanistan to Bengal to Mysore, the Mauryan Empire became the subcontinent's first centralized power and also its most extraordinarily well-administered one, guided as it was by the authoritarian State-craft philosophy of Chanakya's 'Arthashastra'. The State owned all the farms, forests, mines, and industries, maintained a standing army and efficient spy system, followed a fair if strict judicial policy and a free religious one, had trade and diplomatic relations with foreign powers like Egypt, Syria, Rome, Greece, and China, encouraged art and culture, and patronized the famous Universities of Taxila and Pataliputra. The citizens, in general, were prosperous and content, and remained so for the next 136 years.

Bindusara was the son of the first Mauryan emperor Chandragupta Maurya and his queen Durdhara. During his reign, the empire expanded southwards. Bindusara, just 22 year-old, inherited a large empire that consisted of what is now, Northern, Central and Eastern parts of India along with parts of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Bindusara extended this empire to the southern part of India, as far as what is now known as Karnataka. He brought sixteen states under the Mauryan Empire and thus conquered almost the entire Indian peninsula (he is said to have conquered the 'land between the two seas' - the peninsular region between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea). Bindusara didn't conquer the friendly

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Dravidian kingdoms of the Cholas, ruled by King Ilamcetcenni, the Pandyas, and Cheras. Apart from these southern states, Kalinga (modern Odisha) was the only kingdom in India that didn't form the part of Bindusara's empire. It was later conquered by his son Ashoka, who served as the viceroy of Ujjaini during his father's reign.

Unlike his father Chandragupta (who was a follower of Jainism), Bindusara believed in the Ajivika sect. Bindusara's guru Pingalavatsa (alias Janasana) was a Brahmin of the Ajivika sect. Bindusara's wife, Queen Subhadra (alias Queen Aggamahesi) was a Brahmin^[19] also of the Ajivika sect from Champa (present Bhagalpur district). Bindusara is accredited with giving several grants to Brahmin monasteries (*Brahmana-bhatta*). Bindusara died in 272 BCE (some records say 268 BCE) and was succeeded by his son Asoka the Great.

Bindusara's successor was Asoka, the third emperor of the **Mauryan dynasty** of India and the best known ancient ruler of India. Asoka was born in 304 BC and came to the throne in 270 BC, after a power struggle that resulted in the death of one of his brothers. In 260 BC, Asoka attacked Kalinga (present day Orissa) in order to expand his empire, which he ruled as a tyrant at that time. This campaign was successful, but resulted in a horrible loss of life. Overwhelmed by the carnage he had caused, Asoka changed his way of life. These words were spoken in remorse for his bloody attack on Kalinga, Asoka renounced war forever and became a Buddhist. He sent missionaries to South East Asia, Cyrene (present day Libya), Egypt, Syria, and Macedonia. His son, Mahinda, became a Theravada monk and was sent to introduce Buddhism to Sri Lanka. In Asoka's empire, all religions were tolerated but Buddhism was preferred. Buddhism became a dominant religious force under Asoka.

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Although Asoka was not known as a skillful politician, he was devoted to the well-being of his subjects. He made provisions for public health care for both humans and animals, introduced improvements in agriculture and horticulture, established wildlife reserves, and sponsored cave excavations to create shelter for traveling monks and ascetics. Asoka campaigned for moral, spiritual, and social renewal. He had inspectors of morality, who were appointed to make sure that his policies were carried out. He also reformed the administrative and judicial systems of India.

