

Classical Civilizations in India and China

Your business is with action alone, not by any means with the fruit of the action. . . . Having recourse to devotion, perform actions, casting off all attachment, and being equable in success or ill success.

—The Bhagavad Gita, c. 400 C.E.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is part of one of the most important writings in the Hindu tradition, *The Mahabharata*. It emphasizes carrying out one's duty as determined by one's birth and on separating oneself from any "attachment" to the effects of one's actions or any other worldly concerns. These emphases became vital themes not only in Hinduism but also in Buddhism, one of several new religions to emerge in India and China between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. In addition to these new religions, new social and governmental structures, such as India's caste system and China's civil service system, emerged that still influence life in those countries today.

Social Organization: The Caste System

The Aryan people who began to settle throughout the Indian subcontinent around 1500 B.C.E. developed a very well-defined social hierarchy that is now known as the *caste system*. Westerners typically use the word "caste" to describe India's social order because the Portuguese used the word *casta* (class) when they first noticed a distinct social hierarchy during their sixteenth-century travels to India. Aryans originally used the word *varna*, meaning "color," to distinguish between themselves (who had "wheat-colored complexions") and the darker-skinned Dravidians. Intermarriage between the two groups occurred often enough that now most physical distinctions are undetectable.

The Caste System in India

Caste Name	Function	Occupations
Brahmins	The priestly and learned class	Spiritual leaders, teachers
Kshatriyas	The warrior and ruling class	Rulers, military elite, nobility, property owners
Vaishyas	The merchant and artisan class	Traders, agriculturalists, money-lenders, smiths
Shudras	The peasant and serf class	Unskilled servants for upper three classes, serfs

The Four Castes Caste identities formed around the kinds of occupations and social roles people held in ancient India. A distinct social hierarchy developed, leading to four basic castes: *brahmins*, or people of the priestly class; *kshatriyas*, or the warrior class; *vaishyas*, or merchants and artisans; and *shudras*, or peasants and serfs.

Dalits The lowest rung in the hierarchy consisted of people outside of all the varnas. People once called *untouchables*, now known as *dalits*, performed the most unpleasant work in society, such as disposing of dead bodies and cleaning sewer systems. Their work was so dirty that touching them would supposedly pollute members of the castes.

Evolution of the Caste System Over hundreds of years, the caste system expanded to include the groups that formed around new occupations and groups of people that migrated into the subcontinent. Hundreds of *jatis*, or subcasts, developed within each original caste to accommodate a more complex society.

India long ago outlawed discrimination against dalits, or any caste. However, signs of the caste system are still present. For instance, a last name can reveal a person's social position or his or her family's ancestral occupation. In rural areas, dalits still carry out the least hygienic work. Among the educated urban elite, some people consider caste when considering marriage choices.

New Religions Emerge in India

Individual reflection and meditation became the focal points of two new religions, *Jainism* and *Buddhism*, which emerged in northern India during the late sixth century and the fifth century B.C.E.

Jainism Founded by *Mahavir Jain*, who was born in the 500s B.C.E., Jainism drew on ideas first expressed in the traditional Hindu texts known as the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* stated that all creatures on Earth were part of a larger soul, or *Brahma*. Mahavir Jain reasoned that because each living creature was part of Brahma and thus possessed a godly soul, individuals should show mercy to all animals. Thus, Jainism's followers took steps to do no harm. They adhered to strict vegetarian diets; they wore masks over their mouths to avoid swallowing insects; and only a few engaged in farming because it involved killing pests.

As a result of its demanding lifestyle, Jainism gained few followers. However, Jainism's ethical standards, including its doctrine of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, influenced later generations. For example, Mahatma Gandhi's steadfast commitment to nonviolence stemmed from his belief in *ahimsa*. Today, followers of Jainism make up a small percentage of India's religious population, but many Hindus identify Jainist ethics within their own beliefs.

Buddhism During Jain's lifetime, a young member of the warrior class, a kshatriya, sought a different path toward salvation. *Siddhartha Gautama* was unfulfilled with the life he led among the pampered young elite. In about 530 B.C.E., he became aware that suffering plagued the human race, and he set out on a quest to discover why. Gautama left his family and became an *ascetic*, someone who rejects worldly pleasures and lives a life of self-denial. According to legend, as he meditated for days underneath a bodhi tree, he came to several realizations that he called *enlightenment*. Afterwards, Gautama called himself Buddha, or "the enlightened one," and his disciples came to be known as Buddhists.

