

Ancient Civilizations (India)

Compiled by Janet Langley

- I. Geography, population, early culture
 - A. Location- sub continent formed when the "island" of India collided with the mainland of Asia 60 million years ago- 7th largest country (1,237,062 sq. mi.) bordered by Pakistan (NW), China (N border of Kashmir state), Nepal (N), Bangladesh (E), Island of Sri Lanka off SE tip of India (used to be Ceylon)
 - B. Major geographical features
 1. Oceans- Indian Ocean (S.), Bay of Bengal (E.) and the Arabian Ocean (W.)
 2. Rainforests- along the Western coast of India and Sri Lanka
 3. Rivers (From the dawn of civilization, the Indians have settled along their many river banks- the sustainer of life- Indians love their rivers)
 - a. Ganges - "Mother Ganga"- NE, is India's most sacred river. She emerges bubbly white and icy cold from the snows of the Himalayas and rushes 1,560 miles down to the Bay of Bengal. The Ganges meanders past the Taj Mahal in Agra, to Varanasi (or Benares), the holiest city of Hindu India...some believe it to be the oldest city in the world. The water of the Ganges at Varanasi is believed to have healing powers; thousands of ailing Hindus journey their every year to immerse their bodies in the sacred waters. (Homeless Bird, Gloria Whelan)
 - b. Indus (cradle of ancient India) 1,800 miles long from its origin in the Mtns. Of Tibet to Arabian Sea (site of early Aryan civilization) NW border. Five Rivers (in Persian- 5 rivers is "Punjab") flow into the Indus R.
 - c. Godavari Central India
 4. Mountains- Northern border- Himalayas ("abode of snow") Youngest (60 million years old) and tallest mtn.s in the world formed by the island of India colliding with

Tibet- 50 mtn.s over 5 miles high including Mt. Everest and K2.

5. Plains- in the N. very fertile
6. Deserts- N.W. portion- East of Indus R.
7. Savannahs- mid-eastern coast stretches into interior along the Godavari R. basin (bordered on west by desert) always warm, lots of heavy tropical rainstorms

C. Climate

1. Rainy season (Monsoon) Brahma- Nov-Feb.- rains fall so heavily that you can't see across the street- rains every day for 4 months!
2. Cool season- (Vishnu) March-May
3. Hot season- (Shiva) June-Oct.- sizzling hot

D. Population

1. 2nd most populated country in world (next to China) with 1,140,000,000 (2008)

E. Early Culture

1. Earliest written language- Sanskrit (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Mahabharata and Ramayana- sacred texts/stories)
2. 500 ACE (during the fall of Rome and the beginning of Europe's Dark Ages) was the Gupta India or "golden age"- it included the largest expansion of Indian rule (defeat of Huns), highly organized state, king governed without capital punishment, many religions thrived, no animals were killed, there were great sculptures created, 35' iron pillar was erected in Delhi in 400 ACE- 1400 years before the industrial revolution and 100 years before China masters the use of metals.
3. The Cholan Empire (9-11th C. ACE) last classical civilization to survive- located deep in the tropics of SE India. They were the "Athenians" of India. People seemed to live in harmony, they liked to record their history. Raja Raja, the great King of Kings - sent armies and fleets to Indonesia; they built a large dam, set up-irrigation canals, built numerous temples to Hindu gods.

F. Gifts from Ancient India

1. First to spin and weave cotton (Greeks thought they had trees that grew balls of sheep's wool)
2. Developed our number system 1,2,3... including zero and pi
3. First to domesticate and eat chicken
4. play chess, gamble with dice
5. eat mangoes
6. Proved that the Earth orbited the sun in 500 ACE
7. Estimated the circumference of the Earth as 24,900 miles and that the cosmos was billions of years old 1,500 years before modern astronomers discovered this.
8. They also developed mathematical calculations to predict eclipses and developed theories about gravity.

II. Migration- The Persians were the first to use the word "India" to describe the land East of the Indus River and to call the land's inhabitants, "Indians". However, "Bharata" is how the earliest Indians referred to their land. The name "Mahabharata", the title of one of India's two epic stories, comes from this word- meaning "Great Bharata". The fact that they arrived in India with the Vedas (their songs of life past on from singer/historian to S/H over the centuries) reveals why so many of the stories of the ancient Nordic peoples, the Greeks and the Romans have similar gods and folktales.

