



Ancient India

Stepping
Off the
Steppes

Stuck in a Caste

Hi!

Hi!

Hi!

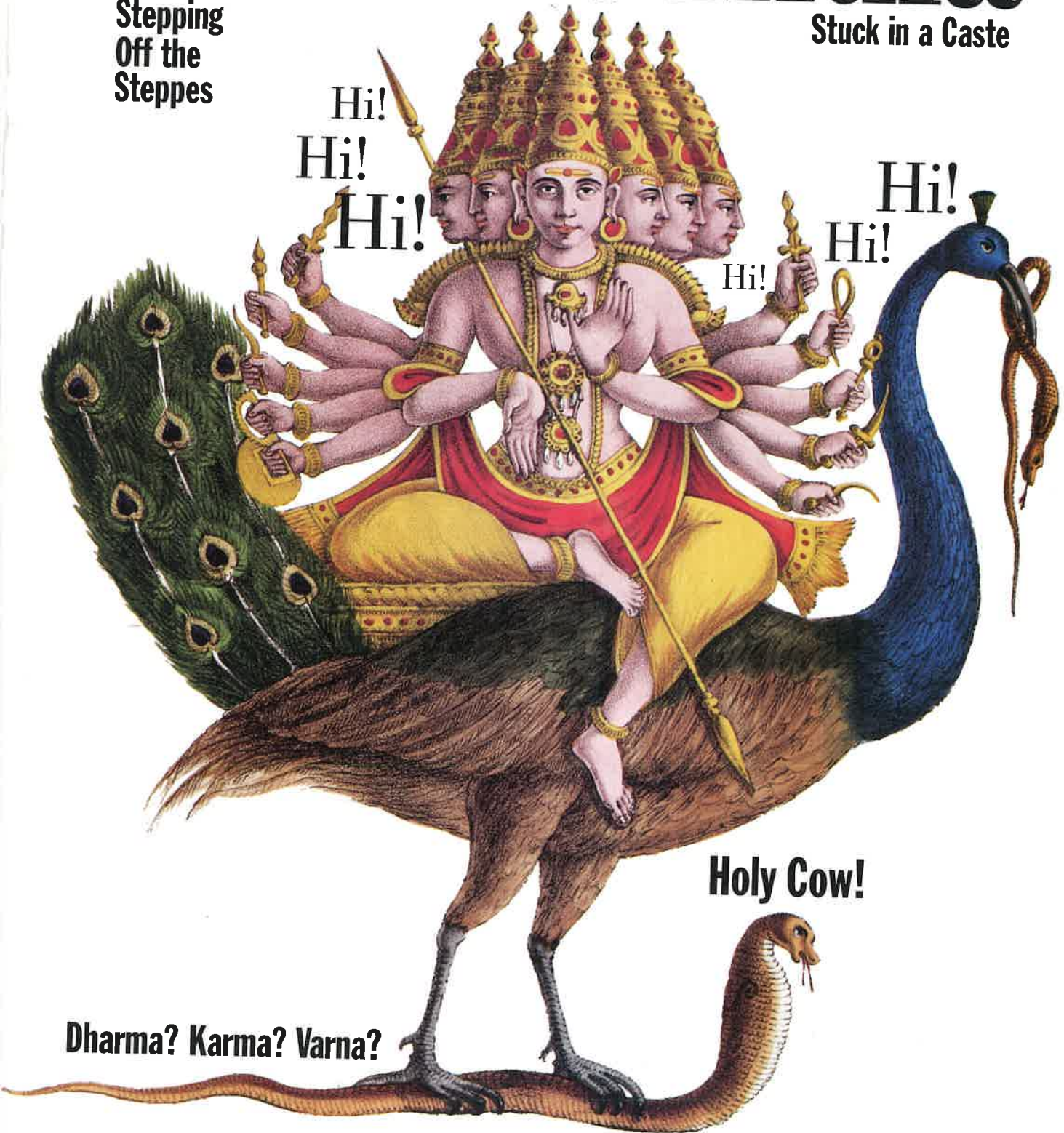
Hi!

Hi!

Hi!

Holy Cow!

Dharma? Karma? Varna?



