

Aryans Bring Changes to India

Around 1500 B.C. large numbers of people began to migrate into India. These migrations lasted for more than 3,000 years. They were important because they brought together people with different customs and ideas. The earliest immigrants called themselves **Aryans** (AIR•ee•uhnz). The Aryans were warriors and herders who came from eastern Europe and western Asia. Their arrival marked the beginning of the Classical Age in India.

Aryan Immigrants

The earliest Aryan migrations took place over hundreds of years. They were part of a larger southward movement of people called Indo-Europeans. Why the Aryans and others left their homeland is not known. Drought, famine, or disease may have forced them to leave their homes. Perhaps invaders drove them out.

Some Aryans moved west. Others pushed south. The Aryans who moved south crossed through the mountain passes of the Hindu Kush, the wall of mountains between the Indian subcontinent and the rest of Asia. These Aryans moved to the region of the Indus Valley now known as Pakistan. In time, however, the Aryans occupied much of the northern parts of India.

Each wave of migration brought more Aryans into the subcontinent. Soon the Aryans competed with the native people of India for farmland. The Aryans had one advantage in the fight for land: they had horses. Until the Aryans arrived, there were no horses in India.

Before coming to India the Aryans had lived as herders. They raised cattle, goats, horses, and sheep. In India they

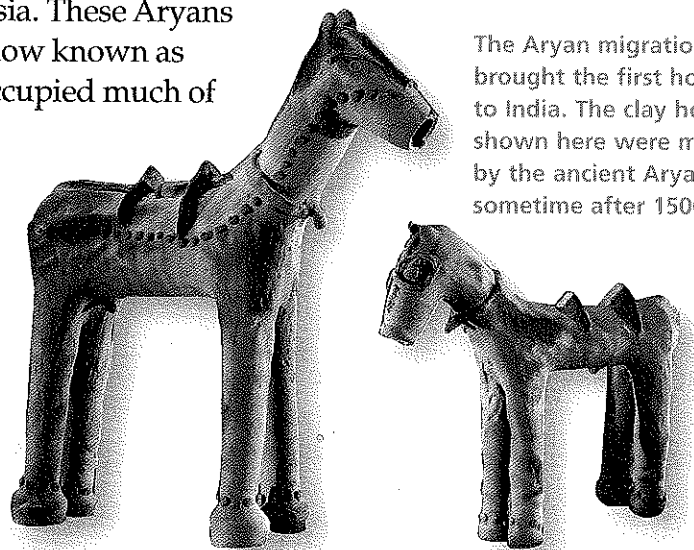
FOCUS

How does the movement of people into an area affect those already living there?

Main Idea As you read, consider how the arrival of the Aryans changed life for the people of India.

