

India: Ancient and Classical Civilizations

Ancient India

Ancient India represented what is today Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh or a large triangle bordered to the North by the Hindu Kush Mountain and to the east by the Himalayan Mountains. These mountain ranges and the Indian Ocean to the south isolated India from Asia. This isolated area is referred to as the Indian Subcontinent and is watered by two great rivers: the Ganges [Ganges] and the Indus River. The plain between these rivers is flat and easy to irrigate, and very fertile. It is the rich heartland of India. The remainder of India is a harsh environment that is dependent on the annual monsoons for rain to avoid drought.



Map of the Indian Subcontinent taken from Wikimedia Commons

India's first civilization developed along the flood plain of the Indus River. Like the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates the river floods annually and leaves a rich layer of soil for farming. Around 2,500 B.C., while the Egyptians were building the pyramids, the Dravidian people in the Indus River valley were laying the foundation for their civilization. The largest cities were **Harappa** and **Mohenjo-Daro**. Each city had a population of roughly 30,000 and was neatly laid out on a grid pattern with streets running north-south and east west. This suggests that these cities were carefully planned by a central government. The cities contained bathhouses, public grain storehouses, and government buildings. Houses fronted along side streets and had few windows looking

out onto the street. Each had a central courtyard with stairways up to the roof. They also contained clay pipes to drain away waste water. Cities in ancient India demonstrated more concern for sanitation and cleanliness overall.



Indus River Valley Civilization taken from Wikimedia Commons

Most residents made their living through agriculture and herding. They raised grains like wheat and barley and herded cattle, goats, sheep, and fowl. There was also an active merchant community that traded actively with Mesopotamian cities like Ur. They produced clay pots and worked with bronze, copper, and lead.

By 1750 B.C. the city-states of the Indus River Valley entered a period of slow decline. It appears that the population of the region exhausted the natural resources of the area. The fields were overgrazed, the trees and brush cut for fuel, and it appears that drought and famine also played a role. Around 1500 B.C. a new people invaded the region and quickly conquered the weakened cities.

Aryan Invaders

Around 1500 B.C. a group of nomadic people invaded the Indus Valley through a mountain pass in the Hindu Kush called the Khyber Pass. They conquered the native people of the valley. These new people were called Aryans (AIR-ee-uhnz), which meant "the nobles" in their language. These new peoples spoke a language called Sanskrit but lacked a written language. Their priests preserved their culture from generation to generation by memorizing long hymns and poems. The Aryans were a nomadic herding people and abandoned the cities of the Indus River Valley. They did not become city dwellers until much later in their history.





Map and photograph of the Khyber Pass in present day Pakistan

To escape the Aryans, some of the Dravidian people fled southward across Vindhya Mountains and into the Deccan Plateau (Southern India). To this day the people of Southern India speak a different language, Dravidian, from Northern India. While some fled, those who remained were enslaved. The enslaved Dravidian people mixed with the Aryan people over time and created a new culture that was unique to Indian civilization. The main product of this blending was the creation of the Hindu religion.



Map of India that outlines the Deccan Plateau taken from Wikimedia Commons



Please complete the following quiz to test your understanding of the material you have learned above.

The Hindu religion developed during the Vedic Age (1500 to 500 B.C.). The Aryan people brought a rich mythic traditions and many gods, which were related through 1,000s of hymns. These hymns were called the Vedas and thus created the name of the age. Once the Aryan's invaded their myths and gods merged with those of the Dravidians and expanded the Vedas during this age. The most famous collection of hymns was the *Rig-Veda*. Please remember that Aryan civilization lacked a formal written language and conveyed their religion and culture through these hymns, which is why they are so important to historians and archeologists. Around 400 BC, Hindu teachers sought to interpret the meaning of the **Vedas** and published their interpretations in the **Upanishads**.

The Vedas detail the beliefs of Hindus and established many traditions. Although the Vedas teach that there is one spiritual power, Brahman, which created and controls the universe, Hindus honor many gods and goddesses as forms of that one God.

Hinduism does not have a strict set of rules or teachings, but it still impacts the way that people live their lives. Hindus believe that the universe is an endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. **Reincarnation** is the idea that when a person dies, his or her atman, or eternal self, is reborn in a new physical form. The ultimate goal of life is to achieve moksha, or union with Brahman. Hindus believe it often takes several cycles of death and rebirth before people achieve moksha and are freed from the cycle of rebirth.