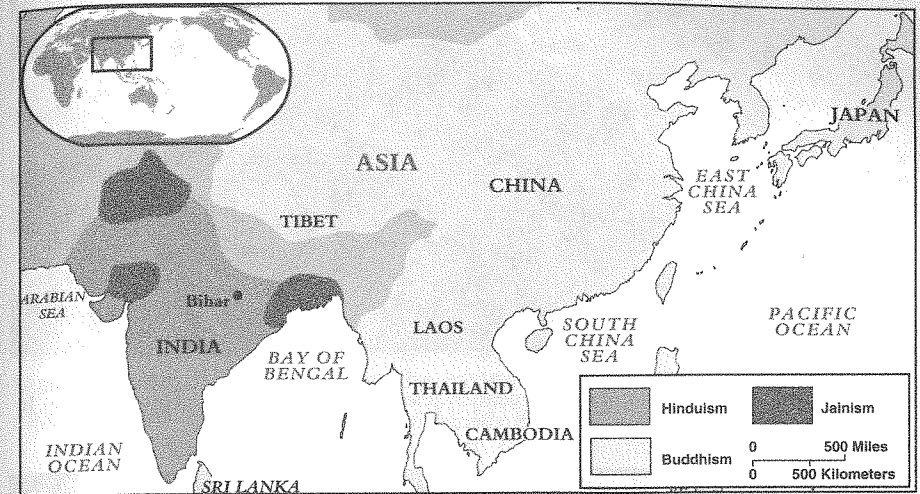
Buddhist doctrines are summarized in the *Four Noble Truths*: (1) all life involves great suffering; (2) all suffering stems from desires for worldly pleasures and material things; (3) suffering can end when one eliminates all of one's earthly desires; and (4) desire can be eliminated by following Buddhism's eight-fold path. This path requires an individual to meditate, reflect, and refrain from the pursuit of earthly pleasures. The goal is, over time, to detach oneself from worldly affairs. Detachment leads to enlightenment, which leads to a peaceful state in the afterlife known as *nirvana*. Reaching nirvana would mean ending the cycle of birth and rebirth, and the pain that goes with it.

Comparing Indian Spiritual Traditions While Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism all were built on a belief in inward reflection and a hope to end the cycle of *reincarnation*, only Hindus believed that one's caste has anything to do with one's *karma*. Buddhists and Jains rejected the rigid social hierarchy of the caste system. They believed that it was inconsistent with the ideals of showing mercy to all people and detaching oneself from worldly matters.

Buddhism spread quickly throughout India. It was more accessible to most people than either Hinduism or Jainism. Buddhism became quite popular with members of lower castes because of its rejection of the caste system. Buddhist teachings were not in Sanskrit, the ancient language of educated elites, but in local dialects that stemmed either from Hindi or Dravidian languages. By the fifth century B.C.E., as would Christians 500 years later, Buddhists established *monasteries*.

Duty in Hinduism In the same era that Jainism and Buddhism developed, the late sixth century and the fifth century B.C.E., Hinduism was also spreading. Epic poems such as the *Mahabharata* (an excerpt of which opens the chapter) and the *Ramayana* were transmitted orally, which made them widely accessible in an era when few people could read. These poems communicated Vedic lessons through epic tales of heroism, romance, and adventure.

RELIGIONS OF EAST AND SOUTH ASIA



For example, the quotation from the *Mahabharata* that opens this chapter instructs Arjuna to fulfill his caste duties without worrying about the fruits of his actions on Earth. The message sent to listeners was simple: Do not worry about meditating or practicing asceticism in a quest for eternal peace. Performing one's *dharma* should be the goal if one wants to end the birth/rebirth cycle.

Gender Roles The epic poems also taught lessons about gender roles. In the *Ramayana*, the female protagonist, Sita, follows her husband, Ram, dutifully as he is unfairly exiled to the forest for 14 years. Even during a long separation from her husband, Sita is an obedient and faithful wife. Sita's unselfishness and devotion provided a model for how wives should subordinate themselves to their husbands. Inequality in gender relations, while common in religions throughout the Classical period, remained a prominent feature of India's social history even in the Modern Era. For example, only men could become monks; women typically did not get educated.

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* remain widely read among Hindus today. They are still part of India's cultural fabric.

Mauryan Empire

Of all the continuities in Indian history, spirituality and social organization stand out the most. Strong political centralization does not. Rarely has the entire region of South Asia been unified under one government.

For example, Persian armies invaded the Indus Valley from the west and made it part of their empire about 520 B.C.E. Almost 200 years later, the Greek ruler Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and took over their empire. In 327 B.C.E., he led his army into the Indus Valley and added it to his conquests. Alexander left India two years later, after his troops mutinied.



