

CHAPTER
3

CHAPTERS IN BRIEF

People and Ideas on the Move, 2000 B.C.–250 B.C.

Summary

CHAPTER OVERVIEW People of the plains of western Asia moved into the settled areas of early civilizations. Hittites created one empire. Aryans brought new ideas into India. Partly in response to Aryan rule, the Hindu and Buddhist religions took shape. Around the Mediterranean Sea, others spread their culture through trade. Hebrews struggled as they followed their religion based on belief in one god.

1 The Indo-Europeans

KEY IDEA Indo-European peoples moved into areas new to them, including Europe, India, and Southwest Asia. They met people already living there.

While some peoples built civilizations in the great river valleys, others lived on the huge plains of western Asia. They rode horses and tended cattle, sheep, and goats. They spoke many different languages, but all of them came from the same original language. These people are called the Indo-Europeans. Then, for some reason, starting about 1700 B.C., they began to leave their homes. They moved into some of the settled areas and began to conquer them.

One of these Indo-European peoples was the Hittites. They rode two-wheeled chariots and used iron weapons to conquer the area that is now Turkey. They moved farther and took the ancient lands of Mesopotamia. When they moved to the south, they ran into the Egyptians. Neither side was able to defeat the other, however, so they decided to make peace.

The Hittites adopted many features of the culture that had grown in Mesopotamia before they arrived. Some they used without making any changes, but others they adapted to suit their own ideas. The Hittites ruled their Southeast Asia empire from about 2000 to 1190 B.C. Then they fell to a new wave of invasions.

Another group of Indo-European people named the Aryans moved into modern India. They first captured the land of the people of the Indus Valley. They were divided into three classes of people: priests, warriors, and peasants or traders. They came to see the non-Aryans living in the area as a fourth class. Over time, they developed complex rules for how people in these classes, or castes, could interact with one another. People were born into their caste for life. Some “impure” people lived in a group outside this class system. They were

butchers, grave diggers, and trash collectors. Because they did work that was thought to be not clean, they were called “untouchables.” They were kept away from contact with the members of other classes.

Over many centuries, the Aryans took more and more of what is now India. Eventually many powerful people tried to create their own kingdoms. They fought each other until one kingdom, Magadha, won control over almost all of India. Around this time, an epic poem *Mahabharata* was written. It tells the story of a war. The poem reveals the blending of cultures at the time and sets down ideals that were to become important in Hindu life.

2 Hinduism and Buddhism Develop

KEY IDEA Religious beliefs arose in India during the age of Aryan settlement. Later these ideas developed into the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Hinduism is a collection of religious beliefs that forms no one system. Unlike many religions, it was not founded by just a single person. It is a religion that allows great variety for its followers. Certain ideas became common to the beliefs of all Hindus.

Hindus believe that each person has a soul. However, there is also a larger soul, called Brahman, that brings together all the individual souls. A person’s goal is to become free of desire and not bothered by suffering. When that takes place, the person’s soul wins escape from life on Earth. It can take a long time to reach that understanding. Hindus believe that the soul is born again into another body after death. In the next life, the soul has another chance to learn its lessons. According to Hindus, how a person behaves in one life has an effect on the person’s next life. Someone who was evil will be reborn into a poor position. Someone who did good deeds, however, will benefit in the next life.

Another religion that arose in India was Jainism. It was started by Mahavira, a man who lived from

about 599 to 527 B.C. He believed that every creature in the world—even animals—has a soul. Because of that, people must be sure not to harm any creature. Today, Jains take jobs that are certain not to hurt living things.

Another new religion, Buddhism, arose about the same time as Hinduism and Jainism. Buddhism has millions and millions of followers all around the world. It was started around 528 B.C. by Siddhartha Gautama.

Siddhartha searched for a way that would allow him to escape the suffering of human life. He spent many years searching for this answer and tried learning from many different teachers. Finally, he sat down and meditated under a tree. After 49 days of this meditation, he had his answer. He was now called the Buddha, which means the “enlightened one,” and he began to teach others.

The new teaching was based on the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is filled with suffering and sorrow.
2. Suffering is caused by people pursuing the immediate pleasures of the world.
3. The way to end suffering is to end all desires.
4. The way to end all desires is to follow the Eightfold Path leading to nirvana—release from selfishness.

As with Hinduism, the Buddha taught that the soul would be reborn into a new life. This chain of new lives would continue until the soul, like the Buddha, reached understanding.

These ideas attracted many followers. Many people who lived in the lower classes of Indian society saw these ideas as a chance to escape from the limits placed on them. His teaching also spread in southern India, where the Aryans did not have much influence. Some followers took the ideas to other lands. In the centuries after Buddha’s death in 483 B.C., Buddhism appeared in Southeast Asia. Later it was carried to China and then to Korea and Japan. Merchants and traders played an important role in spreading the religion. Strangely, in India where Buddhism was founded, the religion faded. It was possibly just absorbed into Hinduism. Many places that are important to Buddhism remain in India, however. Buddhists from around the world travel there to visit locations connected to the life of Buddha.