III. Story of Indra, the earliest god; the god of thunder, lightning bolt and sometimes god of the sun (Zeus). Indra sprang from his mother's side (a symbol of a very royal birth- Zarathustra, Siddharta ?), fully grown and clad in armor (Athena). Indra, who rode his great white elephant into battle, was always victorious. He had the ability to revive the slain warriors on the battlefield and take them to his large hall. (Valkyries of Norse Mythology and Valhalla). No sorrow, suffering or fear ever entered Indra's castle in the clouds of Mt. Meru (Mt. Olympus).

Indra's greatest battle was with the dragon, Vritra, who stole all of the water in the world. Indra swore to destroy Virtra. After smashing through Virtra's 99 fortresses, Indra assailed the dragon with his celestial

weapon, Vajra. They battled for years, but eventually Indra slew Virtra and in doing so, sliced open his belly and freed the world's water. For a thousand years, Indra reigned as the premier god of the Hindus. But, over time Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva gained power over him and he was relegated into the role of the Weather god.

- A. Indra- Weather
- B. Agni- Fire
- C. Vata- Wind and Air
- D. Varuna- Waters
- E. Yama- Death
- F. Devas-lesser gods and the Asuras- demons

IV. Creation Story of Brahma- (see hand written story) Brahma (creator of all things) sprang from the Lotus Flower of the Lord of the Universe- brilliant as 1,000 suns. He then created the waters and placed his seed within a brilliant golden egg (Kalavala), more brilliant than the sun and rested there for one year.

Then, through the power of his thoughts, he split in two and formed the heavens and the earth with the waters in between. His very breath created the gods in the heavens and by breathing down, he created the demons, so there was both light and darkness. He then created the 4 castes (see below) and split his body in half- male and female. To guide his creation of man, he brought forth a son, Virag, who became the father of Manu, the child of the sun, the first king of men; to him Brahma revealed the sacred laws of how human beings were to live on earth (Vedas).

He also created Mt. Meru, the abode of the gods, which was 250,000 miles above the earth and surrounded by Mother Ganges. There the gods lived on Soma (Iduna's apples) a nectar or ambrosia of the immortals. There also grew Parijata, the tree of Paradise.

V. The Caste System

- A. Brahmans (created from the head of Brahma) were the priests, teachers (gurus), counselors- only the Brahmans can instruct the sacred laws

- B. Kshatriyas (created from the arms of Brahma) were the Kings, rulers, warriors- born to protect the people.
- C. Vaishyas (created from the thighs of Brahma) were the land owners, tenders of cattle, farmers, merchants, artisans, craftsmen and bankers
- D. Shudras (created from the feet of Brahma) were the peasant serfs, day laborers- born to meekly serve the other 3 castes.
- E. Panchamas (untouchables) were the street cleaners, took care of the cremation grounds, leatherworkers (thought to be the original native peoples of the Indus Valley)

VI. Four Great Ages

- A. Krita Yuga, the perfect age was when all people were saintly and without fear, pride or hatred. Their minds were full of joy and they could see and converse with the gods, who ruled nature and guided them. The weather was neither too cold or too warm, therefore they had no need of clothing or shelter. There was no need for food/plants, for all the nourishment they required could be found in the air they breathed and in the water they drank. They lived for 4,000 years, never growing old. They were never ill or injured. Once in a lifetime they gave birth to a pair of children simply by thinking them into existence. When they died other souls from heaven descended to take their place.
- B. Treta Yuga, was a less perfect age. People felt more distant from heaven. During this time, their needs were supplied by a heavenly tree called the Kalpa Tree. It provided garments and ornaments, as well as, a fruit and honey that were so rich in nutrients, they needed no other food. And while the Kalpa Tree existed, the weather was mild and shelters were not necessary.

After a time, some of the people became greedy and wanted to take possession of the Kalpa tree for themselves. In response, the gods destroyed the tree and unleashed a multitude of changing weather upon the land. The people were forced to find shelter in caves and almost starved to death. But, Brahma took pity on the people and provided them with the skills to work with their hands, to cultivate the earth and bring forth crops.