How close one comes to moksha in a lifetime depends on the law of karma. **Karma** is the positive or negative force created as a result of good or bad actions taken during a person's lifetime. Hindus believe every action has a corresponding good or bad reaction that affects not only an individual's current life, but also determines how one will be reborn in future lives. Humans are considered to be the closest to Brahman, with animals, plants, and other objects being further away from Brahman. People with good karma will be reborn at a level closer to Brahman, while people who do bad things leading to bad karma will be reborn at a lower level, such as an animal or plant.

A Quick Review of the Key Elements of Hinduism

- 1) Belief in many forms of one God, which is called Brahman
- 2) Reincarnation: Rebirth based upon karma. When a living thing dies, its inner self is reborn in another form.
- 3) Karma: Knowledge that all thoughts and actions result in future consequences
- 4) Vedas and Upanishads: Sacred writings
- 5) Spread along major trade routes

Use the slideshow below for a quick review of Hinduism and the key elements you will need to understand for this course.

Hindu Society and Culture

Vedic tradition established a rigid class structure for Indian civilization. These divisions were closely linked to the Hindu religion and were called jatis or birth groups. The name of the system changed to the Caste system after Europeans took control of India. This system became an economic, political and social system over time. There were four main groups:

Caste Divisions

Brahmins: Priests

Kshatriyas [kuh-SHAHT-ree-uhz]: political rulers and warriors

Vaishyas [VYSH-yuhz]: landowners, merchants, and artisans

Shudras [SHOO-druhz]: servants and slaves

Untouchables: people outside the class system.

The members of each class socialized with the members of their class and Indian society was widely segregated. The lowest class, the untouchables, could not use the resources of the classes and generally lived in poverty on the fringe of society. They believed that one's behavior in a previous life or Karma determined your place within the social structure. "Just as he acts, just as he behaves, so he becomes."



Indian children of the Kshatriyan caste, taken from Wikimedia Commons



India's Second Religion: Buddhism

A young man named Siddhartha Gautama questioned the practices of Hinduism. He argued that one could acquire wisdom and escape the cycle of death and rebirth in one life. He believed that all people, even the untouchables, could achieve wisdom. Guatama had once been a wealthy member of the wealthy class and had given it all up to pursue a life of poverty and seeking wisdom. One day while resting under a shade tree, Guatama discovered the truth and sought to teach it to others.



Siddhartha Gautama

Guatama taught his followers his Four Noble Truths and became known as Buddha or Enlightened One. His noble truths taught:

Four Noble Truths

1. Everything in life is suffering and sorrow.
2. The cause of pain are selfish desires.
3. The way to end all pain is to end all desires.
4. You can overcome your desires and escape suffering by following the Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path was like a staircase. According to Buddha, those who sought enlightenment had to master one step at a time.

The steps of the Eightfold Path were right knowledge, right purpose, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. By following this path, anyone could attain nirvana [nur-VAHN-uh]. Nirvana was Buddha's word for release from pain and selfishness.

Nonviolence and a Wider Audience

Buddha taught his followers to treat all living things (humans, animals, and even insects) with loving kindness. He asked his followers to practice nonviolence. They were not even allowed to swat a mosquito. His practices were also communicated in the common language of the people and not Sanskrit so that all could understand. His followers were to show concern for all - women and men, lowborn and highborn.

The following video presents an overview of the development of Buddhism and its practices. Please answer the questions in the activity document that apply to this video, which runs about 7 minutes.