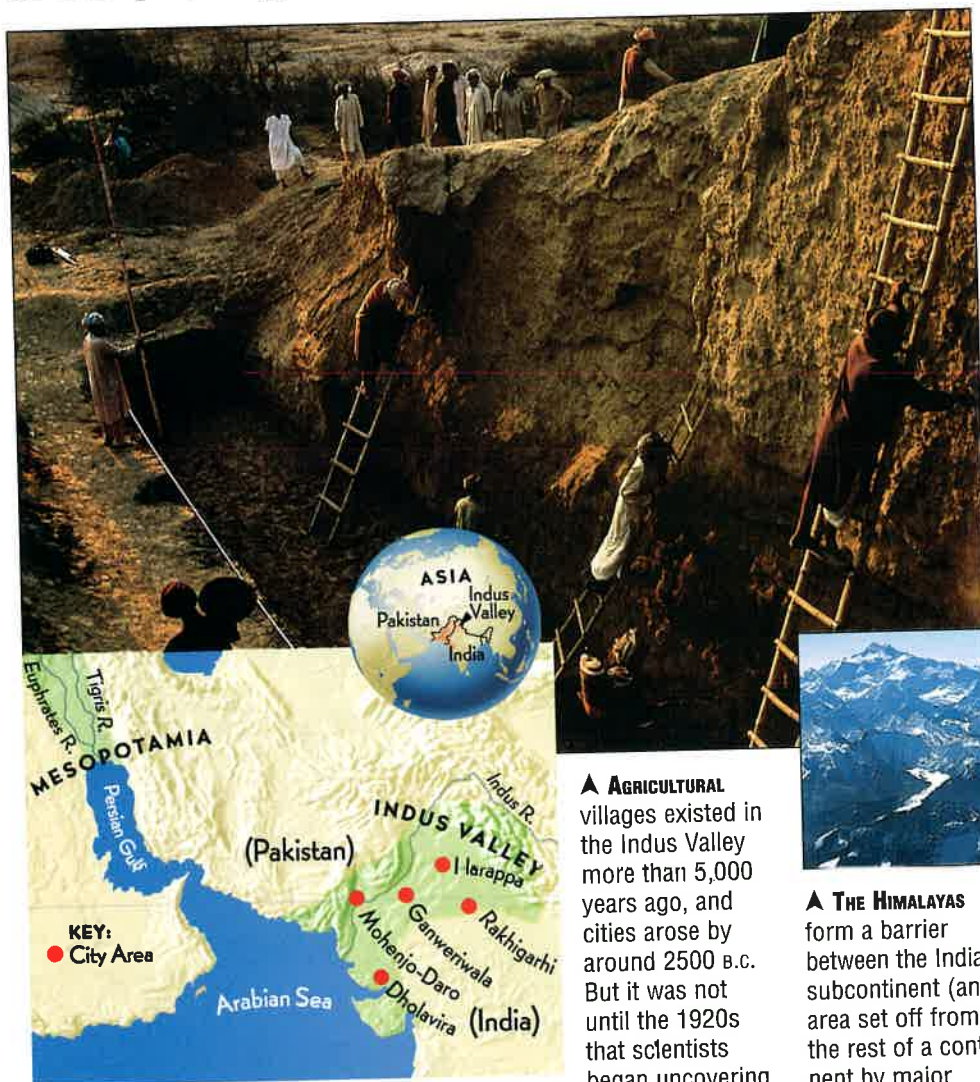
Mysterious Ancient India

No one knows for sure how people lived thousands of years ago in India. In comparison to city dwellers in other ancient civilizations, those of India left relatively little for scholars to study. In ancient Egypt, for example, the pyramids,

tombs filled with treasures, and much more help us understand the past. Ruins of great palaces and writings on tablets tell us about the people who lived in Mesopotamia along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. China, another of

the first great river-valley civilizations, never disappeared. Scholars have filled libraries and museums with artifacts and books from its distant past.

But ancient India is different. There is still so much that we don't know. We don't know the names of the most loved or hated rulers, nor how the govern-

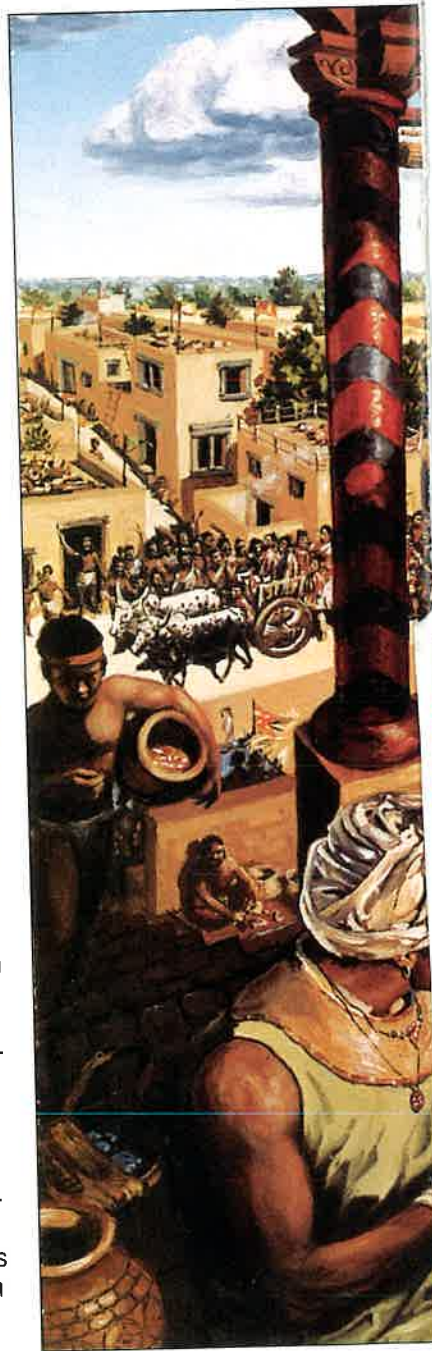


▲ **EXTENDING OVER** an area considerably larger than Texas, the Indus Valley civilization was many times larger than ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia.

The cities were very much alike, even though they were spread out over a vast area. Most of these well-planned cities were laid out in a grid pattern.

▲ **AGRICULTURAL** villages existed in the Indus Valley more than 5,000 years ago, and cities arose by around 2500 B.C. But it was not until the 1920s that scientists began uncovering the ancient city of Harappa, which lies below the present-day city of Harappa, in what is today Pakistan.

