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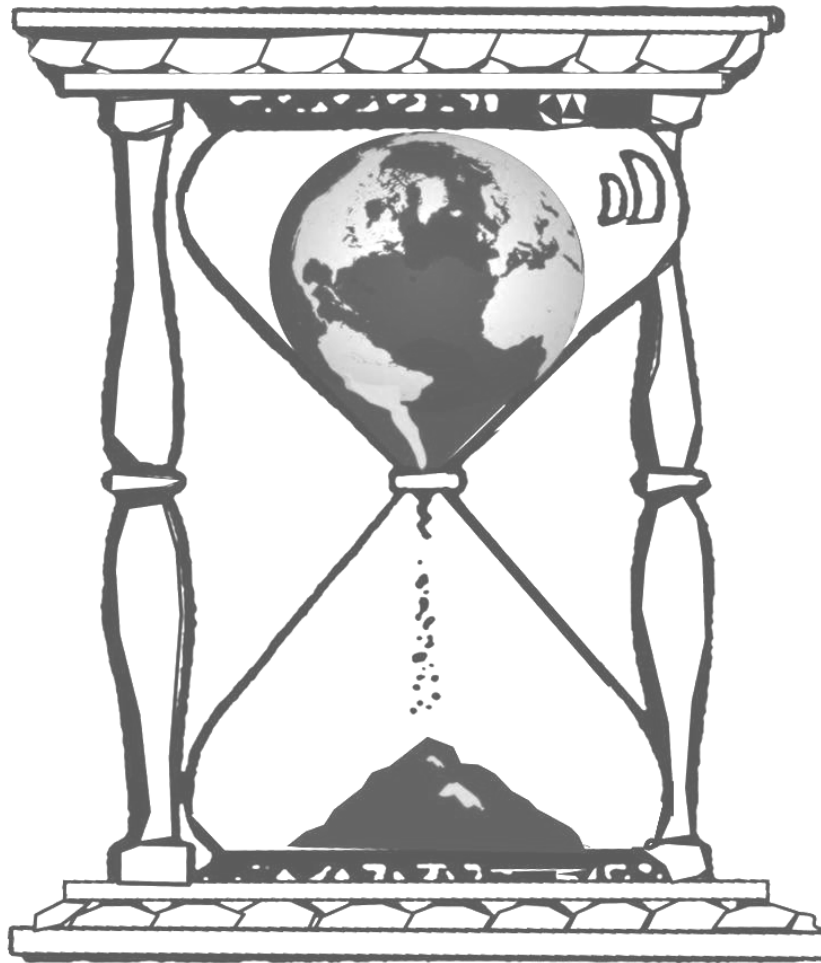
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i Think: World History

