

Chapter Summary

Ancient India

Lesson 1 *Early Civilizations*

- India is a subcontinent whose geography includes the Himalaya on the north; the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra River valleys and fertile coastlands to the east and west; and the Deccan Plateau in the subcontinent's southern two-thirds.
- The main climate feature of India is the monsoon. Monsoon rains bring water for crops, but can also cause flooding.
- The first civilization of the Indus Valley was marked by the large, well-organized cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The cities were made of baked brick and laid out in grid patterns.
- The people of the Indus Valley farmed and made metal tools, cloth, and jewelry. They built temples, and they traded with Mesopotamia.
- As the people of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro disappeared, the Aryans migrated as far as the Ganges River. They established a society based on farming and trade.
- The Aryan civilization developed writing (Sanskrit), literature (the Vedas), and the *varna* social class system in India.

Lesson 2 *Religions of Ancient India*

- The sacred texts of Hinduism are the Vedas and the Upanishads, writings of Sanskrit prayers and ceremonies.
- The basic beliefs of Hinduism include: a single spirit called Brahman encompasses all living things; the ultimate goal is union with Brahman; this union is accomplished by creating good karma (actions) in each reincarnation of the soul.
- Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, a wealthy prince who left his possessions to find enlightenment and the end of suffering.
- Siddhartha's teachings, stated in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, include: eliminating desire will eliminate suffering, and meditation and giving up material things help bring about enlightenment.
- There are two divisions of Buddhism. Theravada Buddhists follow Buddha's teachings, but do not believe that he was a

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god. Mahayana Buddhists believe that worshipping the Buddha helps them follow the Eightfold Path.

- Jainism was founded by Mahavira, who was called the Jina. The main belief of the Jains, *ahimsa*, is that all life is sacred and that followers must never take even an insect's life. Like the Buddhists, they believe in the elimination of desire.
- The teaching of *ahimsa* influenced twentieth-century Indian patriot Mahatma Gandhi to seek freedom from British rule through peaceful protest.

Lesson 3 *The Mauryan Empire*

- Chandra Gupta Maurya unified northern India through military might and established the Mauryan Empire. As a ruler, he was well organized. He was also harsh, fearing rebellion and harm to himself.
- Ashoka is considered the greatest Mauryan leader. Although he began his reign with conquests, he turned to peaceful rule when he converted to Buddhism. He worked to improve the lives of his people. He set up carved pillars around the empire with advice and sayings meant to inspire peaceful and respectful living. He also built stupas (shrines) to encourage Buddhist practice.
- Five hundred years after the fall of the Mauryan Empire, the Indian people were again united under the Gupta dynasty. Samudra Gupta, son of the first emperor of the Gupta dynasty, Chandra Gupta, led the people into a golden age under the Hindu religion. Religious temples, art, and literature developed during this time, as did trade. Pilgrims often traveled to temples and sacred sites.
- Gupta society was quite advanced. Literature in Sanskrit, including religious texts and epic poems, was written. Architecture consisted of religious structures, temples, palaces, shrines, and monuments. Indian mathematicians invented a symbol for zero, and they developed the written number system we still use today. Their system of astronomy was based on the idea of a round Earth revolving around the sun. Medical doctors performed surgery and tried to find the causes of illnesses.