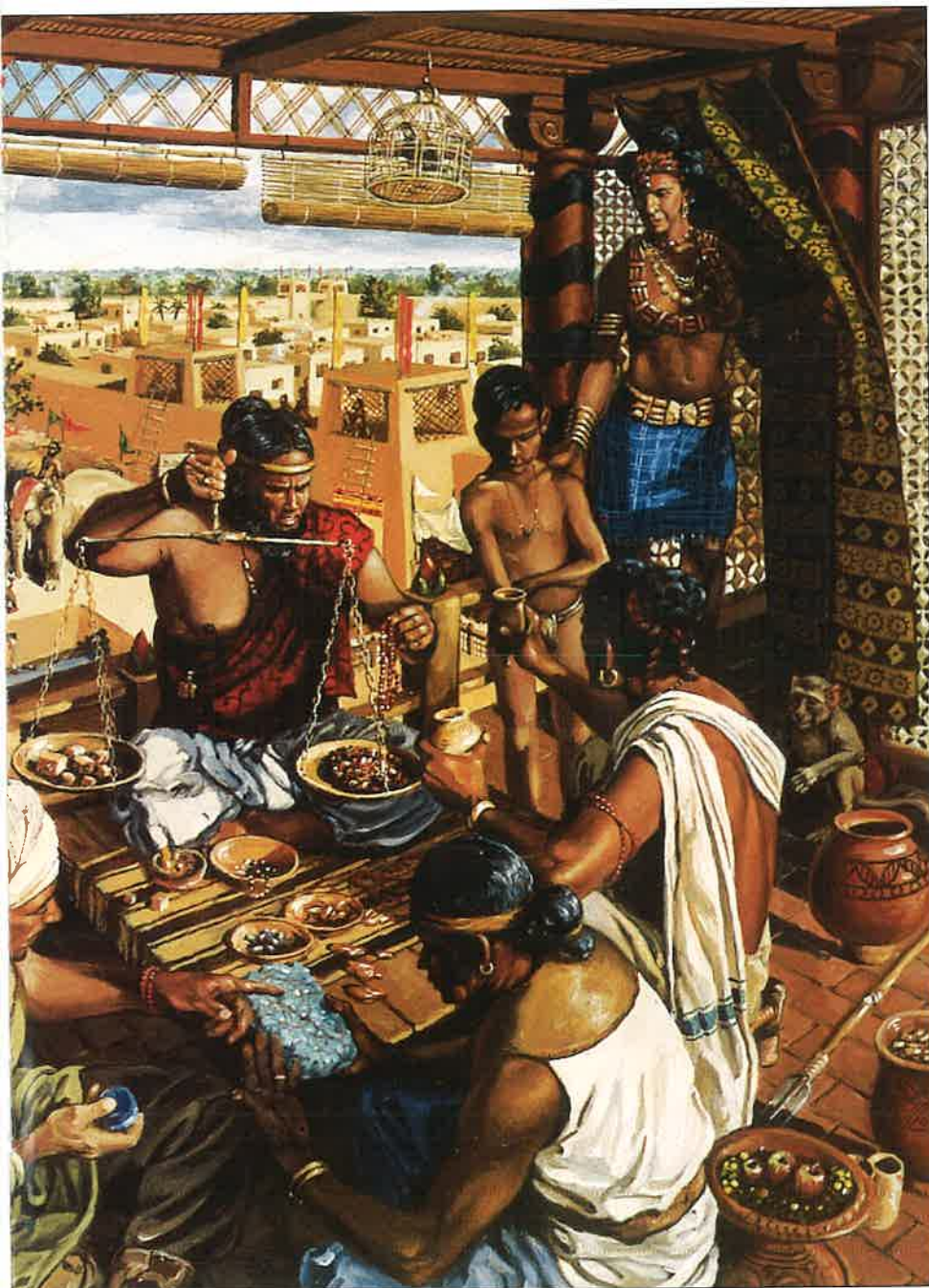
▲ **THE HIMALAYAS** form a barrier between the Indian subcontinent (an area set off from the rest of a continent by major physical barriers) and the rest of Asia. To reach India, early travelers had to cross the narrow passes in the Hindu Kush mountains to the northwest.



ment worked. We don't know what weapons and tools the people used or how wars were fought. And so far, no one has been able to unlock the mysteries of their language. Archaeologists are still looking for clues to ancient India's past in the ruins of its cities. So grab a shovel and let's start digging.



◀ **THE FIRST INDIAN** cities and towns grew up along the banks of the Indus River in what is today Pakistan. The country of India takes its name from the river.



◀ **ANOTHER SIGN** of planning besides the carefully laid out cities was the system of weights and measures. Merchants put stone weights of varying sizes on balance scales to measure goods. Throughout the land, everyone used the same size weights.

▼ **CHARACTERS ON** 5,000-year-old Harappa pottery (below) look like those on a clay seal used centuries later (bottom). Language experts agree that the characters stand for words, syllables, or sounds. But the picture-symbol script is not like any known writing system, and no one has been able to read it. That's why so little is known about the Indus Valley peoples.