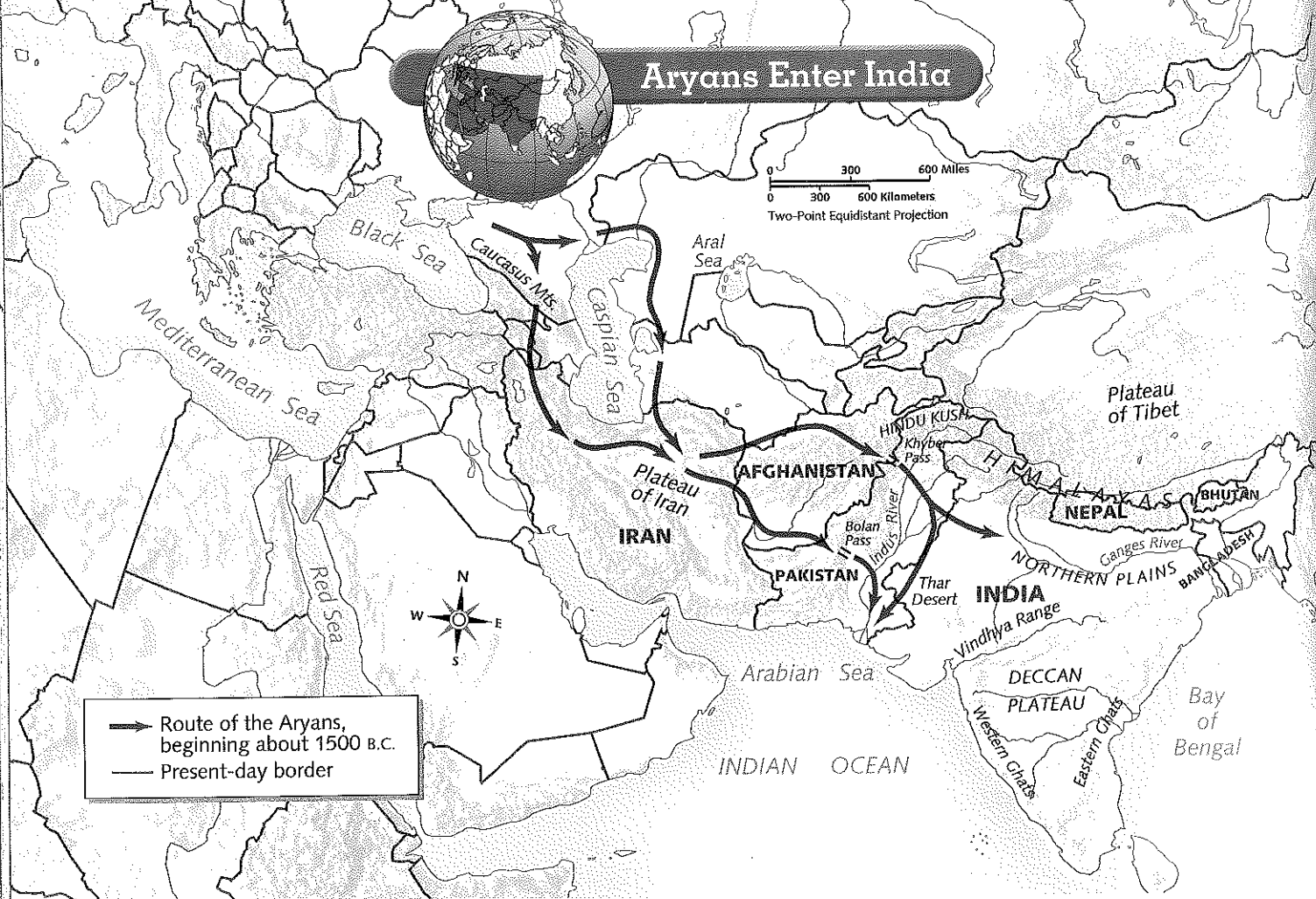
Vocabulary

Aryan
Sanskrit
Vedas
Hinduism
reincarnation
caste
untouchable
Buddhism



The Aryan migrations brought the first horses to India. The clay horses shown here were made by the ancient Aryans sometime after 1500 B.C.

Aryans Enter India



Movement

1500 B.C.

■ Why do you suppose the Aryans stopped and settled in northern India?

This map shows Aryan migration into India beginning about

became farmers. Small villages rose up in the countryside. In the following centuries Indian life and work came to center on the villages. Even today, although India has huge cities, it remains a nation of villages.

REVIEW Why did the Aryans leave their homeland?

Hinduism

The ideas of the Aryans can be seen in present-day Indian culture and beliefs. For example, the Aryans brought their language, **Sanskrit**, to India. Many Indian languages of today are based on Sanskrit.

The Aryans believed that Sanskrit was a holy language, the language spoken by the gods. The Aryans' holiest books, the **Vedas** (VAY•duhz), are written in Sanskrit. These four books of sacred writings describe the Aryan religion.

The Aryan religion developed into the religion of Hinduism. **Hinduism** is one of the oldest religions still practiced today. Believers in Hinduism worship three main gods—Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. Below these gods are many other lesser gods.