Ancient Asia



by Sharon Coletti
and Kendra Corr

* It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

Edited by Kendra Corr and Amy Hellen

Cover graphics by Sharon Coletti and Print1 Direct

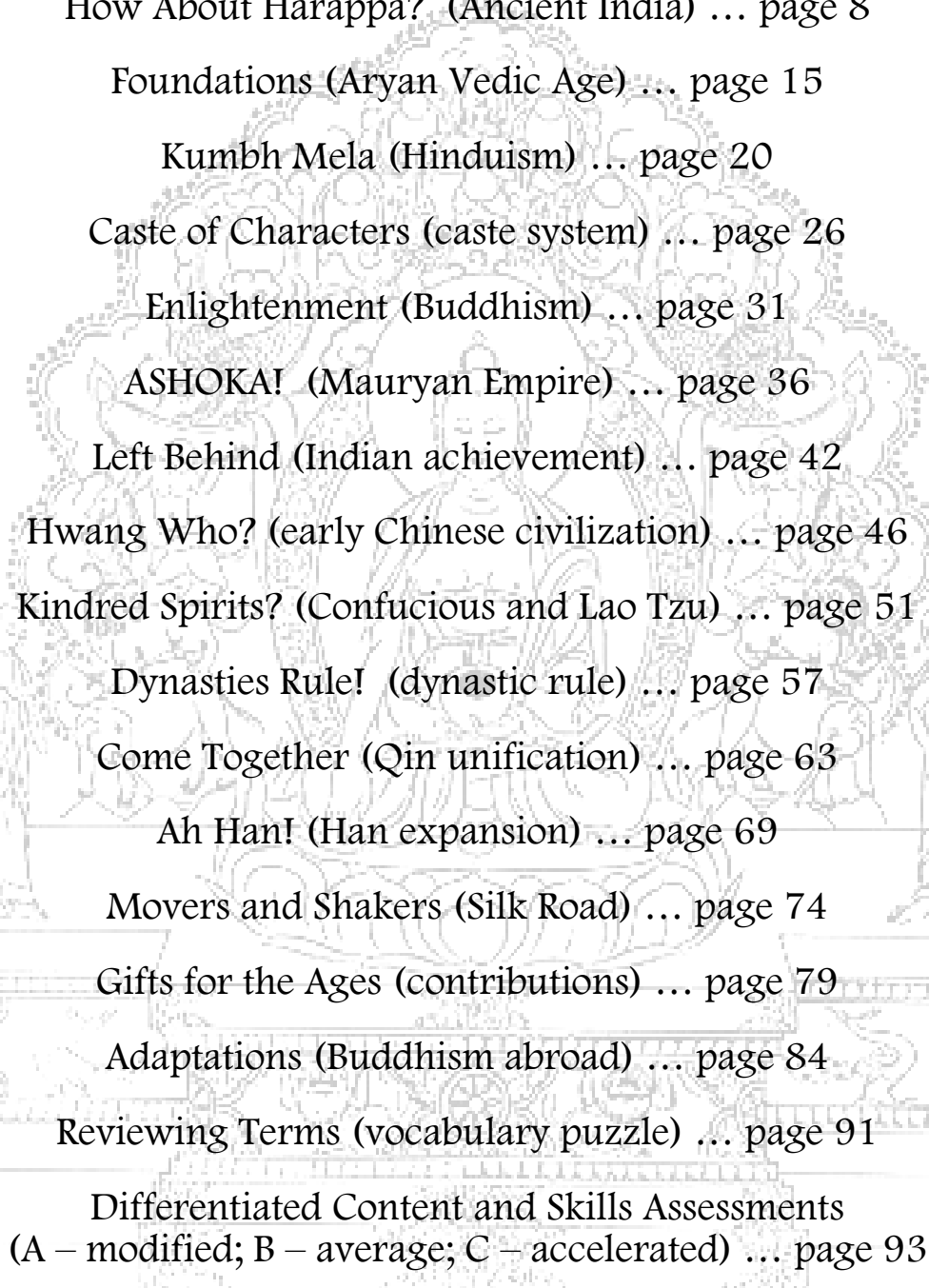
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ISBN # 978-1-933558-73-8

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How About Harappa?

Springboard:

Students should read “About Sarasvati” and answer the questions.
(The Sarasvati and its tributaries is supposed to have flowed southwest through modern Pakistan and northwestern India near the Indus River.)

Objective: The student will be able to describe the Ancient Harappan civilization and its achievements.

Materials:

About Sarasvati (Springboard handout)
Archaeology Today (4-page handout)
Ancient Settlements of River Valleys ... (handout or transparency)

Terms to know:

Hinduism - the dominant religion of India
Sanskrit - ancient Indian language of the Vedas, the Hindu holy books
c. (circa) - approximately, in reference to a date
archaeology - the study of humans based on artifacts, the tools, weapons, writings, etc. they leave behind

Procedure:

