

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Advanced civilizations and powerful empires shaped the early history of India.
2. Powerful empires controlled India for hundreds of years.
3. Independence from Great Britain led to the division of India into several countries.
4. Religion and the caste system are two important parts of Indian culture.

The Big Idea

Ancient civilizations and powerful empires have shaped the history and culture of India.

Key Terms and Places

Delhi, p. 548

colony, p. 548

partition, p. 549

Hinduism, p. 550

Buddhism, p. 550

caste system, p. 550

TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on the history and culture of India. Use a diagram like this one to organize your notes.



History and Culture of India

If YOU lived there...

You live in New Delhi, India's capital city. Museums in your city display artifacts from some of India's oldest civilizations. People can visit beautiful buildings built by powerful empires. Statues and parades celebrate your country's independence.

How does your city celebrate India's history?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The Indian Subcontinent has a rich and interesting history. Ancient civilizations, powerful empires, rule by foreigners, and the struggle for independence have shaped not only the history, but also the culture of India and its neighbors.

Early Civilizations and Empires

India, the largest country on the Indian Subcontinent, is one of the world's oldest civilizations. Early civilizations and empires greatly influenced the history of the Indian Subcontinent.

India's History

Ancient Civilizations

- Around 2300 BC the Harappan civilization begins in the Indus River Valley.
- The Aryans, invaders from Central Asia, enter India around 1500 BC.
- Aryan culture helps shape the languages, religion, and caste system of India.



Harappan artifact

Early Empires

- By 233 BC the Mauryan Empire controls most of the Indian Subcontinent.
- Emperor Asoka helps spread Buddhism in India.
- Indian trade and culture flourish during the Gupta Empire.



Mauryan troops atop a war elephant

Ancient Civilizations

The first urban civilization in the Indian Subcontinent was centered around the Indus River Valley in present-day Pakistan. We call this ancient Indian civilization the Harappan (huh-RA-puhn) civilization after one of its main cities. Historians believe that the Harappan civilization flourished between 2300 and 1700 BC. By about 1700 BC, however, this civilization began to decline. No one is certain what led to its decline. Perhaps invaders or natural disasters destroyed the Harappan civilization.

Not long after the Harappan civilization ended, a new group rose to power. Around 1500 BC the Aryans (AIR-ee-uhrnz), a group of people from Central Asia, entered the Indian Subcontinent. Powerful warriors, the Aryans eventually conquered and settled the fertile plains along the Indus and Ganges rivers.

The Aryans greatly influenced Indian culture. Their language, called Sanskrit, served as the basis for several languages in South Asia. For example, Hindi, the official language of India, is related to Sanskrit. As the Aryans settled in India, they mixed with Indian groups already living there. Their religious beliefs and customs mixed as well, forming the beginnings of India's social system and Hindu religion.

Early Empires

Over time, powerful kingdoms began to emerge in northern India. One kingdom, the Mauryan Empire, dominated the region by about 320 BC. Strong Mauryan rulers raised huge armies and conquered almost the entire subcontinent. Asoka (uh-SOH-kuh), one of the greatest Mauryan emperors, helped expand the empire and improve trade. Asoka also encouraged the acceptance of other religions. After his death, however, the empire slowly crumbled. Power struggles and invasions destroyed the Mauryan Empire.

After the fall of the Mauryan Empire, India split into many small kingdoms. Eventually, however, a strong new empire rose to power. In the AD 300s, the Gupta (GOOP-tuh) Empire united much of northern India. Under Gupta rulers, trade and culture thrived. Scholars made important advances in math, medicine, and astronomy. Indian mathematicians, for example, first introduced the concept of zero.

Gradually, the Gupta Empire also declined. Attacks by invaders from Asia weakened the empire. By about 550, India was once again divided.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

influence
change, or have
an effect on

READING CHECK Summarizing How did early civilizations and empires influence India?

The Mughal Empire

- Babur establishes the Mughal Empire in northern India in 1526.
- Indian trade, culture, and religion thrive under the rule of Akbar the Great.
- By 1700 the Mughal Empire rules almost all of the Indian Subcontinent.



The first Mughal emperor, Babur

The British Empire

- The British East India Company establishes trade in northern India in the early 1600s.
- Indian troops trigger a massive revolt against the East India Company.
- The British government takes direct control of India in 1858.
- India and Pakistan gain independence in 1947.



Indian troop in the British Army



BIOGRAPHY

Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948)

Considered by many to be the father of modern India, Mohandas Gandhi led the struggle for Indian independence. As a leading member of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi introduced a policy of nonviolent resistance to British rule. He led millions in fasts, peaceful protest marches, and boycotts of British goods. His devotion to nonviolence earned him the name *Mahatma*, or "Great Soul." Gandhi's efforts proved successful. In 1947 India won its independence from Britain.

Drawing Conclusions Why did people call Gandhi *Mahatma*?

Powerful Empires

Powerful empires controlled India for much of its history. First the Mughal Empire and then the British Empire ruled India for hundreds of years.

The Mughal Empire

In the late 600s Muslim armies began launching raids into India. Some Muslims tried to take over Indian kingdoms. Turkish Muslims, for example, established a powerful kingdom at Delhi in northern India. In the 1500s a new group of Muslim invaders swept into the subcontinent. Led by the great warrior Babur (BAH-boohr), they conquered much of India. In 1526 Babur established the Mughal (MOO-guhl) Empire.