Hinduism teaches that people live many lives until they reach spiritual perfection. Hindus believe that the soul lives on after

death and returns to life in a new body. This rebirth is called **reincarnation**. According to Hinduism, those who obey their religious teachings and lead good lives will be reborn into higher social positions. Those who do not will return as lower lifeforms. Hindus also believe that animals have souls and that cows are holy. For this reason, many do not eat beef.

REVIEW What religion of today comes from the religion of the Aryans?

The Caste System

For hundreds of years Aryan priests used the Vedas and the belief in reincarnation to give order to their society. Following the teachings of the Vedas, the Aryans divided their society into social classes: priests, warriors, farmers and merchants, and common people. In India the Aryans added a lower group for the conquered Indians.

The Aryan social classes led to India's caste system. A **caste** is a group within a social class. A person born into one caste could never change caste or mix with members of other castes. Caste members lived, married, and worked within their own group.

To the Indian people the caste system was like the human body. The Brahmins (BRAH•muhnz), the priests and scholars, made up the head. The Kshatriyas (KSHAH•tree•uhz), the rulers and warriors, made up the arms. The Vaisyas (VYSH•yuhz), the farmers and merchants, made up the legs. The Sudras (SOO•druhzh), the laborers, craftworkers, and servants, made up the feet.



The Hindu god Shiva

Below all the castes were the **untouchables**. These people did all the unpleasant jobs in Indian society. They picked up garbage, cleaned stables, and handled the dead. Untouchables were thought to be impure. They had to avoid all contact with the rest of society. An untouchable could not even let his or her shadow fall on a person of a higher caste.

Hinduism required people to accept the caste into which they were born. Each person had a place in society and a job to do. Life might be hard, but if people did the work of their caste, there was hope that the next life would be better.

Around the sixth century B.C., a new religion appeared in India. This new religion challenged the rituals and caste system of Hinduism.

REVIEW What was the ancient Indian caste system?

This statue (far left) made in the A.D. 100s shows a servant from the Sudra caste. At near left are two Brahmins, or priests. Brahmins are often shown with the right hand raised as a sign of understanding.



The Origins of Buddhism

An Indian story tells that a traveling Brahman met a stranger one day. The Brahman asked the stranger's name and received this answer:

“Although born in the world, grown up in the world, having overcome the world, I abide unsoiled by the world. Take it that I am Buddha.”

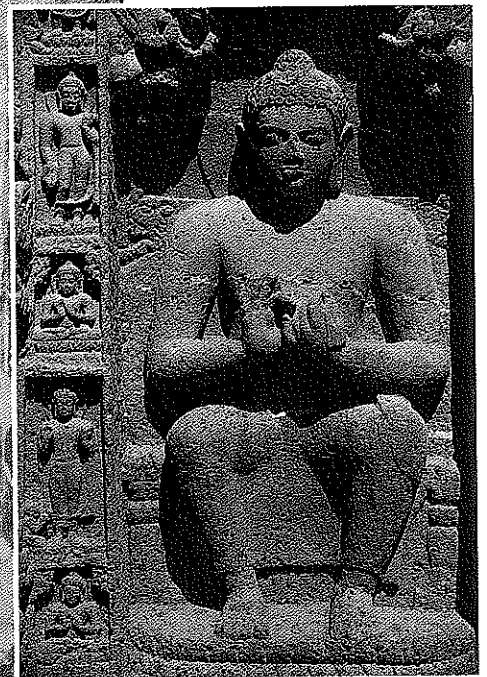
We know little of this man who called himself Buddha, or “the Enlightened One.” What we do know comes from information written many years after his death. These writings tell us that his given name was Siddhartha

Gautama (sih•DAR•tuh GOW•tuh•muh). Born in northern India in 563 B.C., Gautama lived a comfortable life as the son of an Indian prince. His father gave him everything he wanted and kept him from seeing the suffering of the common people.