- After discussing the Springboard, explain that *in this lesson student(s) will learn more about the ancient Sarasvati River.*
- **For group instruction** arrange the room for the “talk show” with chairs for the hosts and guests facing the rest of the group. Assign parts and have students act out the skit. **For individual instruction** read the skit with your student.
- Then lead a discussion about the earliest civilization in ancient India and Pakistan, including these questions:
 - ? How has the thinking about the earliest civilization in Ancient India and Pakistan changed in recent years? *(Since first discovered in the 1920’s, archaeologists thought the Indus Valley Civilization centered on two settlements, Harappa and Mohejo Daro, but new archaeological finds suggest a MUCH larger civilization with more than 1,000 cities!)*
 - ? Explain how knowledge can change and why. *(Archaeology is NOT an exact science. Most views are theories based on evidence uncovered but cannot be proven unless archaeologists decode the ancient writings that confirm interpretations based on artifacts.)*
 - ? What OTHER kinds of information besides decoded language and artifacts can be useful to archaeologists? *(Answers will vary.)*
 - ? What do you think about the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley, and why? *(Answers may vary but should be supported.)*



NOTE: For a colorful slide show of artifacts from the Harappan civilization, check out www.harappa.com/har/haro.html and for a British Museum activity @ [www.ancientindia.co.uk/indus/home set.html](http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/indus/home_set.html).

about SARASVATI



The main religion of India today as well as in ancient times is Hinduism. Hindus, believers in Hinduism, worship many gods and goddesses. One is the goddess Sarasvati or “The Flowing One,” worshipped as the goddess of river waters, learning, arts, culture, and creativity. The name Sarasvati in Sanskrit, the ancient writing of India, translates to mean a feminine river or lake.

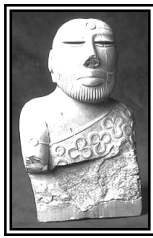
In Hindu writings the name Sarasvati refers to an ancient river. The Rig Veda, which is the oldest of Hinduism’s holy books compiled in around c. 1200 BC, says the River originated in the Himalayan Mountains and flowed westward to the Arabian Sea. The Sarasvati is referred to in the Rig Veda as “the mother of rivers” that “surpasses in majesty and might all the other rivers including the Ganges and the Yamuna.”

Despite these ancient references to a great river, no such waterway exists today, so it had long been considered a myth. However, recent scientific evidence suggests that the Rig Veda’s Sarasvati River once flowed. Photographs taken by NASA satellites show a dried riverbed three to ten kilometers wide as described. Scientists estimate that this large river may have dried up between 2500 and 2000 BC. Though they are yet to determine why this occurred, some explanations include earthquakes, mountain droughts that dried the streams feeding the river, or overgrazing by herders in the region.

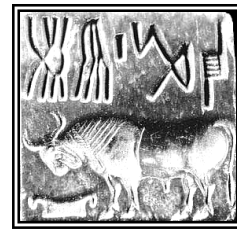
Study the map to decide where you think the Rig Veda’s Sarasvati River flowed.

1. Through which modern country or countries?
2. In what direction?
3. What other rivers, if any, were nearby?





Archaeology Today



Mark Question - host

Pat Peeve - co-host

Chris Digs - archaeologist # 1

Marsh Pick - archaeologist # 2

V.S. Wakankar - (real) archaeologist

Studio Audience - all students without speaking parts

(Mark Question should speak in a bored tone until directed otherwise.)

Question - Good day, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our public television program, Archaeology Today. *(yawns)* I am your host, Mark Question, and I am joined by my new colleague Pat Peeve. As fans of the show may have heard, my previous co-host, Howe Dull, passed away recently from complications from an extremely slow heart rate. The staff of the show wants to take this opportunity to offer our sympathy to his wife and family. *(brief silence with sad looks)*

Today we have an exciting *(shrugs)* show for you about a major issue relating to Asia's ancient civilizations. I can hardly wait. We will begin now with our first guest. I'd like to welcome to the show archaeologist Chris Digs. *(soft applause from the studio audience)*

Chris - *(enters and sits down next to Mark Question)* Thank you, Mark. I'm delighted to be with you today.