Source: Thinkstock

Hinduism includes many religious rituals performed by priests leading a community of people (above). In contrast, Buddhism focuses more on individual reflection (below).



Source: Thinkstock

However, two dynasties did manage to wield centralized authority over most of the subcontinent at times: the Mauryans and the Guptas.

The *Mauryan Dynasty* emerged in the fourth century B.C.E. The kingdom of Magadha had grown in prominence, for there were no other comparable competitors in Northern India. Then, under a conqueror named *Chandragupta Maurya*, the kingdom began consolidating and seizing control of additional territory. At its height, during the third century B.C.E., the Mauryan Empire established a centralized government throughout most of the subcontinent. With the exception of the land south of the *Deccan Plateau* (in central India), all of India and modern-day Pakistan was under Mauryan control.

Mauryan Government The Mauryan Empire was divided into segments called *provinces*. Each province had a capital city and was ruled by a prince who governed as representative of the emperor. Each prince was assisted by a *council of ministers*, while another council advised the emperor.

The provinces were divided into *districts* governed by a minister. Each minister was in charge of the district's bureaucrats, whose jobs ranged from maintaining public health to regulating trade. These local officials were usually hired from among the people of each district.

The army kept peace in the empire, and a large spy system kept the government informed of any unrest that was brewing. The high costs of Mauryan government were paid for by heavy taxes on landowners and the value of the crops that farmers raised.

Ashoka Maurya Chandragupta's grandson is undoubtedly the most celebrated of all Mauryan rulers. In the beginning of his career, *Ashoka Maurya*, who ruled 268–232 B.C.E. and is often called *Ashoka the Great*, was a ferocious warrior. He brought large regions of east-central India under Mauryan control. His attack on the eastern Indian kingdom of *Kalinga* was especially brutal, with as many as 100,000 people killed on each side.

As Ashoka gained dominion over this and other lands, the military experiences he had affected him spiritually. The destructive battles against Kalinga prompted him to reconsider his responsibility for causing so many deaths. After that campaign, he converted to Buddhism and ended his violent ways. Ashoka became a strong advocate for Buddhism, building monasteries and sending missionaries to far-flung regions of the empire, even to neighboring kingdoms such as *Ceylon* (modern-day Sri Lanka) and *Bactria* (a kingdom west of the Indus River established by Alexander the Great's Greek descendants). Ashoka's support of Buddhism encouraged his subjects to convert, another factor for Buddhism's surge in popularity.

Ashoka's Achievements Ashoka became well known after this point as an effective governor, instead of as a conqueror. He established an efficient tax-collecting system, which provided a steady revenue stream for the government based in the capital city *Pataliputra* (today known as Patna), near the *Ganges River*. The tax revenue allowed the government to build roads that connected commercial centers, which encouraged trade and travel within the vast empire. One long road connected cities in the northeast with cities in the northwest. Ashoka also ended slavery and required that servants be treated fairly.

One of Ashoka's most famous actions was to inscribe his administration's policies and philosophies on rocks and pillars throughout the kingdom. Like Hammurabi's Code, the *Rock and Pillar Edicts* kept the public informed of the law. This united the empire under a central power.

Instead of making war on neighboring regions, Ashoka promoted peace through diplomacy by sending out ambassadors and Buddhist missionaries. Some of his ambassadors travelled as far as Greece and Egypt. One result of Ashoka's foreign policy was an increase in foreign trade. Taxes on trade within the empire provided additional income for the government.

Decline of the Mauryan Dynasty Despite Ashoka's accomplishments, the Mauryan Dynasty fell apart about 50 years after his death in 232 B.C.E. No Mauryan leader that followed showed the same talent for governance nor

the ability to control an expanding government. Over time, the army became ineffective and government officials became idle. In this power vacuum, two invading empires from the northwest briefly attempted to rule the subcontinent: first Bactria and then the *Kushan Empire* ruled from around 180 B.C.E. to 180 C.E. Both the Bactrian and the Kushan empires stretched from Central Asia into northern India.

Trade in Goods and Ideas Despite the invasions and foreign control, India became an important trading crossroads during this period. Silk and other goods from China passed overland through northern India to the Mediterranean Sea. Indian merchants obtained spices and gemstones from kingdoms in Southeast Asia. They traded these items, plus Indian textiles and other merchandise, with the Romans and other peoples along the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition to overland routes, goods were carried in ships from ports along India's west coast to ports on the Red Sea and along the Persian Gulf. From there, traders went overland to Egypt or to the Mediterranean Sea. These *Indian Ocean sea lanes* also connected Indian ports with East Africa and Indonesia. Mauryans even had regular trading relations with the Romans.