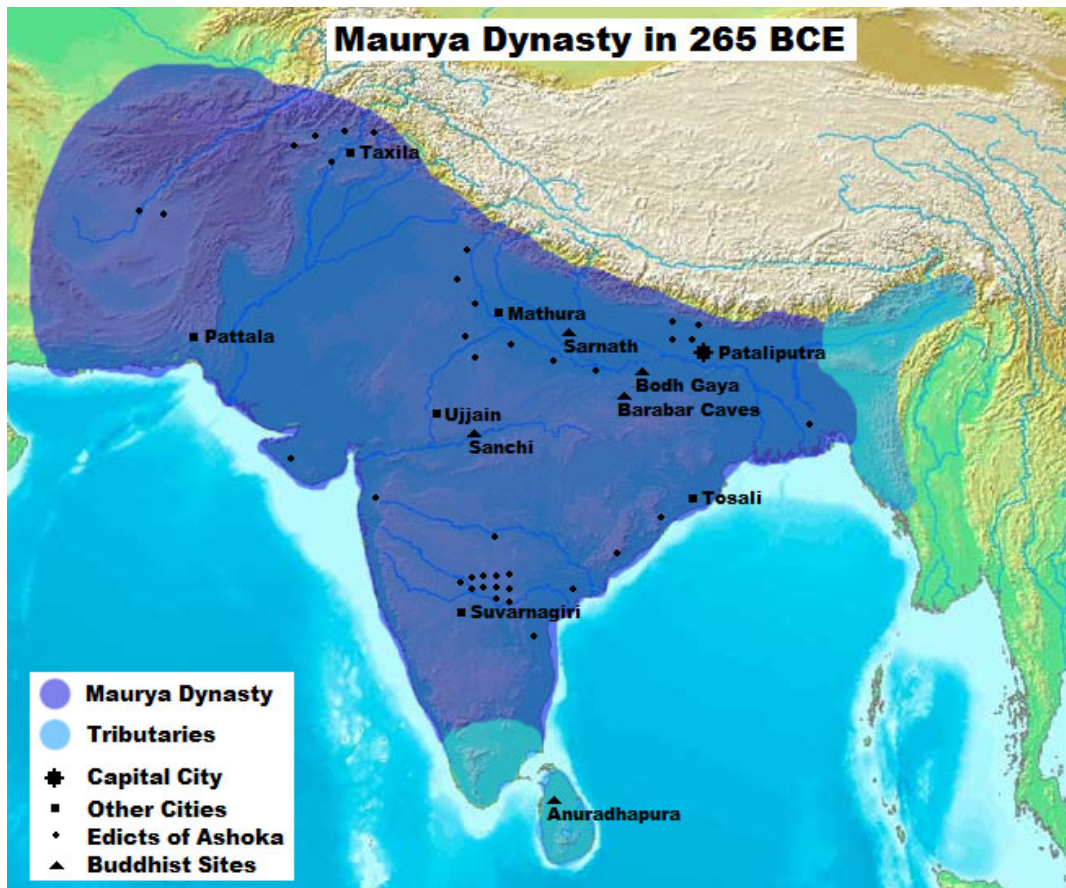
An overview of Buddhism, 7 minutes

Use the slideshow below for a quick review of Buddhism and the key elements you will need to understand for this course.

The Mauryan Dynasty

By 500 B.C. the Aryan invaders had merged with the original Dravidian people. They had failed, however, to establish any sort of a unified political empire. In 512 B.C., the armies of the great Persian Empire of Darius I invaded through the Khyber Pass and conquered much of northwestern India. The Indian population experienced political unity and heavy taxation for the first time during the Persian invasion. After the Persians were defeated by the Greeks, Alexander the Great's forces invaded through the Khyber Pass. The Indus Valley passed into Greek hands for only five years when Alexander the Great died. The Greeks and the Persian invasions taught the Indians much about centralized government and empires. A young Indian leader named Chandragupta Maurya (chuhn-druh-GUP-tuh MOW-ree-uh) began building a new empire about 322 B.C.

Chandragupta established a small kingdom on the Ganges initially and then expanded across Northern India. He brought the Indus Valley, Ganges Valley, and the southern Himalayas under his control. Chandragupta established a hereditary monarchy to rule his empire, which became known as the Mauryan Empire. He ruled his empire by force and fear. He used government spies and tortured all who opposed his rule. He trusted no one and had servants taste all of his food to prevent poisoning.



Mauryan Dynasty at its height, taken from Wikimedia Commons

The most famous ruler of the Mauryan Dynasty was Asoka. Asoka was the grandson of Chandragupta. He was a warlike ruler who showed no mercy for his captives. It is said that he killed 100,000 captives when he conquered southern India. These early slaughters haunted Asoka and were a major motivation for his later conversion to Buddhism. The later part of his rule was characterized by a desire to treat all of his subjects fairly and equally. He ordered his officials to take care of his people providing hospitals, relief from floods and droughts, veterinary clinics for their animals, and building a road system that encouraged travel and trade.



Asoka, taken from Wikimedia Commons

Asoka sent hundreds of Buddhist missionaries to neighboring lands throughout Southeast and Southwest Asia. Asoka's policies spread Buddhism far beyond India through trade routes and allowed it to become a major world religion with millions of followers. Asoka was the last strong ruler of the Mauryan Empire. 50 years after his death, the empire broke into many small kingdoms.

The following video briefly discusses how Asoka's policies helped to spread Buddhism. Please watch this video, which last about 2 minutes, and answer the appropriate questions on the activity sheet.