India's First Cities

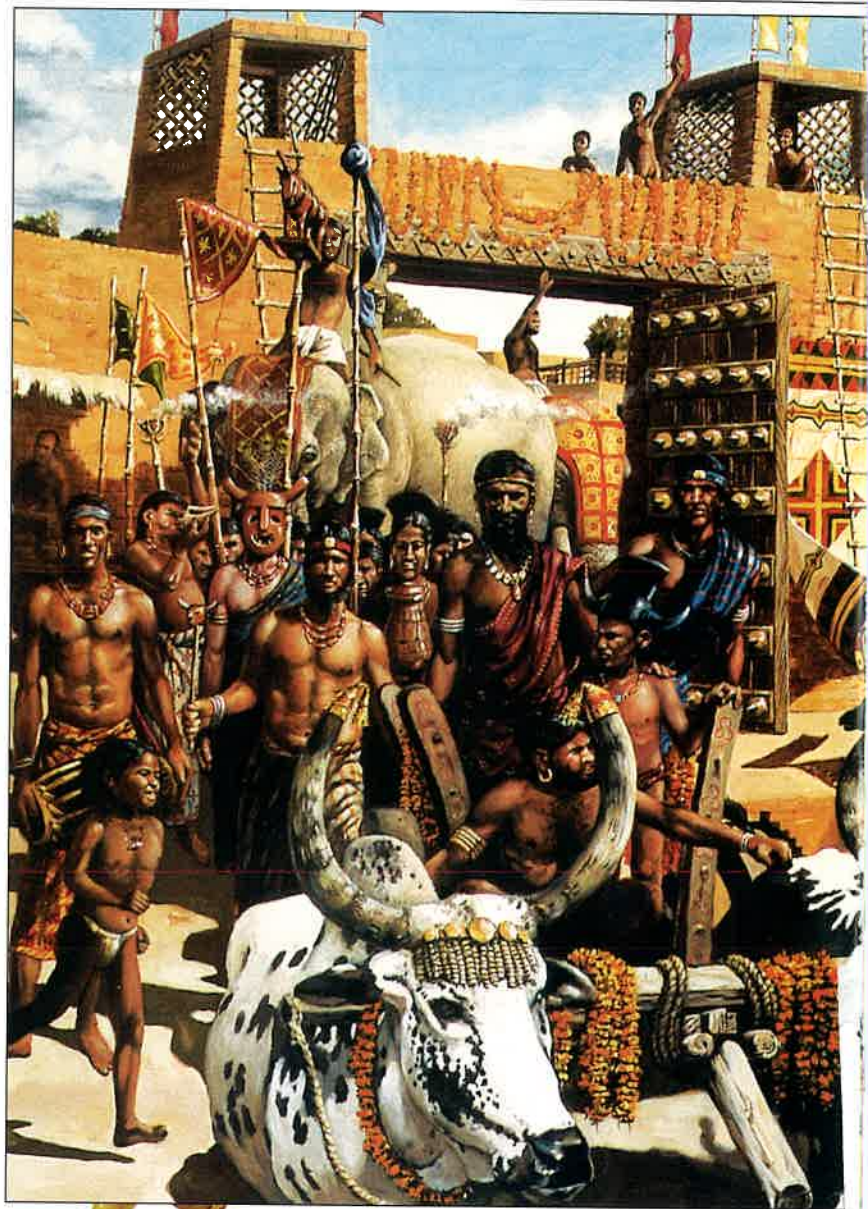
The villages that began to develop along the Indus River over five thousand years ago are among the oldest in the world. At first, almost every villager was a farmer. As farming methods improved, farmers produced enough to feed thousands of people. This allowed some of them to do other kinds of work. They became merchants, traders, and craftsmen. Villages turned into towns, and some towns turned into cities. By 2500 B.C., the Indus civilization was large enough to have two major cities—Mohenjo-Daro and, four hundred miles to the northeast, Harappa.



▲ **ARCHAEOLOGISTS** have uncovered charred kernels of wheat and barley from ancient trash

heaps in Harappa. This indicates that wheat and barley were key crops then as they are

today in parts of Pakistan. Farmers grew crops in the rich soil deposited by the Indus River.



◀ **BOTH MOHENJO-DARO** and Harappa had many craftsmen and traders. Craftsmen made jewelry and other objects out of

copper, bronze, gold, silver, and a reddish clay called terra cotta.

➤ **ALTHOUGH NO** actual wheels have been found, clay models like this one from Mohenjo-

Daro show that wheeled carts, pulled by humped zebu cattle, were used to carry goods.





◀ **HARAPPA MAY** have been home to more than 20,000 people. This image shows a ceremonial procession. Such an event may have served to raise the status of the upperclass landowners, merchants, and spiritual leaders.



▲ **ANCIENT PEOPLE** of the Indus Valley made same-size bricks by the millions. They were baked in ovens and made so well that many lasted for thousands of years.

▲ **HARAPPA WAS ONE** of many urban centers linked by trade. Traders supplied craftsmen with raw materials, such as lapis lazuli, from what is now

Afghanistan. Conch shells from the Arabian Sea were made into bracelets. Indus Valley merchants sent goods as far away as the Persian Gulf.

The Seals What Do They Mean?

Archaeologists have found many thousands of these postage-stamp-size stone seals in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro. They may once have been used to stamp the names or titles of merchants on clay rectangles that were attached to goods to show who owned them. People may have worn some seals on strings like nametags or as badges to show that the wearer was a member of a certain group or lived in a certain community.



▼ **ONE OF THE** most popular animals found on the seals is imaginary. Scientists have discovered seals depicting the unicorn throughout the Indus Valley.



◀ **THE PEOPLE OF** Harappa may have hunted elephants for their ivory or tamed them to carry heavy loads. Other seals show tigers, rhinoceroses, antelopes, and crocodiles.



▲ **THIS HUMPED** zebu bull, also known as a Brahman bull, is still common in India and Pakistan. Cattle and other farm animals found in the Indus Valley were pictured on many seals.



