**Ancient India**

The Indus and Ganges River Valleys India's Geographic Setting:

* India is considered a (sub-continent)

• Subcontinent: A large land mass that sticks out from a continent.

• India was an isolated area because of the mountains in the north.

• The Himalayan Mountains and the Hindu Kush separated India from Asia.

A climate of Monsoons:

• India's climate is dominated by the Monsoon. A monsoon is strong winds that carry moisture.

• October to May the winter Monsoon blows from the northeast separating dry air across the country. In the middle of June the wind blows from the Indian Ocean.

• The summer Monsoon picks up moisture from the ocean.

• People depend on summer monsoons to provide much needed rain. If a monsoon is late often crops become weak die and this causes famine, and if the monsoon brings too much moisture the river will overflow causing deadly floods

Barriers and Pathways

• Passes through the Hindu Kush mountain range have served as highway for migrating people.

• The earliest people from central western Asia migrated to India into the Valley of the Indus River through these path ways.

• They settled in the area because it was inhabited already, other people had settled near the great rivers which develop in the mountains from melting snow and rain. The two main rivers are the Indus in the west, and the Ganges in the east

• The rivers flow across the plains of northern India creating fertile farmland in the river valleys.

Life in the Indus River Valley

• The rich soil of the Indus river valley provided these people with an abundant harvest with a surplus of wheat and other grains

• With all the surplus of food the population grew more and more, and some other villages became cities.

• From 2500 BC to 1500 BC, well planned cities flourish in the river valleys.

The World’s Earliest City Planners

• The cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were developed in these valley’s, both were large cities and were carefully planned out. They were built in a modern fashion and became a prototype for future cities

• The city rulers built Mohenjo-Daro( mound of the dead) on a high mountain

• To make travel easy in the city street were laid out in squares.

• People built their homes and shops around this squares

• At the center of the city there was a Citadel. A Citadel is a fortress

* Harappa was also built at a high elevation
* It was a complex city with a sewer system and cemeteries which suggests they believed in an afterlife.
* The entire civilization of the are was named after the city of Harappa since it was the first to be discovered.



Conquest by the Aryans

• The invaders called themselves the Aryans, which in their language meant noble or highborn.

• The Aryans migrated south into India.

• Aryans came across the plains of northern India and eventually conquered the original people of the area.

• The Aryans conquer the people of the Indus River Valley; many became slaves of the invaders.

**The Beginnings of Hinduism**

Roots of Hindu Belief

• 1 of the World’s oldest major religions-Hinduism

• Aryan culture mixed with conquered people and, formed the Hindu religion

• Over 3,500 years the religion developed

• It is unclear of the religions true origins

• Hindus worship gods and goddesses (polytheistic)

• They believe in 1 spirit

Gods and Goddesses

• Most important gods are Brahma the creator Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer.

• These gods take human and animal form

• Shiva is the most important and powerful

o he doesn't get into human matter

o he creates and destroys the world

o his wife Shakti is also worshipped but she takes part in human life

• Vishnu is a kind god that is concerned about humans

o Visits Earth from time to time in different forms

o He guides and protects humans

* Brahma was the creator of everything

o Hindus believe that he was born in a golden egg

o Created Earth and everything on it

Basic Beliefs

• Are all in religious text and writings

• Hindu books are written in a language called "Sanskrit"

• One text name is the "Upanishads"

• Upanishad means sitting near a teacher

• It is filled with questions from students

• And answers from teachers

• It has a section about reincarnation

Reincarnation

• Is after you die your soul goes into another body

• Good people with strong beliefs would be reborn in a higher class

• People who were bad would come back in a lower class or even an animal

• If you were perfect your spirit would go straight to Brahman

Hindu's Duties

• If you are perfect your spirit goes to Brahman and you get off of the cycle of die and come back

• The soul becomes one with Brahman

• Hindu's must obey their "dharma"

o Dharma is the religious moral duties of people

o Duties depend on a persons, age, class and occupation

o If you obey your dharma you get closer to Brahman

o Hindu believe "ahimsa"; which means being nonviolent

o They don't eat meat because they won't harm animals

o Another belief is that there is more than one path to truth.

o Hindu people worship in many different ways

**Buddhism** is a religion created by a young prince named Siddhartha Gautama. When he was 30 he dropped his wealth and his family to go find the solution of human suffering. Gautama believed that you look inwardly and meditate to find answers. After 49 days of meditating and fasting he found the answer to suffering. His followers call him "Buddha" or enlighten one. Buddha taught that suffering was caused by people that have selfish desires for money, power, and pleasure. If you give these things up you can be free of suffering. To give up these desires you can do it by following the "Middle Way." To get to Middle way Gautama taught that you can't have too much pleasure or too much worry about life. Also you have to treat people fairly, and unselfishly. You must tell the truth, and never kill a living thing. By following Buddha's path you will find nirvana. Nirvana is lasting peace. You also are an equal. There are no social class boundaries in Buddhism. There is an eightfold path to guide people. Right Understanding, Intention, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration

Who was Chandragupta?

o Had absolute power

o King

o Had many servants, gold, jewels and a palace.

o Ruled for 35 years

What did the Maurya Empire have and do?

o Servants

o Fountains

o Palace

o Gold and jewels

o Chandragupta took over most of India

o He established irrigation for farmers and roads to trade

Who was Asoka?

o Chandragupta grandson

o Converted to Buddhism

o He had a love for animals and people

o Called "father" to the people because he cared about people

o Built hospitals and wells so nobody would starve or be hurt

o The spread of Buddhism from this time period reached China and influenced many civilizations

**INDIA RESOURCES**

**ANCIENT INDIA**

Two ancient civilizations arose in Asia to the east of Mesopotamia and Egypt, One of those civilizations began in India. The other civilization began in China.