Asoka Video, 2 minutes

The Gupta Empire

In India, 500 years of disunity followed the end of the Mauryan dynasty in 180 B.C. In northern India, waves of invaders continued to arrive from Persia, Afghanistan, and the plains of central Asia. These newcomers set up many warring states and kingdoms in northern India. Southern India was largely not affected by these invasions. In 320 A.D., a Hindu prince named Chandra Gupta (Chuhn-druh GOOP-tuh) was crowned king of the upper Ganges Valley. The new king was the first in a hereditary line of rulers who introduced a golden classical age to India.

The Gupta Dynasty ruled a mighty empire for 150 years, which marked the first time that northern India was united under one government. Historians have a very difficult time dating the achievements of this age as Indian scholars did not record dates. This was a result of the Hindu belief that the passage of worldly time was unimportant. What we do know about this age comes through a rich oral tradition. These oral traditions were called itihās (meaning "so it was told"). In addition to these accounts historians rely on the record of Chinese monks who traveled through India.



Gupta Empire at its height, taken from Wikimedia Commons

Science and Learning During India's Golden Age

A culture of learning developed during the Gupta period that was admired by scholars around the world. Young Hindus of the priestly (Brahmin) castes attended school from age 9 to 30. There were several universities but the most famous was located at Nalanda on the Ganges River. Scholars working at these universities made advances in science. A list of the most famous follow.

- **Inoculation:** Indian doctors were the first to give injections against smallpox. India's free hospitals were providing injections 1,000 years before Europeans developed vaccines.
- **Surgery:** Indian surgeons sterilized their tools, set broken bones, and repaired ears and noses with techniques of plastic surgery.
- **Number System:** Hindu mathematicians were the first to use a numeral system based on ten and discovered the concept of zero. Muslims of Baghdad adopted this system and passed it to Europeans through trade routes. The system was known as Arabic numerals because Europeans associated it with the Arab traders.
- **Astronomy:** Hindu scholars were among the first to state that the world was round based on mathematical calculations.
- **Industry:** Indian scholars also developed new and advanced techniques for making textiles. India would develop a reputation for the finest textiles in the world.

Literature

The greatest literature of India's golden age was drama. Many of these dramas were written by Kalidasa (KAH-lee-DAH-suh), whose has often been compared to Shakespeare. Emotion was key to Indian drama. Audiences at the Gupta court recognized eight pure emotions known as rasas. The five rasas were love, anger, fear, loathing, and wonder. Each scene within a play represented one of these emotions. The final scene would combine all emotions represented in the drama.



Kalidasa, taken from Wikimedia Commons

The Fall of the Gupta Empire

The Gupta Empire lasted until 600 A.D. The last Gupta rulers faced the same frightening challenge as the last Roman emperors. While Attila the Hun was terrifying Rome, other Hun commanders crossed through the Khyber Pass into Northern India and attacked the Gupta. The Gupta Empire slowly shrank and the people of India entered six centuries of turmoil. The Hun people settle in India and developed a new ruling class called the Rajputs.



Understanding Hinduism and Buddhism



Task:

- Research both specific and general aspects of a religious tradition
- Summarize the history, traditions, and beliefs of a religion

Process:

STEP 1 | Understanding Hinduism and Buddhism Handout - A list of important terms and concepts associated with each religion that can be used to guide your research.

STEP 2 | Helpful Websites

- Introduction to Buddhism
- Buddhism
- Buddhism and Hinduism Information *Enter your first name/last name to view the information
- Hinduism

STEP 3 | Project Instructions

1. Review the terms found in the **Understanding Hinduism and Buddhism Handout** as a way to begin your research. You need to familiarize yourself with these terms and know their meaning.
2. Research the religion that was assigned to you. Assignments have been posted in the News Forum. Contact Mrs. Gallitz if you have not been assigned a religion.
3. Create a Padlet that identifies and explains the history, tradition, and major beliefs of your assigned religion.
 - To do this, go to <https://padlet.com/> and set up an account for yourself. Write down your credentials, make a good password, but don't use an important password (such as a password for more secure online things you do) on this program. Create a password that can be used for less important programs like this that won't hurt you as much if ever hacked (not likely).
 - Click anywhere to begin--a textbox will be created and you type in information. At this time, the free version does not allow you to change font size, but you can change the box size and shape. Work with what you get. Use the side toolbar to see other ways you can modify what you type.
 - Be sure to use good planning and placement and consider the Elements of Design when creating your padlet. Organization, imagery, accuracy, and creativity are important in this project.
 - Include 5-7 images related to your topic.
 - You can also check out some of their templates and/or pictures.
 - In each box you create, you add audio by clicking on the little pencil. There is an option to upload, which is where

- you would upload your mp3 created using vocaroo (or Audacity if you prefer). See instructions for Vocaroo below.
- Once you have uploaded your recording(s), finalize your Padlet by clicking on the Share button and copying the URL at the bottom.
- Complete the task by pasting your initial discussion post. Paste your URL into the discussion post as well, so that others can check out your page.
- Complete your two response posts in the discussion board.