Inside Mohenjo-Daro

Mohenjo-Daro was once the largest city on the Indian sub-continent, with as many as fifty thousand people. Along with Harappa, it may have been one of the twin capitals of Indus civilization. The two were alike in several ways. Both had large public buildings sitting on a hilltop. Both had huge warehouses to store grain. Most important, both were carefully planned and laid out. The city's ancient name is not known, but archaeologists named it Mohenjo-Daro ("Mound of the Dead"). Let's see what decades of digging tell us about its past.



◀ **HERE IS HOW** Mohenjo-Daro looks today. Part of the city ruins sits on a hill rising above the surrounding plain.

▼ **WORKERS LAID** out the streets in a grid pattern, making rectangular city blocks larger than any modern city blocks. Narrow side streets crossed broad main streets. The city had one area for public buildings and another for homes.

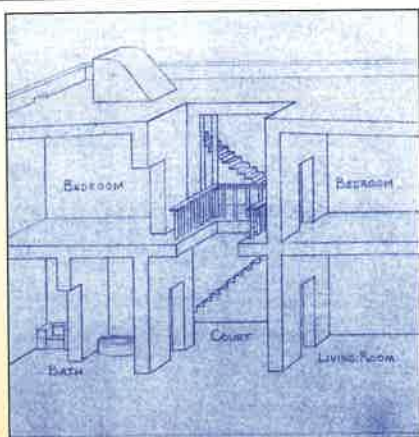


▲ **THE LOWER PART** of the city (in the background, below) had not only homes but also workshops

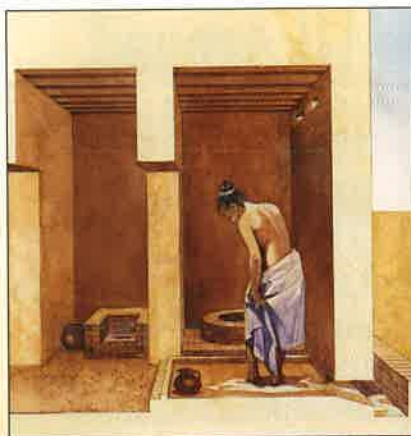
for metalworkers, bead makers, potters, textile makers, bricklayers, and other craftsmen.

The Lower City





◀ **HOUSES, MADE** of baked brick, differed mainly in size. Larger houses had several rooms arranged around a courtyard. They were often two stories tall and had a bathroom and a private well. Smaller houses had one or two rooms.



◀ **HOUSES HAD** plumbing systems with baths, toilets, and drains that led into sewers below ground. The brick-covered drains on the streets had holes for inspection. These systems were much more advanced than those of the Egyptians and Mesopotamians.

▼ **THE CITADEL, A** fortress complex (in the foreground, below), looked out over the lower city where people had their homes. The entire city sat on giant mud-brick platforms to

protect it from the yearly flooding of the Indus River. Archaeologists have found no temples or palaces in the cities of ancient India. However, the size of public buildings such as

the granary and the gathering of grain in storehouses suggest a well-organized government with leaders who communicated regularly with each other.

THE GREAT BATH was the most important public building. It was probably used for public worship or religious ceremonies that involved bathing in the pool. Stone

pillars mark the entrances to the many rooms around the bath. They may have been changing rooms or priests' cells. Some rooms had private baths, possibly

used by priests. Archaeologists have uncovered public baths in most other Indus cities.

THE GRANARY SERVED as a storehouse for wheat and grain grown by farmers in nearby villages. It rested

on large blocks of brick. Between the bricks, cold air circulated to keep the grain fresh. Outside

the building, workers built a loading platform to move the grain in and out of the storehouse.

The Citadel

Where did they go?

THE INDUS VALLEY civilization lasted for about a thousand years. By around 1500 B.C., its cities and towns were in ruins. One cause may have been the change in the flow of the Indus and other rivers, which caused places to become too dry for farming. Another cause may have been frequent seasonal shortages of water. This could have come about after forests were cut down to provide fuel for baking bricks, and the rainfall that used to be held in their root systems, now flowed away rapidly. Some cities may have been attacked by invaders or hard hit by earthquakes or flooding that destroyed crops and disrupted trade.

All Around the Ancient World

Like the ancient Indian cities, the early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China arose along or near major rivers. Ancient Egypt extended along the banks of the Nile. Mesopotamia spread out across the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what is today Iraq. The earliest civilizations in China sprang up in the valley of the Huang He River.

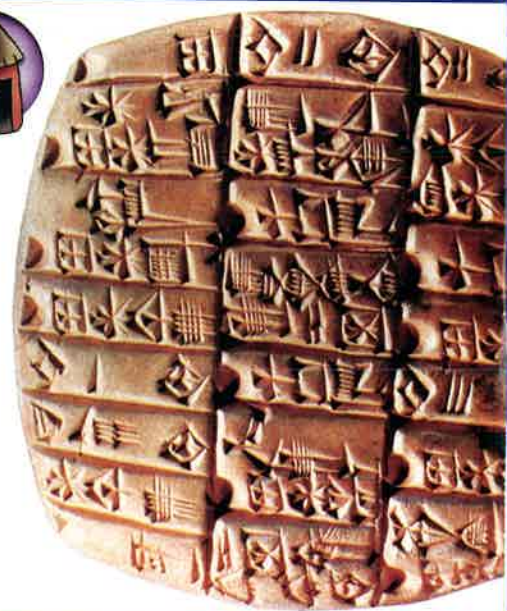
► **4500 B.C.**
First semi-permanent villages in Egypt