Babur's grandson, Akbar, was one of India's greatest rulers. Under Akbar's rule, trade flourished. Demand for Indian goods like spices and tea grew. The Mughal Empire grew rich from trade.

Akbar and other Mughal rulers also promoted culture. Although the Mughals were Muslim, most Indians continued to practice Hinduism. Akbar's policy of religious tolerance, or acceptance, encouraged peace throughout his empire. Architecture also thrived in the Mughal Empire. One of India's most spectacular buildings, the Taj Mahal, was built during Mughal rule.

The British Empire

The Mughals were not the only powerful empire in India. As early as the 1500s Europeans had tried to control parts of India. One European country, England, rose to power as the Mughal Empire declined.

The English presence in India began in the 1600s. At the time, European demand for Indian goods, such as cotton and sugar, was very high. Mughal rulers granted the East India Company, a British trading company, valuable trading rights.

At first, the East India Company controlled small trading posts. However, the British presence in India gradually grew. The East India Company expanded its territory and its power. By the mid-1800s the company controlled more than half of the Indian Subcontinent. India had become a British **colony**, a territory inhabited and controlled by people from a foreign land.

British rule angered and frightened many Indians. The East India Company controlled India with the help of an army made up mostly of Indian troops commanded by British officers. In 1857 Indian troops revolted, triggering violence all across India. The British government crushed the rebellion and took control of India away from the East India Company. With that, the British government began to rule India directly.

READING CHECK Analyzing How did powerful empires affect Indian history?

Independence and Division

By the late 1800s many Indians had begun to question British rule. Upset by their position as second-class citizens, a group of Indians created the Indian National Congress. Their goal was to gain more rights and opportunities.

As more and more Indians became dissatisfied with British rule, they began to demand independence. Mohandas Gandhi was the most important leader of this Indian independence movement. During the 1920s and 1930s his strategy of nonviolent protest convinced millions of Indians to support independence.

Finally, Great Britain agreed to make India independent. However, tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities caused a crisis. Fearing they would have little say in the new government, India's Muslims called for a separate nation.

To avoid a civil war, the British government agreed to the **partition, or division**, of India. In 1947 two independent countries were formed. India was mostly Hindu. Pakistan, which included the area that is now Bangladesh, was mostly Muslim. As a result, some 10 million people rushed to cross the border. Muslims and Hindus wanted to live in the country where their religion held a majority.

Soon after India and Pakistan won their independence, other countries in the region gradually did too. Sri Lanka and Maldives gained their independence from Great Britain. In 1971, after a bloody civil war that killed almost 1 million people, East Pakistan broke away to form the country of Bangladesh.

FOCUS ON READING

As you read this paragraph, visualize the events described. Draw a rough sketch to depict what you imagine.

READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect

What were the effects of Indian independence from Great Britain?

The Partition of India

A massive wave of migration took place after the partition of India and Pakistan. Millions of Hindus and Muslims crowded onto trains that would take them to their new homelands in India and Pakistan.



Indian Culture

As you might imagine, the rich and unique history of the Indian Subcontinent has created an equally unique culture. Two aspects of that culture are religion and a strict social class system.

Religion

Religion has played a very important role in Indian history. In fact, India is the birthplace of several major religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

Hinduism One of the world's oldest religions is **Hinduism**, the dominant religion of India. According to Hindu beliefs, everything in the universe is part of a single spirit called Brahman. Hindus believe that their ultimate goal is to reunite their souls with that spirit. Hinduism teaches that souls are reincarnated, or reborn, many times before they join with Brahman.

Buddhism Another Indian religion is Buddhism, which began in northern India in the late 500s BC. **Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama—the Buddha.** According to the Buddha's teachings, people can rise above

their desire for material goods and reach nirvana. Nirvana is a state of perfect peace in which suffering and reincarnation end.

Caste System

Thousands of years ago, the Aryans organized Indian society into a unique social class system known as the caste system. **The caste system divided Indian society into groups based on a person's birth or occupation.**

The caste system features four main classes, or castes, originally based on occupations. Below these four castes are the Dalits, members of India's lowest class. Many rules guided interaction between the classes. For example, people from different castes were not allowed to eat together.

READING CHECK Analyzing How do religion and the caste system influence Indian culture?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW In this section you learned about the rich history and culture of the Indian Subcontinent. Next, you will learn about important issues that affect India today.

Section 2 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SK7 HP2

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- Identify** What different peoples ruled India?
 - Analyze** How did these early civilizations and empires influence Indian culture?
- Describe** What were some accomplishments of the Mughal Empire?
 - Predict** How might Indian history have been different if the British had not ruled India?
- Recall** Who was the leader of India's independence movement?
 - Explain** What led to the partition of India?
- Define** What is the caste system?
 - Elaborate** Why do you think India is home to some of the world's oldest religions?

Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Use your notes and a diagram like the one here to write a sentence summarizing each aspect of Indian history and culture.



FOCUS ON VIEWING

- Discussing History and Culture** Which details about India's history and culture will you use? How will you explain and illustrate them?