Conquest and trade brought new cultures and ideas into India. For example, Indian art styles were influenced by Greek and Roman art. The statues called *Gandhara Buddhas* uniquely combined Greek and Roman artistic traditions with native Indian art.

Gupta Dynasty

The second (and last) major Indian dynasty of the Classical Era was the *Gupta Dynasty*. Though the size of the empire was smaller than the Mauryans' had been, the Gupta Era, which began in the late third century C.E. and ended in 550 C.E., was a Golden Age for India. During the peak of the dynasty's power, trade increased with foreign merchants. Perhaps because their predecessors—the Kushans—had come from foreign lands to the west, the Gupta Dynasty had extensive contact with European merchants as far west as Rome. India thus became an important destination on the *Silk Roads*. (See the map on page 135.)

Governing the Empire Like the Mauryan rulers, the Guptas divided their empire into provinces. In some cases, they kept former kings as provincial rulers. Other provinces were ruled by Gupta princes. All of these officials were responsible to the emperor in the Gupta capital city, Pataliputra. The city became the intellectual and cultural center of the empire.

Scientific and Mathematics Achievements Like the Mauryan ruler Ashoka, the Guptas helped improve health care in their empire. They built free hospitals and encouraged advances in medicine. Indian physicians pioneered surgical procedures to set broken bones and transplant skin grafts. They performed the first *inoculations*—infecting a person with a mild form of a disease so that immunity would develop. Doctors in Southwest Asia and Europe eventually adopted these and other Indian medical practices.

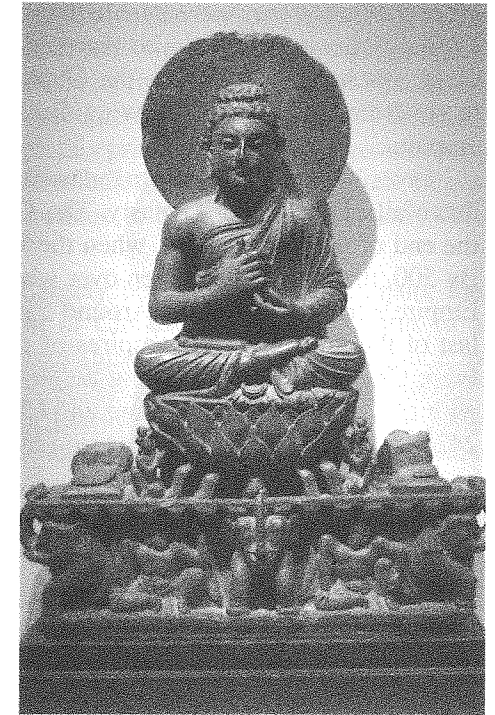
Other Indian advances shaped the modern world. For example, Indian mathematicians developed the numerical symbols 0 through 9 that we use today. They are called *Arabic numerals* rather than Indian because they were introduced into Europe by Arab peoples, who had learned about them through trade with India.

Gupta Religion As in other Classical cultures, religion was a dominant force. In India, it was particularly noticeable in education, art, and literature. Hindu children from upper castes studied the *Vedas* and other great works of literature in school. Entire universities were devoted to the study of specific subjects, including government, astronomy, math, art, painting, and architecture. One of the most ancient universities in the world was in *Nalanda*, located in northeastern India. In *Sarnath*, in north central India, Buddhist scholars established a university devoted entirely to the study of Buddhist teachings. With strong support from the Gupta government, painting, sculpture, and literature flourished.

While religion was important, unified practice of it was not. Both the Mauryan Empire and the Gupta Empire allowed religious freedom. With the Guptas' support, Hinduism spread to become India's major religion, which it remains today.

Spread of Buddhism Contacts increased with China, not only because of the Silk Roads trade, but but also because many Chinese were curious to learn about Buddhism. Monasticism had spread throughout South Asia, encouraging the intense study of the religion. Buddhist shrines became popular pilgrimage locations for the religion's followers. Chinese missionaries visited Buddhist sites as early as the fifth century C.E., thus paving the way for Buddhism to spread in China. Buddhism ended up gaining many more followers in East Asia and Southeast Asia than in South Asia.