▼ **4000 B.C.**
First cultivators settle in Indus Valley and begin farming



► **3500 B.C.**
Sumerians develop cuneiform writing in Mesopotamia



► **2500 B.C.**
Indians build cities in Indus Valley; Egyptians begin writing on papyrus



Bath at Mohenjo-Daro



"Adoration of Ru" on papyrus

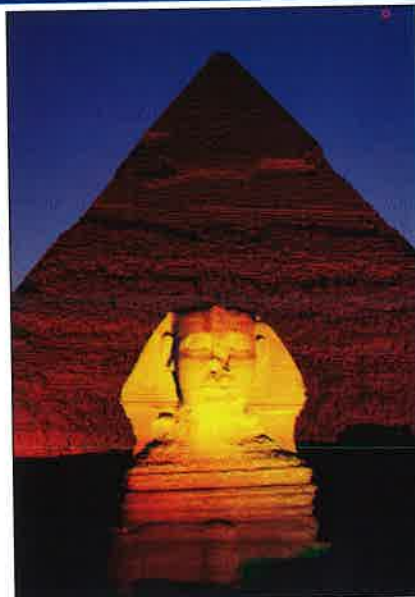
► **1500 B.C.**
Aryans arrive in India; Vedic Hinduism develops in India



▲ **1200 B.C.**
Israelites leave Egypt



▼ **2650 B.C.**
First stone
Egyptian pyramid
built at Saqqara

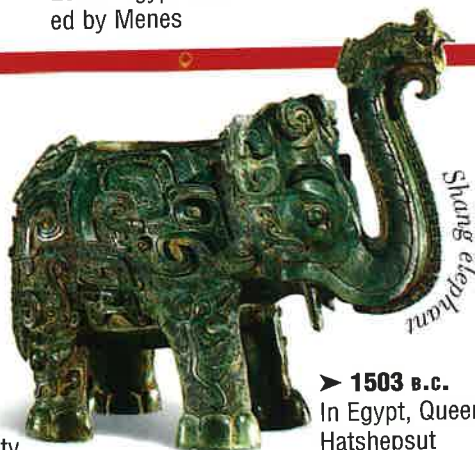


▲ **3100 B.C.**
Earliest hiero-
glyphic writing in
Egypt; Upper and
Lower Egypt united by Menes

► **2550 B.C.**
Great Pyramid
and Sphinx at
Giza



▲ **2000 B.C.**
Chinese writing
develops



► **1700 B.C.**
Shang dynasty
begins in China

► **1503 B.C.**
In Egypt, Queen
Hatshepsut
begins her reign



◀ **1000 B.C.**
Zhou dynasty
begins in China;
Kingdom of Israel
established;
Phoenicians devel-
op an alphabet



◀ **605 B.C.**
King Nebuchad-
nezzar begins
reign in Babylon

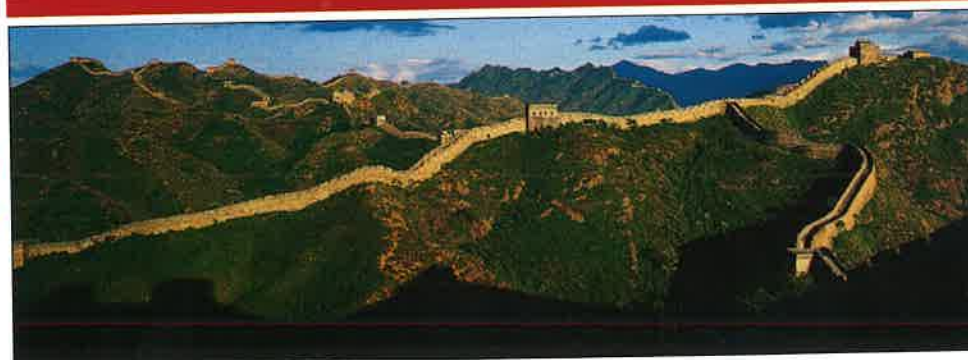
► **525 B.C.**
Persian
armies conquer
Egypt



▼ **400 B.C.**
The Vedas, Hindu
sacred texts,
written down
in Sanskrit



► **400 B.C.**
Workers begin
building Great
Wall of China



Phoenician alphabet

Peering into the Past

These men in the Indus River near Mohenjo-Daro practice the ancient tradition of hunting herons. The decoys that they wear help them to sneak up on unsuspecting birds.

