

History Of South Asia

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Answer 2

Disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization

The great Indus Valley Civilization, located in modern-day India and Pakistan, began to decline around 1800 BCE. The civilization eventually disappeared along with its two great cities, Mohenjo daro and Harappa. Harappa lends its name to the Indus Valley people because it was the civilization's first city to be discovered by modern archaeologists. Archaeological evidence indicates that trade with Mesopotamia, located largely in modern Iraq, seemed to have ended. The advanced drainage system and baths of the great cities were built over or blocked. Writing began to disappear, and the standardized weights and measures used for trade and taxation fell out of use. Scholars have put forth differing theories to explain the disappearance of the Harappans, including an Aryan Invasion and climate change marked by overwhelming monsoons.

The Aryan Invasion Theory (C. 1800-1500 BC)

The Indus Valley Civilization may have met its demise due to invasion. According to one theory by British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler, a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, suddenly overwhelmed and conquered the Indus River Valley.

Wheeler, who was Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1944 to 1948, posited that many unburied corpses found in the top levels of the Mohenjo-Daro archaeological site were victims of war. The theory suggested that by using horses and more advanced weapons against the peaceful Harappan people, the Aryans may have easily defeated them. Yet shortly after Wheeler proposed his theory, other scholars dismissed it by explaining that the skeletons were not victims of invasion massacres, but rather the remains of hasty burials. Wheeler himself eventually admitted that the theory could not be proven, and the skeletons indicated only a final phase of human occupation, with the decay of the city structures likely a result of it becoming uninhabited.

Later opponents of the invasion theory went so far as to state that adherents to the idea put forth in the 1940s were subtly justifying the British government's policy of intrusion into, and subsequent colonial rule over, India. Various elements of the Indus Civilization are found in later cultures, suggesting the civilization did not disappear suddenly due to an invasion. Many scholars came to believe in an Indo-Aryan Migration theory stating that the Harappan culture was assimilated during a migration of the Aryan people into northwest India.

The Climate Change Theory (C. 1800-1500 BC)

Other scholarship suggests the collapse of Harappan society resulted from climate change. Some experts believe the drying of the Saraswati River, which began around 1900 BCE, was the main cause for climate change, while others conclude that a great flood struck the area. Any major environmental change, such as deforestation, flooding or droughts due to a river changing course, could have had disastrous effects on Harappan society, such as crop failures, starvation, and disease. Skeletal evidence suggests many people died from malaria, which is most often spread by mosquitoes. This also would have caused a breakdown in the economy and civic order within the urban areas.

Another disastrous change in the Harappan climate might have been eastward-moving monsoons, or winds that bring heavy rains. Monsoons can be both helpful and detrimental to a climate, depending on whether they support or destroy vegetation and agriculture. The monsoons that came to the Indus River Valley aided the growth of agricultural surpluses, which supported the development of cities, such as Harappa. The population came to rely on seasonal monsoons rather than irrigation, and as the monsoons shifted eastward, the water supply would have dried up.

By 1800 BCE, the Indus Valley climate grew cooler and drier, and a tectonic event may have diverted the Ghaggar Hakra river system toward the Ganges Plain. The Harappans may have migrated toward the Ganges basin in the east, where they established villages and isolated farms. These small communities could not produce the same agricultural surpluses to support large cities. With the reduced production of goods, there was a decline in trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia. By around 1700 BCE, most of the Indus Valley Civilization cities had been abandoned.

Answer 5

Founder of Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism who later became known as “the Buddha,” lived during the 5th century B.C. Gautama was born into a wealthy family as a prince in present-day Nepal. Although he had an easy life, Gautama was moved by suffering in the world. He decided to give up his lavish lifestyle and endure poverty. When this didn’t fulfill him, he promoted the idea of the “Middle Way,” which means existing between two extremes. Thus, he sought a life without social indulgences but also without deprivation.

Buddhism History

When Gautama passed away around 483 B.C., his followers began to organize a religious movement. Buddha’s teachings became the foundation for what would develop into Buddhism. In the 3rd century B.C., Ashoka the Great, the Mauryan Indian emperor, made Buddhism the state religion of India. Buddhist monasteries were built, and missionary work was encouraged. Over the next few centuries, Buddhism began to spread beyond India. The

thoughts and philosophies of Buddhists became diverse, with some followers interpreting ideas differently than others. In the sixth century, the Huns invaded India and destroyed hundreds of Buddhist monasteries, but the intruders were eventually driven out of the country.