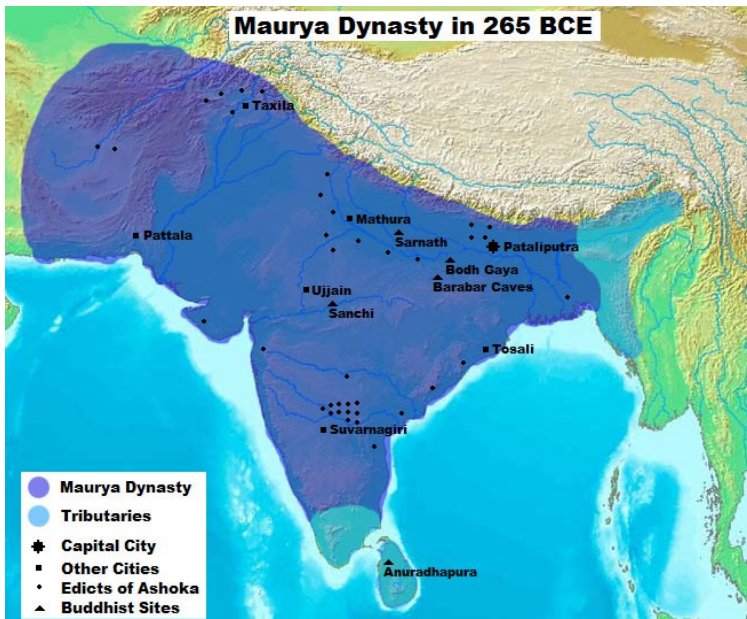


Figure 23. Emperor Asoka's Empire

(Source: Wikipedia Commons Attribution)

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Pandyan Kingdom

The **Pandiyas** were one of the three small Dravidian races that occupied the southern extremity of India (see Figure 24). Around 700 BCE, Dravidians must have penetrated into South India and organized themselves into distinguishable communities. Titles such as Solan, Pandiyan, and Keralas prove the existence of such a community. Early Pandyan Kingdom comprised the greater part of modern Madura and Tinnevely district during 1st century AD. Their original capital was at Kolkoi (on the Thambraparny river in Tinnevely) and later at Madura. Ashokan edicts of 3rd Century BCE mentions of Pandyas. Kongu Ratta inscription of early 5th century AD recorded the conflict of Pandyas with Kongu Rattas. Not much is known about Pandyas then onwards until 7th century AD. Cheras, possibly remained as allies of Pandyas for a larger period than the Cholas. The dependence with Cholas and Cheras allowed them to continue free movement and trade along the coast of Sri Lanka. Around 940 AD, Rajaraja Chola reduced the Pandyas to a condition of tributary dependence and the position continued for the next two centuries. After Chola dominance, Madura Sultans, Vijayanagara Rayas, Nayakas of Madura, Nawabs of Arcot took turn to rule the once powerful Pandyan Kingdom. Pandyas were restricted to unimportant areas of Tinnevely district. At the end of 16th century, Pandya dynasty disappeared from Indian scene once for all.

Madhurapuri (Madurai) grew and prospered to become the capital of the Pandyan Kingdom. It is referred to in the Ramayana and Kautily's Arthashastra. Megasthenes (302 BCE), Pliny (77 AD) and Ptolemy (140 AD) wrote of "Madura, the kingdom of the Pandian". Macro Polo visited Madurai in 1293 AD and Ibn Batuta in 1333 AD. Madurai lies on the banks

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The dynasty extended its power into Kerala (southwestern India) and Sri Lanka during the reigns of kings Kadungon ruled (BCE 590-620), Arikesar Maravarman (BCE 670-700), Varagunamaharaja I (BCE 765-815), and Srimara Srivallabha (BCE 815-862). Pandya influence peaked in Jatavarman Sundara's reign BCE 1251-268. After Madurai was invaded by forces from the Delhi sultanate in 1311, the Pandyas declined into merely local rulers.

Acknowledgements

The purpose of this article is to put together a concise history of the Indus Valley Civilization. The available literature shows many areas which are highly speculative and controversial. I tried to put together the best scenarios which I compiled from the following articles available in the website, for which I am highly obliged. I am very thankful to Mr. Omar Khan <omar@harappa.com> of Dept. of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of Pakistan for his support in the inclusion of some of the pictures.

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To My Parents

