

# Ancient India Civilizations Study Guide

## The Caste System

For thousands of years on the Indian sub-continent a person's social class was determined by birth.

Historians later called this the caste system.

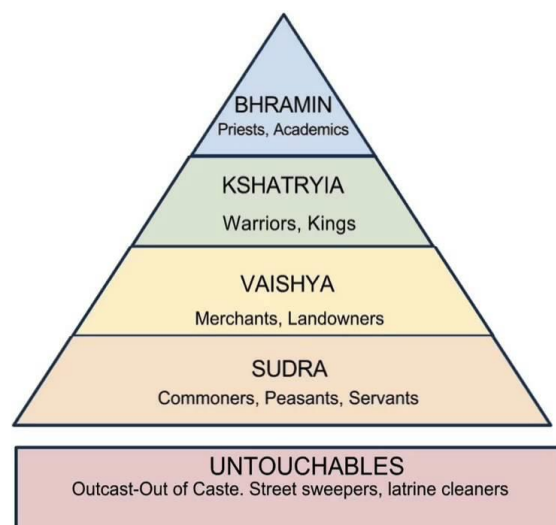
The invasion of the Aryans change the Indus River Valley because the Caste System formed.

Caste members lived, ate, married, and worked with their own group. A person born into one caste rarely changed castes or mixed with members of other castes. Social rules defined how to behave within a caste and when in the presence people from other castes. The best argument against using a caste system to organize a modern society would be because the caste system prevents a nation from using people's skills. Warriors and soldiers were high in the Caste because military strength and security were important to the Aryans when they were nomads. The Caste System created political and social order.

The Untouchables were a class of people at the very bottom of Indian society. They were so low

that they were not even an official part of the caste system.

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## Economy - Mathematics

The factor that contributed most to the spread of the mathematical system developed in India during the Gupta Empire was a result of the travels of foreign merchants. FACT: The number system developed by Gupta mathematicians spread around the world largely as a result of Middle Eastern traders. Traders, who frequently calculate the supply and value of their goods, made use of the best mathematical system available.

One factor that most contributed to the improvement of trade in India during the period of Gupta rule was the construction of a network of roads. We have seen this in other ancient civilizations! Other factors that helped trade were the rivers and oceans through and around India.

## **Geography**

Ancient cultures have been more likely to settle in northern India than southern India because Northern India contained two major rivers. One reason for this is the fertile soil, another is the ease of trading. The physical feature that assisted Ancient Indians in trading was its proximity to rivers and oceans. The two major cities that developed in the Indus River Valley were Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Both of these cities had governments that protected their food supply.

Monsoons affected the development of early Indian civilizations because the water brought by monsoon rains allowed agriculture to develop away from India's major rivers. Winter monsoon rains and cold winds were blocked from India by the Himalayas Mountains.

## **Empires**

The Mauryan Empire was the first empire to unite many smaller Indian kingdoms. It started in northern India and then, over time, covered most of what is India today. Ashoka the Great was one of the rulers of this empire. The Gupta Empire was another Indian Empire that developed after the Mauryan.

## **Culture**

Hinduism developed as a religion in the region because Aryan invaders brought their religion to India, and it combined with other local religions to form Hinduism. Hinduism became the largest religion in India. Buddhism also started in India.

## **Hinduism and Buddhism**

Both religions believe in Reincarnation – being reborn time and time again, and Karma – the result of good and bad actions that a person does. Karma affects your life now and your position in your next life.

Hinduism – teaches a belief in: Brahman, the universal soul that of which all living things are part. Brahman has three forms – Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the Destroyer.

The Vedas – Hindu religions texts

Dharma – the code of right conduct for living one's life

Buddhism – the key teachings of Buddhism are found in the 'Four Noble Truths', and 'The Eight Fold Path'. The Four Noble Truths speaks of suffering, and how it is caused by wanting things. If you stop wanting or desiring things you will achieve happiness and ascend the ladder of reincarnation.

The Eight Fold Path helps lead people into right action – behaving right and good.

Buddhists believe in practicing non-violence. Siddhartha Gautama became the 1<sup>st</sup> Buddha, or 'Enlightened One'. When a person reaches enlightenment, the goal for everyone in Buddhism, they are no longer reborn – they have reached Nirvana, oneness with everything!