Mark - Chris, why don't you begin by telling us a little about your field?

Chris - I'd love to. I am an archaeologist, so my job is to dig for artifacts and study them. My personal specialty is Asian archaeology.

Pat - Have you been to Asia to study? I've always wanted to go to Asia myself, but I've never actually had the opportunity. My grandmother and grandfather lived in Asia for a while and they always told me about the beautiful scenery and the wonderful people there. If I ever had the chance to go, I think I'd especially want to visit ...

Mark - Thank you for that information, Pat. Why don't we allow Chris to answer the question you asked?

Chris - Hmmm. *(thinking)*

Mark - Have you been to Asia?

Chris - Oh, that's right. Yes, I am particularly interested in ancient civilizations, and I've had the occasion to visit the major sites of those in Asia. I've been to Pakistan and India to work in the Indus River area and to China to the Hwang He and Chiang Jiang Rivers. All of these valleys were the sites of some of the earliest civilizations in the world.

Pat - So, why do you think that is? I think if I were an ancient person looking for somewhere to settle, a river would be a nice place. There's water to drink and maybe animals would come to the river so they could drink, and I could hunt and get food that way. If I ...

Mark - Pat, why don't we allow our GUEST to tell us about these Asian river valleys?

Chris - Actually, Pat is right. The ancient people did settle in these river valleys for the fresh water and food. The valleys also offered fertile soil since the rivers flooded regularly. Topsoil from the mountains is carried in rivers and when they flood and then recede, a rich layer of silt is left on the surrounding plains, making the soil perfect for farming. Since ancient people farmed and herded, they were able to settle in one place and develop some very advanced civilizations.

While there were important cultural differences in the people of these civilizations, all had similarities. As I said, they farmed and herded, so they usually had enough to eat. This allowed them to develop other interests and specialties which became different types of jobs. This is called "division of labor." Then they traded their goods both within their own areas and with others. Most of these early civilizations that began around 4000 BC used metal tools and weapons and had laws, religion, art, and writing.

Mark - How do you know so much about such ancient people?

Chris - We study their artifacts to make educated guesses. In some cases we have been able to decode the ancient languages and learn about people in great detail.

Mark - That brings us to our second guest. Marsh Pick is also an archaeologist who has worked in Asia. (He/She) studied under a famous British archaeologist, mmm ...

Marsh - *(Other guest moves down and Marsh sits next to Mark Question.)* Sir Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler. I had the great pleasure of learning about the Indus Valley Civilization from the man who discovered it. Sir Robert Wheeler is credited with arranging digs that uncovered the Indus cities of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro in the 1920's.

Pat - I've never been to the region, but I know that the Indus River is in India and flows westward into Pakistan. The Ganges is also in India, but it flows east through Bangladesh. I understand that India is a very crowded country.

Mark - Pat, I'm sure our audience would like to hear what our guest has to say.

Marsh - Yes, I was telling you about Sir Robert. His work in India showed that the Indus civilization had a very advanced society. Trade with people of the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia allowed for the exchange of goods and ideas. Many artifacts found are believed to be trade goods and seals used to stamp the goods with mud to show ownership. The Indus people were great engineers, building large cities. These cities had similar layouts, leading to the belief that the government maintained strict controls. The most interesting thing about the Indus Valley People was they had a complex plumbing system that carried water to each house and drained waste out.

Mark - So what happened to these advanced people? Are they still around?

Marsh - Sir Wheeler believed they were conquered by a group of people from Europe called Aryans that moved into the area.

Pat - I was talking to our other guest earlier and (he/she) said your teacher, Sir What's-His-Name, was wrong.