It was in this age of the Treta Yuga that Manu, the son of Viraga lived. It is said that Manu called into being the 7 Holy Rishis and together they taught the people the sacred laws of Brahma. Yet darkness and evil had to increase on earth so that the people might learn the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. There finally came a time when the forces of evil captured so many souls that goodness was lessened by half; this was the Dwapara Yuga.

- C. Dwapara Yuga, the age of disease, calamity and the triumph of falsehood over truth- the great flood and the destruction of all but Manu and his ark (see story below- VII).
- D. Kali Yuga, the 4th great age lasted 5,000 years and ended in 1899- it is said that at that point only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the original goodness of the Kriga Yuga was left.

VII. Manu and the Fish- During this time, Manu, whose name means "to know", still lived alone in the forest where he sat meditating, turning his thoughts to god. One day as he stood by a stream, a fish rose out of the water and asked for his protection from a large fish that wished to swallow it. Manu placed the fish in a jar, and then as it grew, into a tank. Finally, the fish asked to be returned to the river. After a time, the fish returned asking Manu to take it to the ocean. When Manu reached the oceanside with the fish, the fish warned Manu of the impending destruction of the world; it was time for evil to be taken from the earth.

The fish instructed Manu to build a strong, massive ark and furnish it with a long rope. Then Manu was instructed to enter it with the 7 Holy Rishis and take with them samples of all the different seeds that grew on the earth. As soon as Manu had accomplished this task, clouds that looked liked elephants of every color, gathered in the sky and it began to rain as the fish had said. The earth became covered with water.

Manu made a noose of the rope and the fish, now in the guise of a horned animal caught the noose up with his horns and towed the ark safely through the stormy seas. After many long years, the fish towed the boat to the highest peak of the Himavat (which is still called the Harbor to this day) and tied it safely there. Then the fish spoke, "I am Brahma, the

Lord of all creatures, none other than I could have saved you from this cataclysm. Manu will create again all beings. By following my laws will you gain this power.

VIII. The Vedas (laws of Brahma, as taught by Manu)

IX. Four Steps of Life- for a boy born into one of the top 3 castes (pg. 10- Dorothy Harrer?)

A. Initiation- initiated into purpose of his life, he then chooses a teacher/guru

B. Studentship

C. Householdship

D. Hermitship

X. Story of Shiva, the Destroyer

XI. Story of Vishnu- the protector (and Krishna and Rama incarnations)

XII. Story of Rama and Sita (Ramayana)

XIII. Karma and Reincarnation (vegetarianism)

XIV. Arjuna and his "Treasurers from the gods"

XV. Ganesh

X. Buddha

Siddhartha ("He who achieves his aim") Gautama 563

BC- 483 BC

A. Father was a wealthy ruler of a kingdom in Nepal. His mother (who dreamt that she had been impregnated by 10 white elephants through her side) prematurely gave birth to him under a tree and died a week later. At his naming ceremony 8 wise men prophesized that he would be a very great ruler or holy man. Prince Siddhartha's father had 3 palaces built for his son, one for each season. He grew up attended by servants and protected from any knowledge of the ugliness of life: (poverty, disease, etc.) At age 16 Siddhartha's father arranged his marriage to Yoshara - a cousin, (they had one son).

B. Age 29 yr. Renunciation of his life of privilege/search for truth

C. Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree (35 yrs. old)

D. Eightfold path/his teachings- parables not preaching

E. Buddhist life (today)

Anthroposophic Notes: Manu/Noah was a great initiate. He led the people out of Atlantis and over the continent into India. While crossing the Gobi

Desert (not a desert then), he stayed for a while in a sun-mystery center. There he initiated seven leaders- the 7 Holy Rishis.

Ancient Indian people communicated with the gods, communed with the elementals, the spiritual world; they experienced the material world as "maya"- illusion; they did not want to be on the earth, but rather longed to reunite with the spiritual world. At this time, their etheric had yet to separate from the spirit- they were not individual ego beings, rather still connected to the whole cosmos.

Brahma was their highest god
Vishvakarman- Light of the gods
Indra- clouds, air, storm
Varuna- water
Agni- fire

Yoga was a gift of the Rishis- it slows down the body's metabolism, which helped the people to survive the intense heat of the Indian summer/hot season.

Rama was a King Arthur figure- lived a life of virtue
In 400 AD- there were 31 days of plays based on his story- the Ramayana.