**Ancient India**

**Hinduism**

     Hinduism is the oldest major religion in the world today; it survived so long by changing and adjusting to new circumstances. To Hindus all religions are acceptable, and the practices of other religions may be included as part of Hindu worship. Hindus believe in an eternal and infinite spiritual principle called Brahman that is the ultimate reality and foundation of all existence. Brahman can take the form of many gods including Brahma the creator of the universe, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer.

     For Hindus, a proper life is unconcerned with worldly riches; the goal is to seek union with Brahman, a quest that may take many lifetimes. Hindus believe in **reincarnation**, meaning the soul never dies and may be reborn again in a different body. **Karma**, all of the actions of a person's life, will determine if a person returns in the next life at a higher level on the ladder of incarnation and closer to union with Brahman.

However, there were complicated rules of behavior. Each person was born into a caste: 1) the priests, 2) the warriors, 3) the merchants, and 4) the common people, mostly peasants and laborers.  Most people of ancient India were members of the  commoner class, which had limited rights.  A fifth group, the Untouchables, was outside the caste system.  Considered not fully human, Untouchables performed the worst jobs such as skinning animals, cleaning toilets, and burying the dead.

     While the caste system may seem unfair to us today, it provided a means for different kinds of people to live together peacefully while avoiding the slavery common to many ancient cultures.  Although discrimination based on caste has been outlawed in India for decades, it still influences what kind of jobs people can get and whom they will marry

     Hinduism is the largest religion of India and a defining feature of Indian culture. Hinduism and the caste system served to maintain order among India's many ethnic groups because each person knew his or her place in society, and people who followed the rules could hope to move to a higher caste in the next life.

***\*\*\*What are 2 main beliefs of Hinduism? How did it impact India?***

**Buddhism**

     Not everyone in India was satisfied with Hinduism. In the 500s BC, a young Hindu prince raised in luxury became troubled by the suffering he saw in the world. He left his wife and infant son to become a wandering monk, seeking a way to end the suffering. After six years of solitary searching, he found an answer and began to teach. His followers called him the "Buddha" or "the enlightened one."

     Buddha taught that our life in the physical world is merely an illusion. When people let go of their worldly pain and worries, they can unite with the universal soul and achieve a state of complete peace called **nirvana**. Like Hindus, Buddhists believe nothing is permanent, that life constantly moves through cycles of birth, death, and rebirth like the turning of a wheel. Although Buddha accepted the Hindu belief in reincarnation, he taught that people could achieve nirvana from their actions in this life alone, and he rejected the caste system. For these reasons, Buddhism became popular among the lower classes in India. Today Buddhism is a major world religion. Although it began in India, Buddhism spread to the east and declined in India as Buddhism was absorbed into Hinduism. Buddhists are now found in the greatest numbers in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

***\*\*\*What are 2 main beliefs of Buddhism? How did it impact India? Why did Buddhism spread through Asia but Hinduism didn’t?***

**Ashoka**

     India was torn by warfare between kingdoms until the first Indian empire was established in the Ganges valley by the **Mauryan** dynasty in 324 BC. Its greatest leader was Ashoka, who extended his empire to the south in a bloody invasion that conquered all but the southern tip of India. Then Ashoka had a sudden change of heart. He publicly announced his grief at the suffering caused by his armies, and he rejected violence. He even gave up hunting and eating meat. Ashoka converted to Buddhism, and he spread Buddhist ideals throughout India and to neighboring countries. Ruling India with Buddhist ideals, Ashoka's government promoted the welfare of the people by kind acts such as digging new wells, building hospitals for people and animals, allowing freedom of religion, and easing harsh laws.

.     Ashoka also encouraged long-distance ocean trade. It was during his reign that India became the center of a vast **southern ocean-trading network** that stretched from China to Africa and the Middle East.

***\*\*\*What caused the rise of the Maurya Empire? What were 2 major achievements of Ashoka?***

**Gupta Empire**

     Historians consider the Mauryan Empire and the Gupta Empire that followed (in the 300s and 400s AD) to be the greatest civilizations of India's **classical period**, a period when India underwent great cultural and political advancement. The reign of the Gupta Empire has been called India's "golden age," a high point of Indian history when art, drama, literature, and science flourished. Gupta mathematicians invented the zero, an amazing number with no value that gives value to the place of other numbers. The zero made it possible to calculate numbers faster and more accurately, and it was adopted the world over. Doctors developed an inoculation against smallpox. Farmers learned how to turn the juice from sugarcane into dried sugar crystals that could be easily stored and traded over long distances. Cotton from India clothed people across much of the ancient world. Gupta India was a land of wonders.

    The Gupta Empire declined in the early 500s AD when tribes of nomadic horsemen called **Huns** invaded from grasslands to the north, but the cultural patterns that developed during India's classical period created a vital civilization in southern Asia that endures to this day.