At about age 30, Gautama went outside the walls of his palace for the first time. Outside the walls, he saw an old man bent over with age. Then, he came upon a man too sick to care for himself. Finally, he saw a dead body. Gautama asked a servant to explain what he had seen. The servant said that age, sickness, and death come to us all. This answer was not enough for Gautama. Why, he asked, was there so much suffering? How might this suffering be ended? Gautama decided to spend the rest of his life finding the answers



Buddha has been pictured in many ways by artists from many cultures. The cave wall painting showing Buddha seated on a lotus flower (left) and the carving of a seated Buddha (below) were found in the Ajanta Caves in Hyderabad, India.



to his questions. He left his father's palace and lived the life of a wandering beggar.

For a few years Gautama studied with Brahman priests. Then he continued his search for knowledge by praying and fasting. Nothing helped him find answers. One day Gautama sat down to rest under a tree. He began once again to think about the problem. After hours of deep thought, Gautama suddenly felt that he understood the meaning of life. He decided that people should seek love, truth, the joy of knowledge, and a calm mind. At that moment he became Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Gautama spent the rest of his life carrying his message to all who would listen. After his death his followers told of his teachings.

Buddhism, the religion based on those teachings, eventually spread across Asia.

Neither Buddha nor his followers organized a central church. They did not write holy books like the Vedas. Their aim was to set an example for others. They did so through unselfish and peaceful behavior.

REVIEW *Why did Gautama begin a search for truth?*

LESSON 1 REVIEW

Check Understanding

- Remember the Facts** Where did the Aryans come from? Where did they migrate to?
- Recall the Main Idea** How did the Aryan migrations affect civilization in India?

Think Critically

- Past to Present** Today India is an industrialized country. What effect do you think the development of industry has had on the caste system?
- Explore Viewpoints** If you had been a Brahman in early Indian society, how

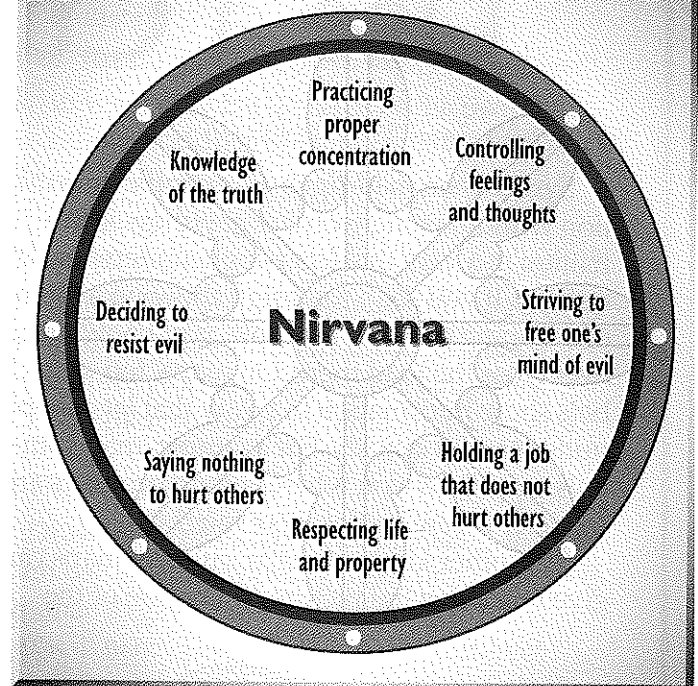
might you have felt about the teachings of Buddha? How might you have felt about the teachings if you had been an untouchable?



Show What You Know

Research Activity Use information from this textbook and from encyclopedias and almanacs to create a chart comparing Indian civilization before and after the arrival of the Aryans. Topics you might present include how people lived, where people lived, what religions people practiced, and what the social classes were.

Path of Buddhism



LEARNING FROM CHARTS Buddhists follow these eight points, called the Noble Eightfold Path, in their search for nirvana—a feeling of happiness, peace, and complete understanding.

- *Why would practicing proper concentration be important?*