The civilizations of ancient India and China are important to the modern world. The cultures of present‐day India, China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries are built on those earlier civilizations.

**Key Words**

Descendant

Plateau

Dynasty

Reincarnation

India is located in southern Asia. On a map, India looks like a huge triangle of land pushing into the Indian Ocean. Natural barriers separate India from the rest of Asia. The Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea lie to the east and west of India. The Himalayan and Hindu Kush Mountains lie across northern India.

There are passes (openings) through the Hindu Kush Mountains. People probably came to India through those passes. Later, traders and invaders reached India through the passes.

**The Land and the Climate**

India can be divided into two regions. Much of northern India is made up( pf a large plain called the northern plain. Three great rivers flow through the northern plain the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra. Those rivers create valleys of fertile farmland. Much of southern India is made up of a huge plateau, called the Deccan Plateau. Frequent droughts made farming difficult for ancient peoples on the Deccan Plateau.

There are three seasons in India: a cool season, a hot season, and a rainy season. During the cool season and the hot season, India gets little rain. But from June through September, winds called monsoons blow in from the Indian Ocean. Those winds usually bring much‐needed rain to India.

**Looking Back**

1. What natural barriers separate India from the rest of Asia?

2. What are the two regions of India?

3. Thinking Deeper: In what region of India do you think civilization began? Why?

**The Indus Valley Civilization**

Civilization began in India around 2500 B.C., about 1000 years after the start of civilization in Sumer.

The first Indian civilization arose on the northern plain in the valley of the Indus River. Historians call that civilization the Indus Valley, civilization.

Civilization developed in the Indus Valley much as it had in Sumer and Egypt. Thousands of years ago nomads moved into the valley. The rich soil and plentiful supply of water made the valley a good place to live. The nomads settled into villages and began to plant crops, such as wheat and barley. In time, their tiny farm villages grew into towns and cities.

**Indus Valley Cities**

The Indus Valley civilization had two chief cities: Harappa and Mohenjo‐Daro. Both cities were planned. Both welaid out in blocks like a modern cy. The streets of the cities were wide, straight, and paved.

Indus Valley built their cities out of mud bricks. They learned to bake the bricks in ovens. Those bricks were almost as hard as stone.

Indus Valley people also built sewer systems for their cities. They laid large sewer pipes under their streets. Each house was connected to the sewer by drain pipes. The pipes carried waste water away from the houses.

**Indus *Valley Achievements***

The Indus Valley civilization lasted over 1000 years. Like the peoples of the ancient Middle East, Indus Valley people developed their own systems of writing and counting. They also developed a system of weights and measures.

Indus Valley people were skilled crafts workers. They made jewelry and' other objects of gold, bronze, and copper. Weavers wove cotton thread into cloth. (Indus Valley people were probably the first people to grow cotton.)

Sailors from the Indus Valley crossed the Arabian Sea to trade cotton cloth and other goods with Mesopotamia. Sailors took crows with them on their ships. If the sailors lost sight of land, they set a crow free and followed it. They knew that a crow always flies toward land.

Indus Valley civilization began to decline about 1800 B.C. No one knows why. Floods may have forced people to leave the valley. Or invaders may have destroyed towns and cities. By 1500 B.C the Indus Valley civilization had disappeared.

**Looking Back**

1. . Where did civilization begin in India?

2. How did Indus Valley people build their cities?

3. What were some achievements of the Indus Valley people?

**The Aryans**

About 1500 B.C., people from central Asia crossed the Hindu Rush Mountains and invaded India. Those people were called Aryans. The Aryans conquered the people living in northern India. (Those people were probably the ***descendants*** of the Indus Valley people.)

The Aryans built an important civilization in India. At first, they were nomadic herders who raised cattle and sheep. But gradually the Aryans settled in into villages and began to farm. By about 700 B.C., the Aryans were living in cities and had developed a written language called *Sanskrit.*

**The Caste *System***

The Aryans developed a system of social classes known as the caste system. Under the caste system, Aryans divided people, into *castes,* or groups, according to their occupation.

Aryans created four main castes. The top castes were made up of priests, kings, and warriors. The lowest caste was made up of workers who served the higher castes.

Under the caste system, people could not rise to a higher caste. People remained in their caste for life. Children became members of then‐ parents' caste.