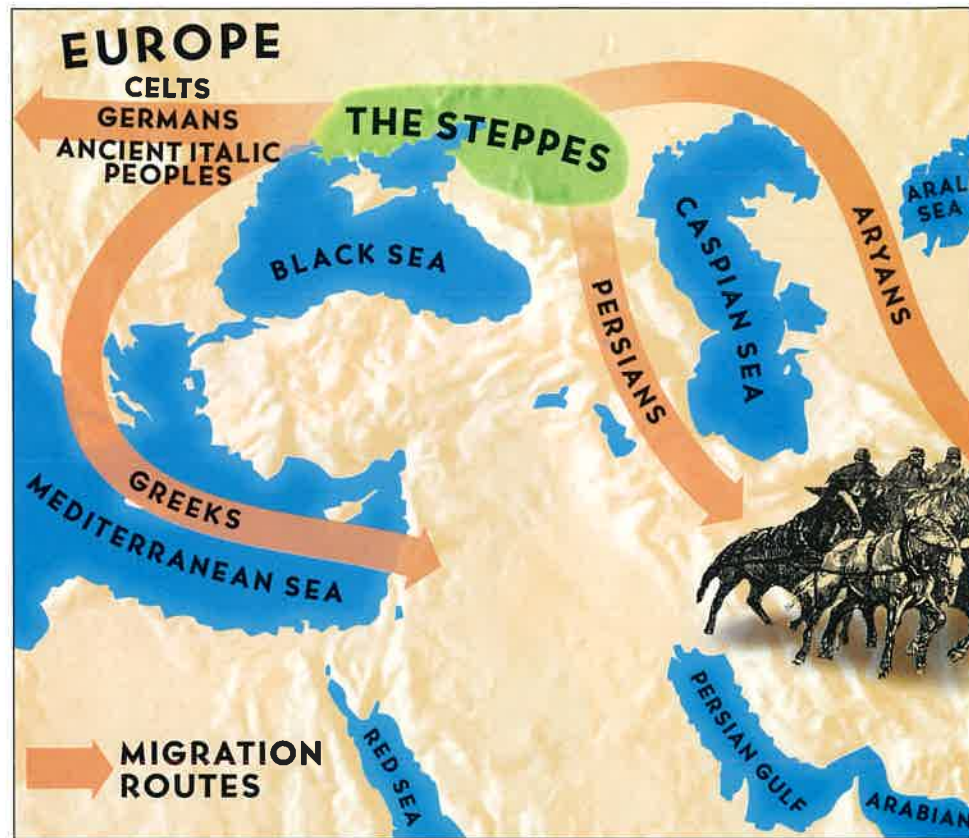




The Indo-European Migration

As the earliest Indus Valley cities were declining around 1500 B.C., a group of people known as the Vedic Aryans were crossing into India through passes in the Hindu Kush Mountains. Their migration into India took place over hundreds of years. They traveled first into the Indus Valley, but unlike the earlier peoples along the Indus, the Aryans were not city dwellers. They were nomadic herders, who moved from place to place searching for grasslands for their cattle. Fierce fighters well equipped with bronze weapons, they easily defeated those they challenged.

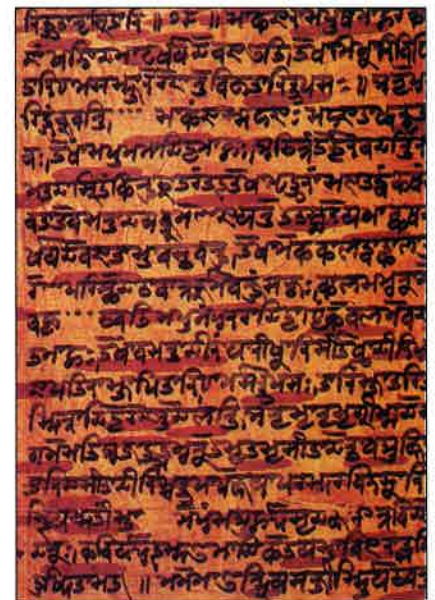
Over time, the Vedic Aryans gave up their nomadic life and settled in the valley of the Ganges River, in northern India. Although Aryan society vanished long ago, its traditions and beliefs have had a lasting impact on Indian culture and way of life. Both the Indian social system and Hinduism, one of the world's major religions, have their roots in ancient Aryan beliefs and practices.



▲ **THE ARYANS WHO** settled in India were part of a much larger group who spread out from the Steppes—dry grasslands of Central Asia. This group herded cattle, sheep, and goats and tamed horses. They may have left the Steppes because they had run out of good grazing land for their animals, or they may have been fleeing invaders. Some, including the Aryans, went south toward India. Others,

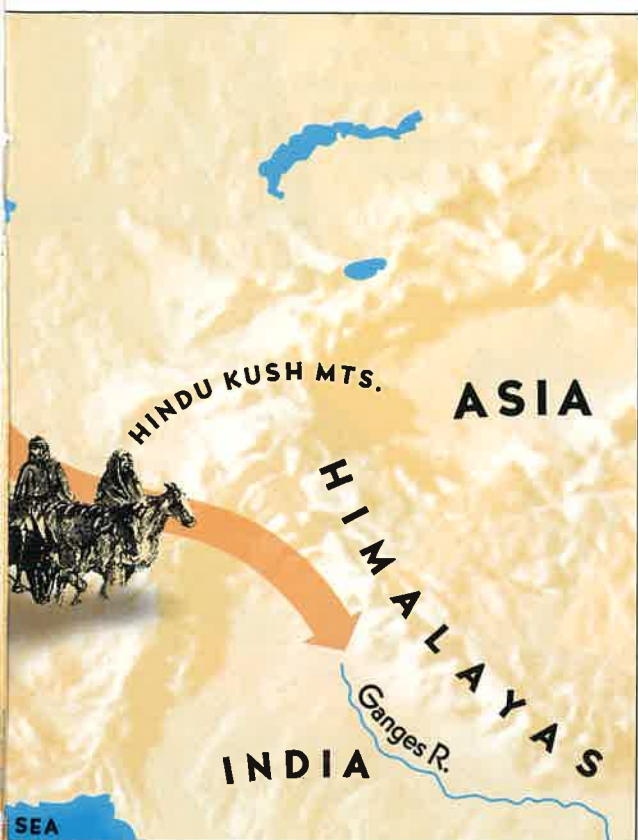
who spoke early Celtic, Germanic, and Italic languages, moved west through Europe. Still others, who spoke Greek and Persian, went to locations between those of the other groups.