Padlet images--toolbar on right side (click on ? to get instructions; click on share button to get the share options. You see the URL at the bottom of the share page.

FAQS **EMAIL US**

You are on a Padlet padlet. It is like a blank piece of paper for your computer.

BUILDING

- You can build a new padlet by clicking [here](#) or by clicking on the **+ Create padlet** option in the sidebar.
- Hit up the **⚙️ Modify** panel of a padlet to see all that you can modify.
- If you create a padlet without logging in or signing up, you may be unable to edit the padlet after 24 hours. You may still be able to post on it, but you may be unable to change the title, privacy settings etc.

READING

- To view an expanded version of a post or its attached multimedia, just click on it.
- Once expanded, use left and right arrow keys to slide through posts.

WRITING

ADDING A POST

- Double click to add a new post, or
- Drag a file from your computer.

ADDING RICH TEXT (BOLD, ITALICS, QUOTE, CODE, LISTS)

- Just select the words you want to 'enrich' and a toolbar will show up with the necessary actions, or

- Use the following keyboard shortcuts:

Bold	Ctrl + b
Italic	Ctrl + i
Numbered List	Ctrl + k
Bulleted List	Ctrl + j
Superscript	Ctrl + l
Subscript	Ctrl + h
Undo	Ctrl + z
Redo	Ctrl + Shift + z
Increase indent	Tab
Decrease indent	Shift + Tab
Clear formatting	Ctrl + m

ADDING MULTIMEDIA

SHARE


EXPORT

Image


PDF


Excel


CSV


SUBSCRIBE


EMAIL


PRINT

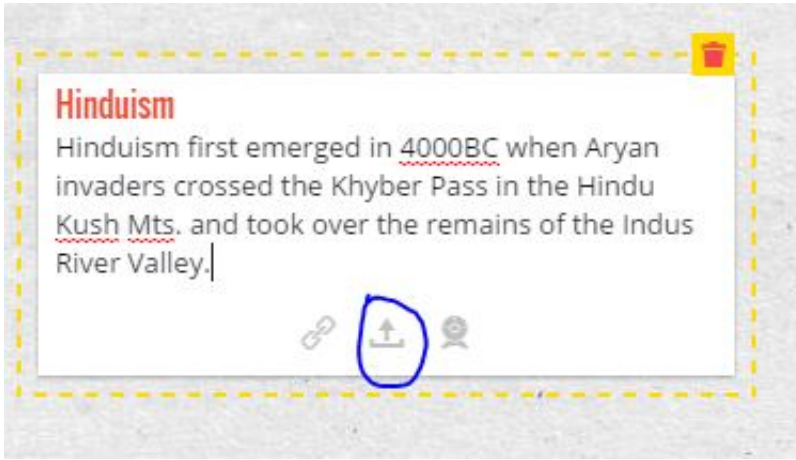

EMBED
Copy and paste this code in your blog or your website.

```
<iframe  
src='//padlet.com/embed/3y7nufr73xh5'  
frameborder='0' width='100%'  
height='480px'  
style='padding:0;margin:0;border:none'>  
</iframe><div style='border-top:2px solid
```

Using Wordpress?
Copy and paste this in your wordpress post.
Requires a self-hosted wordpress blog with the [Padlet Shortcode Plugin](#)

```
[padlet key='3y7nufr73xh5' width='100%'  
height='480']
```

MOBILIZE
<http://padlet.com/gallitr/3y7nufr73xh5>

Audio/Vocaroo portion

- Prepare a written statement describing the organization and main ideas in your multimedia presentation and record it using Vocaroo (www.vocaroo.com). You may also choose to do a few shorter recordings. If you choose to create a few recordings, be sure to download each file before producing the next one.
- For directions on how to use and download your Vocaroo recording as an MP3 file, visit this website: <http://goo.gl/AzkMw>.
- Upload your audio recording from Vocaroo (mp3 file) into Padlet.

Grading:

- Please refer to this **grading rubric** for an overview of how you will be evaluated.