***What are 3 reasons historians say Gupta’s leadership called the “Golden Age”?***

**Ancient China**

     The world's fourth great civilization also got its start along a river valley, the **Yellow** river of northeastern China where farmers grew millet and wheat. Farming later moved south to the **Yangtze** (YONG-zuh) river, where rice production led to an increase in China's population. The land between the rivers became the center of Chinese civilization, the so-called "Middle Kingdom." Early Chinese culture grew in relative isolation due to physical barriers and long distances that separated it from other major civilizations of Eurasia. The world's highest mountain range, the **Himalayas**, separate China from India.

**Mandate from Heaven**

     The **Zhou** (JOH) dynasty took control of China in 1122 BC and ruled for nearly 900 years. To give their government legitimacy, Zhou and later Chinese rulers claimed to rule with approval from the gods, a mandate from heaven. Although this claim was meant to enhance the emperor's authority, it also established the right to overthrow an ineffective emperor. The emperor was expected to protect his people by ruling in a way that pleased the gods. If trouble developed in the empire—droughts or military defeats, for example—people might say the emperor had lost his mandate from heaven, and the emperor could be overthrown.

     Over many centuries, China's history experienced a recurring pattern. A ruling dynasty would start out strong and gradually weaken over time until it was replaced by a new dynasty. Then the pattern would repeat. Zhou rulers controlled their kingdom through a **feudal system**, meaning they divided the land into smaller territories and appointed officials to govern them. When the Zhou dynasty eventually weakened, some of these territories developed into strong states that opposed the emperor and began fighting among themselves. These bloody conflicts lasted for over two centuries, a time called the "Warring States" period.

***\*\*\*What were 3 major achievements of the Zhou Dynasty? What is the Mandate of Heaven? How would this impact China?***

**The First Emperor**

     One of China's warring states, the **Qin** (CHIN) kingdom of western China, grew wealthy from agriculture based on extensive irrigation. With this wealth, the Qin ruler raised a powerful army and spent twenty years ruthlessly conquering China's warring states. He declared himself First Emperor in 221 BC. Thus, it was the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, who created the country of China and gave China its name.

     In order to unify China, the First Emperor stripped the regional warlords of their power, and he forced them to move to the capital where he could control them. He also standardized the Chinese language, money, roads, and weights and measures. The First Emperor ruled with a philosophy that considered people selfish and evil by nature; he adopted strict laws and harsh punishments to keep people in line. He also tried to control what people could think. It is said he buried scholars alive, burned books including the teachings of Confucius, and he brutally eliminated those who disagreed with him.

     Natural barriers protected China on three sides: oceans to the east and south, mountains and desert to the west. But, China's northern border lay open to attack from Huns. The First Emperor ordered a number of individual walls joined together to form one great stone wall to defend China's northern border from attack. Hundreds of thousands of laborers worked on the Great Wall for years, and many workers died under the harsh conditions. Gates in the wall became centers of trade with the nomadic peoples who lived outside. The Great Wall was repaired and rebuilt a number of times over the centuries, and parts of it still stand.

     Hoping to find a way to avoid death, the First Emperor experimented with a number of potions until he killed himself by accidental poisoning. The Qin Dynasty lasted for only fifteen years, but it began a Chinese tradition of strong central governments controlled by powerful rulers.

***What were 3 major achievements of the Qin Dynasty?***

**Confucius**

     Confucius was born in 551 BC when Zhou rulers were losing control of their empire. He tried to return harmony to China with a philosophy based on devotion to the family, respect between the classes, high moral ideals, and learning. He emphasized individual duty and responsibility, what we might call a strong work ethic. The family was the center of Confucian society with the father at the head. The mother and children owed total obedience to the father. Family ancestors were honored and not forgotten.

     Confucius promoted an orderly society in which people of higher rank were courteous to those below, and those of lower rank were respectful to those above. Confucius said a ruler should act like a good father and lead by example, not through power and harsh laws. "When the ruler does right, all men will imitate his self-control."

     The harsh rule of theFirst Emperor was so unpopular that the Qin Dynasty was overthrown shortly after the emperor's death. Following a period of civil war, the Han Dynasty took control of China in 206 BC. Han rulers adopted Confucian ideas about creating a respectful and orderly society, and they set-up a **civil service system** to run the government with well-educated officials chosen by written tests.

     The Han Dynasty expanded China's empire to the south and west, and it produced marvels that would change the world including the ship's rudder, the magnetic compass, and paper. The four-hundred-year reign of the Han Empire was so successful that it is considered the greatest of China's classical dynasties.

***How did Confucianism develop? What is the family like in Confucianism? How did Confucianism impact China?***