Types of Buddhism

Today, many forms of Buddhism exist around the world. The three main types that represent specific geographical areas include:

- **Theravada Buddhism:** Prevalent in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos and Burma
- **Mahayana Buddhism:** Prevalent in China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and Vietnam
- **Tibetan Buddhism:** Prevalent in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Bhutan, and parts of Russia and northern India

Dharma

Buddha's teachings are known as "dharma." He taught that wisdom, kindness, patience, generosity and compassion were important virtues. Specifically, all Buddhists live by five moral precepts, which prohibit:

- Killing living things
- Taking what is not given
- Sexual misconduct
- Lying
- Using drugs or alcohol

Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths, which Buddha taught, are:

- The truth of suffering (dukkha)
- The truth of the cause of suffering (samudaya)
- The truth of the end of suffering (nirhodha)
- The truth of the path that frees us from suffering (magga)

Eightfold Path

The Buddha taught his followers that the end of suffering, as described in the fourth Noble Truths, could be achieved by following an Eightfold Path. In no particular order, the Eightfold Path of Buddhism teaches the following ideals for ethical conduct, mental discipline and achieving wisdom:

- Right understanding (Samma ditthi)
- Right thought (Samma sankappa)
- Right speech (Samma vaca)
- Right action (Samma kammanta)
- Right livelihood (Samma ajiva)
- Right effort (Samma vayama)
- Right mindfulness (Samma sati)
- Right concentration (Samma samadhi)

Answer 3

The Greco-Roman period

Early attempts to study religion

6th Century

One of the earliest attempts to systematize the seemingly conflicting Greek myths and thereby bring order into this rather chaotic Greek tradition was the Theogony of the Greek poet Hesiod (flourished c. 700 BCE), who rather laboriously put together the genealogies of the gods. His work remains an important source book of ancient myth. The rise of speculative philosophy among the Ionian philosophers, especially Thales of Miletus, Heraclitus, and Anaximander, led to a more critical and more rationalistic treatment of the gods. Thus, Thales (6th century BCE) and Heraclitus (flourished c. 500 BCE) considered water and fire, respectively, to be the first substance, out of which everything else is made, though Aristotle reported mysteriously in the 4th century BCE that Thales believed that everything was filled with the gods. Anaximander (6th century BCE) called the primary substance the infinite (apeiron). In these various schemes of religious belief, there is a unitary something that transcends the many clashing forces in the world and in fact transcends even the gods. Heraclitus refers to the controlling principle as logos, or reason, though the philosopher, poet, and religious reformer Xenophanes (6th–5th century BCE) directly assailed the traditional mythology as immoral, out of his concern to express a monotheistic religion. This theme of criticism of the myths was taken over and elaborated in the 4th century BCE by Plato. More conservatively, the poet Theagenes (6th century BCE) allegorized the gods, treating them as standing for natural and psychological forces. To some extent, this line was pursued in the works of the Greek tragedians and by the philosophers Parmenides and Empedocles (5th century BCE). Criticism of the ancient Greek tradition was reinforced by the reports of travelers as Greek culture penetrated widely into various other cultures. The historian Herodotus (5th century BCE) attempted to solve the problem of the

plurality of cults by identifying foreign deities with Greek deities (e.g., those of the Egyptian Amon with Zeus). This kind of syncretism was widely employed in the merging of Greek and Roman culture in the Roman Empire (e.g., Zeus as the Roman god Jupiter).

5th Century

The plurality of cults and gods also induced skepticism, as with the Sophist Protagoras (c. 481–411 BCE), who was driven from Athens because he dared to question the existence of the gods. Prodicus of Ceos (5th century BCE) gave a rationalistic explanation of the origin of deities that foreshadowed Euhemerism (see below Later attempts to study religion). Another Sophist, Critias (5th century BCE), considered religion to have been invented to frighten humans into adhering to morality and justice. Plato was not averse to providing new myths to perform this same social function—as is seen in his conception of the “noble lie,” or the invention of myths to promote morality and order, in the Republic. He was strongly critical, however, of the older poets’ (e.g., Homer’s) accounts of the gods and substituted a form of belief in a single creator, the Demiurge, or supreme craftsman. This line of thought was developed in a stronger way by Aristotle in his conception of a supreme intelligence that is the “unmoved mover.” Aristotle combined elements of earlier thinking in his account of the genesis of the gods (coming from the observation of cosmic order and stellar beauty and from dreams

4th And 3rd Century

Later Greek thinkers tended to vary between the positions adumbrated in the earlier period. The Stoics (philosophers of nature and morality) opted for a form of naturalistic monotheism, whereas the philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BCE) was skeptical of religion as ordinarily understood and practiced, though he did not deny that there were gods who, however, had no transactions with human beings. Of considerable influence was Euhemerus (c. 330–c. 260 BCE), who gave his name to the doctrine called Euhemerism—namely, that the gods are divinized humans. Although Euhemerus’s own argument was based largely upon fantasy, there are certainly some examples, both in Greek religion (e.g., Heracles) and elsewhere, of the tendency to make humans into gods, but it is obviously not universal. Most of the Greek concepts about religion proved to be influential in the Roman world also. The atheistic Atomism of the Roman natural historian Lucretius (c. 95–55 BCE) owed much to Epicurus. The eclectic thinker and politician Cicero (106–43 BCE), in his *De natura deorum* (“Concerning the Nature of the Gods”), criticized Stoic, Epicurean, and later Platonic ideas about religion, but the book remains incomplete. Much of the skepticism about the gods in the ancient world was concerned with the older traditional religions, whether of Greece or Rome. But in the early empire the mystery cults, ranging from the Eleusinian mysteries of Greece to those of the Anatolian Cybele and the Persian Mithra, together with philosophically based religions such as Neoplatonism and Stoicism, had the greatest vitality. The patterns of religious belief were complex and of different levels, with various kinds of religion existing side by side