Mark - (*annoyed*) For goodness sake! (*to Pat*) Can't you be a little more polite? (*to the audience*) I suppose we should bring out our next guest now so we can discuss today's archaeology issue, the Indus Valley. I'd like to introduce archaeologist V.S. Wakankar. (*audience applauds*)

Wakankar - (*Others move down and Wakankar sits next to Mark Question.*) Thank you, Mark. You are correct in saying that the Indus Valley is an issue that is being discussed by archaeologists. For many years, Wheeler's views were taught as fact. You can still read about him and the Indus Valley People in many school textbooks, but recent discoveries have shown that he was wrong about the Indus Valley.

Marsh - Excuse me, but Sir Robert was a brilliant archaeologist and his views are still highly regarded!

Wakankar - He was and is, but newer findings have led archaeologists to other conclusions.

Mark - (*sounding interested*) How are the new explanations different from Wheeler's?

Wakankar - One important difference is that Robert Wheeler thought the Indus River was the center of the civilization. That's why the civilization was called the Indus Valley Civilization. Now we are finding out that only a small part of that civilization developed along the Indus River.

Pat - So are you saying that the Indus Valley People didn't even live on that river? I was always taught that ancient civilizations started by rivers, which is exactly what our first guest said. Are you trying to say that everything I've been taught is wrong?

Mark - Pat!

Wakankar - Let me show you. Could someone please display the transparency I brought? (*Refer to or display "Ancient Settlements of River Valleys"*) Thank you. If I could please direct everyone's attention to the drawing? Please notice that the Indus River is the uppermost waterway shown on the large map of northwestern India and Pakistan. As you can see, the Indus and the other rivers still existing today shown with solid lines have several sites that archaeologists have found along them. Now, if you look closely, you can see there are also many sites along the dotted lines showing rivers that no longer exist today.

Over the past several years archaeologists have uncovered hundreds of new sites where these ancient people built towns and cities. Robert Wheeler's view was that the Indus Valley was the location of a small civilization centered around the two cities of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, but new discoveries have uncovered what may be the largest civilization in the ancient world with as many as 1,400 sites in the area!

Chris - So were these people killed off by invading Aryans like Sir Wheeler said?

Wakankar - That is highly unlikely, though many sources still promote this as historical fact. We have found people in modern India using some of the same tools as the ancients. Artifacts have shown that some farm tools from 3000 BC are quite similar to those of today. Also, we have found preserved fields that have the same plowing pattern as farmers in that area use now. We don't think the ancient people were killed off by anyone. We think many of them simply moved away from rivers that were drying up or had their courses changed by massive earthquakes. Earthquakes are of course very common in this part of the world.

Mark - So where did the people go?

Wakankar - We think they moved to the south and to the east. In fact, we believe that modern Indian culture was begun by these early people who many experts now refer to as "Harappans" instead of Indus Valley people.

Marsh - What evidence makes you think this is true?

Wakankar - Religious writings in India refer to the Sarasvati, an ancient river that once existed, and we have found clear evidence that the river once flowed in the region. (*Point it out in the center of the transparency.*) Some weights and measures of today are similar to those found in the ancient ruins. Some modern crafts also look much like those found in those dig sites. There are even satellite photos that show the course of where the ancient river once flowed.

Chris - Still, don't you think much of this could still be considered theory? I've always heard that the only way we can know for sure about ancient people is to decode their written language. There are many examples of Harappan writings, but aren't they still gibberish to us?

Wakankar - Actually, great progress has been made in recent years in translating the Harappan's texts. Everything we have learned from them has supported the current thinking on the matter.