Each caste had strict rules of conduct for caste members to follow. People in a caste could not eat with people of other castes. They could not marry people from other castes.

The caste system has been a part of Indian life for thousands of years. Today, the caste system is not as strong as in the past. But it still affects the way many Indians live.

Ancient Indians developed one of the world's great religions, Hinduism. Today, it is still the religion of most Indians.

The followers of Hinduism are called Hindus. Hindus worship many gods. But they believe those gods are all part of one *supreme* or highest, spirit. That spirit is called *Brahman.* Hindus believe the spirit of Brahman is in all living things.

**Reincarnation**

Hindus believe that each person has a soul. The soul does not die with the body. After one life is over, the soul is *reborn* or born again, in another body. That belief is called ***reincarnation.***

Reincarnation is closely tied to the caste system. You read that each caste has strict rules. Hindus believe that people who obey the rules of their caste are reborn into higher caste. But people who fail to obey the rules are reborn into a lower caste. They might even be reborn as an animal or an insect.

Hindus believe that after many rebirths, some people reach the highest caste. Their souls become pure and clean. Hindus believe that such people are ready to leave the earth. Their souls join forever with the spirit of Brahman.

***Looking Back***

1. Who were the Aryans?

2. What is the caste system?

3. What do Hindus believe about Brahman?

4. How do Hindus believe people become joined forever with Brahman?

**India and Buddhism**

You read that by 700 B.C. the Aryans had built a civilization in India. They set up several kingdoms across northern India. During the next 400 years, invaders, including Alexander the Great, often attacked the Aryan kingdoms.

Around 300 B.C., an Indian ruler named Chandragupta Maurya united the Aryan kingdoms into a large empire. He brought a long period of peace and prosperity to India. During that time, a new religion spread across India. That religion was Buddhism.

**Key Words**

Literature

Spy

Monastery

Toleration

**The Beginnings of Buddhism**

**Siddhartha Gautama** was born in India around 563 B.C. He began his search for the truth about human suffering around 534 B.C. (You read about the beginning of that search.) That was a time of new beginnings in many parts of the world.

In Greece, philosophers were asking new questions about the world. In Italy, the Romans were about to set up the first republic. In India, a new religion called **Buddhism** was about to be born.

**The Search for the Truth**

Much of what we know about Siddhartha comes from Buddhist writings. They say that Siddhartha first searched for the truth by studying with teachers of Hinduism. (Hinduism was the major religion of ancient India.) But Siddhartha did not find his answers in Hinduism.

Siddhartha then went to live in a forest. For six years, he ate only weeds and berries. He went without clean clothes and other comforts. He believed that such *self‐denial* (doing without comforts) would bring wisdom. But still he found no answers.

Finally, Siddhartha decided he would *meditate* until he found the answers he was seeking. (People meditate by relaxing and clearing their minds of thoughts.) He meditated beneath a tree for hours. Then he saw his answers clearly. After that, he was known as the **Buddha,** or the one who has seen the truth.

***Looking Back***

1. How did Siddhartha begin his search for the truth? What did he do next?

2. How did he finally find the answers he was seeking?

**The Teachings of Buddhism**

After finding the truths he was seeking, the Buddha became a teacher. He wandered across northern India sharing his truths with people.

The Buddha died around 483 B.C. After his death, his followers continued to spread his teachings. Out of those teachings came Buddhism.

**The Four Noble Truths**

At the center of Buddhism are the **Four Noble Truths.** Those are the truths the Buddha discovered as he meditated beneath the tree. These are the four truths: From birth to death, life is filled with suffering.

1. People suffer because they *desire* (seek after) things that do not last, such as pleasure and wealth.
2. The way to end suffering is to get rid of desire.
3. The way to get rid of desire is to follow the **Eightfold Path.**

**The Eightfold Path**

The Eightfold Path is a guide to a good life. Those who follow the path are freed from suffering and find happiness. These are the steps on the Eightfold Path:

**Right understanding** Be sure you understand the Buddha's teachings.

**Right thought** Think pure thoughts.

**Right speech** Speak the truth. Do not say bad things about other people.

**Right action** Do not steal. Be careful not to hurt any living thing. Treat others well, even your enemies.

**Right work** Earn a living in a way that does not harm others.

**Right effort** Make an effort to become a better person. Work hard to end bad thoughts and actions.

**Right mindfulness** Be *mindful of,* or think about, how you live each day. Notice what is happening around you. Do not go through life half asleep.

**Right meditation** Spend time meditating each day. Clear your mind of feelings and desires. Only then will you see the truth and find peace.

**Reaching Nirvana**

Like the Hindus, the Buddha believed that people are reborn again and again. In each life, people suffer because of their desires.

The Buddha taught that those who follow the Eightfold Path can end the *cycle,* or circle, of rebirth and suffering. They can reach **nirvana,** a feeling of complete peace and happiness. Those who reach nirvana are not born again. For them, all suffering is ended.

**Looking Back**

1. What are the Four Noble Truths?

2. What is the Eightfold Path?

3. What happens when people reach nirvana?