③ Seafaring Traders

KEY IDEA *Trading societies developed civilizations beyond the Fertile Crescent region.*

In the Mediterranean area, a new culture arose on the island of Crete. It is called the Minoan culture after a legendary king. The Minoans were peaceful people who lived in rich cities that were safe from invaders. They controlled trade in their area and sent their fine pottery, swords, and metal drinking cups to other lands. They also sent other countries their style of art and architecture. This style later had influence on the art of Greece.

Archaeologists have explored the ruins of ancient cities of the Minoans. They have found beautiful wall paintings that offer looks into Minoan culture. One interesting feature of life on the island was the high position that women seem to have held. An earth goddess seems to have headed all the gods of Crete, and women ruled over some important religious places. Among other peoples who lived nearby, women did not play such important roles.

Minoan cities were damaged in 1470 B.C. by a series of disasters. First, a number of earthquakes rocked the island, destroying buildings. Then a volcano exploded on a nearby island. That was followed by huge waves and clouds of white ash from the volcano’s fire. These shocks seem to have been too much for the Minoans. The Minoan civilization ended about 1200 B.C.

Another people arose on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean because of their role as traders. Living in several city-states in what is today Lebanon, they traded far and wide. Some may have even sailed as far as Britain—and perhaps around Africa. They were the Phoenicians.

The Phoenicians put colonies all along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Colonies were 30 miles apart because that was the distance that one of their ships could travel in a day. One of those colonies, Carthage, in North Africa, later became a major power in the Mediterranean world. Phoenicians traded such goods as wine, weapons, metals, ivory, slaves, and objects made of wood and glass. They also made a red-purple dye that was highly valued.

The important achievement of the Phoenicians was their alphabet. They used symbols to stand for the sounds of consonants. They wanted a way of writing so they could make records of their trade agreements. They brought their system of writing to other lands such as Greece, where Greeks

changed the form of some letters. The alphabet that we use today, however, had its beginnings in Phoenician writing.

4 The Origins of Judaism

KEY IDEA *The Hebrews became the only ancient people in their region to believe in one god.*

Another people entered the world scene. They made a claim to an important piece of land, the area now called Palestine. This region sat on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea and on the Red Sea, which led to the Indian Ocean. As a result, it opened to the trade of many lands. The people who settled here were the Hebrews, and they believed that the land had been promised to them by God. Today the Jewish people are the descendants of the ancient Hebrews.

The Hebrews were among the world's earliest peoples to believe in one god. Their story began in Mesopotamia, where a man named Abraham lived. God told him to move his family to Canaan, where he would prosper. Abraham promised that he and his people would always obey God. God, in turn, promised to always protect them from their enemies.

Later the Hebrews suffered from the failure of their crops. They moved to Egypt, but over time they were made into slaves. After many years, they left in a mass departure that Jews called the Exodus. According to the sacred book of the Jews, a man named Moses led them out of Egypt. They wandered 40 years in a wilderness. During that time, the story says, Moses received from God the Ten Commandments. These were the laws that the Hebrews were to follow. For the second time, God promised to protect these people in return for their obedience to his laws.

After Moses died, the people finally reached Palestine and settled down. They began to adopt new ways of life. They often fought with other peoples living in the area, as each group tried to control the best land and other resources. The Hebrews were organized into twelve groups, called tribes. Each tribe was separate from the others, but in times of danger they would all get together under leaders called judges. One of those judges was a woman named Deborah. This was unusual for women in Hebrew society, who were expected to stay home and raise children.

The Hebrews had other leaders called prophets. They said that they were messengers sent by God to tell the people how he wanted them to act. These prophets told the people that they had two duties: to worship God and to deal in just and fair ways with each other. With this message, religion was changing. Instead of being a part of life run by priests who followed certain rituals, it was now a matter of each person living a moral life.

From about 1020 to 922 B.C., the Hebrews were united under three kings. The first, Saul, drove off enemy peoples; the second, David, made Jerusalem the capital; and the third, Solomon, built a magnificent temple to be used to worship God. After his death, though, the kingdom split into two parts. For the next two centuries, these kingdoms had their ups and downs. Finally, though, they were conquered by outside forces. The Chaldeans destroyed Solomon's great temple and forced the Hebrews to leave the land and settle in Babylon. They lived there for several decades, until the Chaldeans themselves were conquered. The new ruler allowed 40,000 of the Hebrews to return home. They rebuilt the temple and the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

Review

1. **Clarifying** What were the social groups of the Aryan people who entered India?
2. **Summarizing** Explain the beliefs of Hindus about life and death.
3. **Developing Historical Perspective** Where did the ideas of the Buddha have appeal?
4. **Drawing Conclusions** What kind of movement is represented by the Minoans and Phoenicians? Why was it important?
5. **Comparing and Contrasting** What was unusual about the religion of the Hebrews?