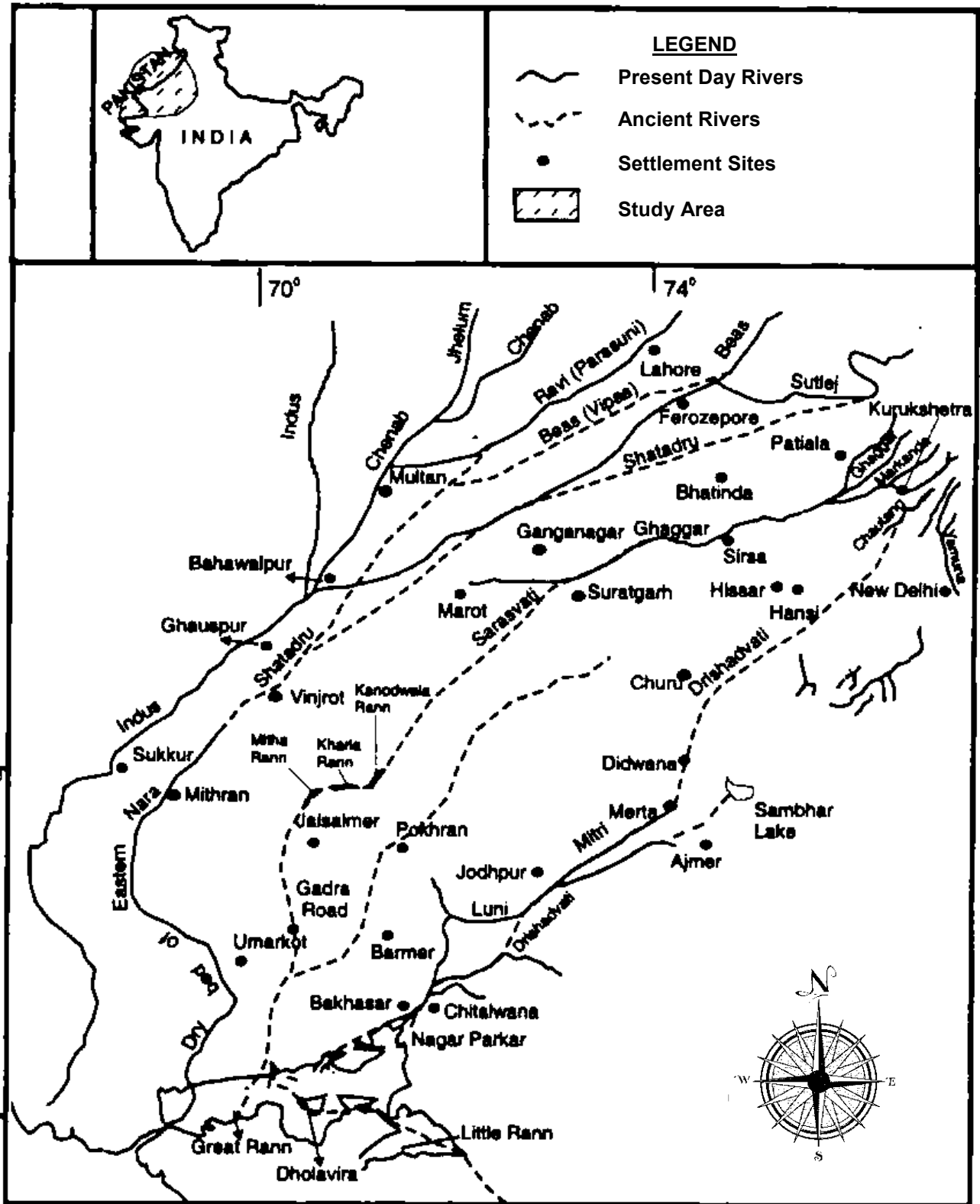
Marsh - I must interrupt! All of this information is being presented as though everyone agrees. I know for a fact that many people still believe the earliest civilization WAS in the Indus Valley!

Mark - But I must end the conversation here, since we are just about out of time.

Pat - But we haven't resolved the issue! All this time I learned one thing and now you're telling me what I learned may be false. I don't understand how experts can disagree on the facts. I want ...

Mark - ... And I want a new co-host! Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us for Archaeology Today. I thought our topic was quite interesting, and hope you did, too. We look forward to spending time with again, but for now, "Good bye!"

ANCIENT SETTLEMENTS OF RIVER VALLEYS (PAST AND PRESENT) IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN



Map courtesy of sarasvati.net