► **UNLIKE INDUS** Valley cities, the villages and towns of the Aryans disappeared almost completely. No bricks, seals, or statues remain, and there are only a few traces of former building foundations. We



would know little about them if it were not for their early hymns, prayers, legends, and other writings collected in the four books known as the Vedas.

Because these writings in Sanskrit tell us a great deal about the Aryans, historians call the years from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C. the Vedic Age.



▲ **FOR CENTURIES**, before the Aryans developed a written form of Sanskrit, each generation taught hymns and poems to the next generation by word of mouth. Remembering and reciting these songs and verses was an important duty of the families of

warriors and priests. After the priests assembled the hymns, poems, legends, and instructions into the four holy books, the Vedas, people could read and recite them, just as millions do today, especially in India.



▼ **ANCIENT ARYAN** writings describe the Aryans as people who enjoyed making war. They not only fought outsiders but also each other. They were skilled fighters who conquered many of the people they challenged. Their success came in part from the fast-moving chariots they drove and the heavy bronze axes they carried into battle.

► **SANSKRIT IS IN** the Indo-European language family. So are English, Spanish, French, Persian, Hindi, and German. As this chart shows, Sanskrit has many root words in common with other languages.

LANGUAGE FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

					6
ENGLISH	mother	father	daughter	new	six
SANSKRIT	mātár	pitár	duhitá	návas	sát
PERSIAN	muhdáhr	puhdáhr	dukhtáhr	now	shahsh
SPANISH	madre	padre	hija	nuevo	seis
GERMAN	Mutter	Vater	Tochter	neu	sechs



◀ **THE ARYANS** measured their wealth in cattle. The more cattle a family had, the richer they were. They depended on cattle for food and also used them to trade for goods.

From Top to Bottom

From the Vedas, we know that Aryan society was strictly divided into four classes, or *varnas*. Each class was made up of families with similar jobs and status. At the top were the Brahmins, traditionally priests, followed by the Kshatriyas, traditionally warriors. Next came the Vaishyas—farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. The Shudras were the lowest recognized class. Many were slaves or servants. Below the Shudras were people who did work no one else would do. They were referred to as untouchables. When Europeans came to India many centuries later, they used the word *caste* to describe India's rigid social system.



▲ **AT FIRST, WARRIORS** enjoyed the same high status as priests. Both groups could listen to and recite the Vedas. As reli-

gious ceremonies became more secret and complex, the priests claimed that only they could conduct them.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

Caste determined not only what work people did but also what they ate and wore, where they lived, and whom they married. People were born into

their caste for life. From birth, the children in each caste knew they would have the same place in society as their parents and grandparents.

According to Indian tradition, the castes emerged from the mouth, arms, legs, and feet of Purusha, the first human being.

LEGS

(VAISHYAS)

Merchants, land-owning farmers, and craftsmen belonged to the Vaishya caste. Many sold or traded goods and some became quite prosperous. Others tended cattle, lent money, or farmed.

FEET

(SHUDRAS)

Slaves, servants, tenant farmers, and unskilled workers belonged to the Shudras caste. They were the poorest and least educated of the four *varnas*. They served the other castes.

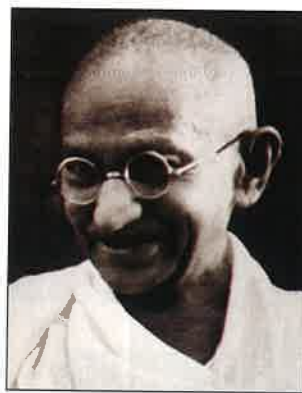


MOUTH

(BRAHMANS)

As priests, Brahmins performed religious ceremonies, such as offering sacrifices of food to the gods and studying the Vedas. People depended on the Brahmins to say the prayers properly

and repeat the right hymns. If a prayer was said incorrectly, people believed terrible things would happen. Brahmins passed their knowledge to the next generation by word of mouth.



▲ **IN THE 1940s**, the great Indian leader Mohandas K. Gandhi, known as Mahatma ("great spirit"), called on all Indians to stop the harsh treatment

of untouchables, whom Gandhi called Harijans, or "children of God." Because of his and other reformers' efforts, the 1950 Indian Constitution outlawed discrimination against Harijans and provided for quotas for them in schools, government, and elective positions. However, customs change slowly, especially in Indian villages, and many Harijans still suffer greatly.

ARMS

(KSHATRIYAS)

As warriors, Kshatriyas took charge of the army and government. They led the councils of elders who ran the villages. They could study the Vedas but could not teach them.

Oops! I must be in the wrong class.



▲ **By 500 B.C.**, the separation of the four *varnas* had become relatively rigid. Classes were divided over time into smaller groups, each known as a *jati* (from the word for birth). Shoemakers, potters, and leather tanners each belonged to a different *jati*. Each *jati* also had its own rules for diet and for marriage. Groups lived in separate neighborhoods and did not mix socially.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

LET'S NOT.



▲ **UNTOUCHABLES** did work others thought of as "unclean," such as skinning animals and tanning hides for leather. Butchers, gravediggers, and collectors of garbage and waste products were also untouchables. They were not allowed to live in

villages but built their huts on the outskirts. If a higher caste person was touched by an untouchable or even had the shadow of one fall on him, that person had to go through certain religious ceremonies to get rid of the "pollution."