Decline of the Gupta Dynasty Regionalism forms one of South Asia's historical continuities. As a result of the subcontinent's ethnic diversity and vast number of languages, any administrative power had to make deliberate efforts to unify the country. Though the Guptas presided over an economically



Source: Paul Trafford / Wikimedia Commons

Statues of Buddha are common, although Buddhists do not worship him as Christians worship Jesus.

vibrant dynasty, they were unable to organize a highly centralized bureaucracy. Unlike Ashoka Maurya, who traveled constantly within the empire to keep close watch over its affairs, the Gupta emperors took a hands-off approach to governing. This led to growing disunity among the far-flung regions of the empire.

Invasions by nomads from the northwest, the *White Huns*, brought the final downfall of the Gupta Dynasty. The Gupta Dynasty had begun to shrink by the end of the fifth century, when the White Huns conquered Northern India. By 500, these Huns had taken over western India, which destroyed the Gupta Empire's trade with Rome. Around 550 C.E., the Gupta Dynasty became the last of the great Eurasian empires of the first century C.E. to collapse. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the impact of the nomadic invasions of India with similar invasions of Rome and China. See page 84 for Rome and pages 242–245 for the Mongolian invasion of China.)

Three Great Philosophical Traditions

While India was only rarely united by a centralized government, China often was. However, during the declining centuries of the Zhou, China suffered a period of instability. During this period, most Chinese followed a simple animistic belief in natural objects and forces and veneration of the souls of the dead. This animism was coupled with shamanism, in which a shaman, or spirit guide, mediated the connection between the everyday world and the spirit world. Over time, however, three significant new schools of thought evolved: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.

Confucius The philosopher K'ung Fu-tzu, known today as *Confucius*, was born around 551 B.C.E., while the Zhou dynasty was in decline. Historians have sorted through the many stories about his early life and have reached the following conclusions. Confucius was probably born into poverty. He might have had a number of different jobs as part of the Chinese bureaucracy, all the while developing his own thoughts about the individual's relationship to the state. A falling-out with local powers in his home state led Confucius to travel across China, speaking to people and gaining disciples as he went.

The ideas of Confucius became the foundation of the belief system of *Confucianism*. After Confucius died, his disciples compiled his teachings, and probably added some of their own thoughts, in a complex work called the *Analects (Selected Sayings)*. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the *Analects* with the Christian Bible. See page 82.)

The Teachings of Confucius During this very turbulent time in China's history, the ideas of Confucius appealed to many people because he argued for respecting social hierarchies and traditions. "Good government consists in the ruler being a ruler, the minister being a minister, the father being a father, and the son being a son." (*Lunyu* 12.11) He focused on behavior in everyday life, not on beliefs about any deity. For example, he taught the importance of family, respect for one's elders, and reverence for one's ancestors. He believed that conducting the proper rituals would lead to social harmony.

Confucius also believed in what is called the Golden Rule—"do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—a tenet important in many other moral and philosophical traditions, including Christianity and Judaism. Confucius preached humility and the importance of virtue, which he defined as treating others properly. He even applied this principle to China's government and kings. The teachings of Confucius affected Chinese beliefs and values more than any other philosophy and continue to be important in twenty-first century China.

Confucianism and the Family Largely because of Confucianism, the family became the most important unit in Chinese society. The status of a man's family, not his wealth or accomplishments, determined his place in society. A family typically included the mother and father, their sons and sons' wives, and any unmarried daughters. All family members lived in the same house and shared household duties.

The father was the head of the household. The older he was, the more respect and authority he had. Fathers arranged the marriages of their children and grandchildren. Upper-class fathers also decided on their sons' education and careers. This all fell under the concept of *filial piety*, which can be defined as the duty of family members to subordinate their needs and desires to those of the male head of the family, or its ruler.

Women had few rights and were not usually educated. They were expected to remain subservient to men and boys, regardless of age. Although mothers and mothers-in-law were greatly respected, married daughters tended to be treated like servants in the husband's households.

Daoism *Daoism* (also spelled Taoism) dates back to the late 500s B.C.E., at the time of the Zhou Dynasty. The origins of Daoism are shrouded in mystery, but its founder is usually said to be *Laozi*, also called the Old Master. As happened with Confucius, Laozi had many disciples who collected his teachings. The followers gathered the Old Master's ideas together in the *Dao De Jing (The Classic Way and the Virtue)*.

In Daoism, followers seek happiness and wisdom by way of the path, or *dao*. To follow the *dao* is to renounce worldly ambitions and society and instead to seek harmony with nature. A key symbol of Daoist philosophy is the Yin and Yang, in which two sides come together in harmony: the Yin, or humanity's submissive and "feminine" side, and the Yang, or humanity's aggressive and "masculine" side. The goal, as understood in Daoism, is to keep the two sides in balance. Daoism appealed to China's peasants because of their connection to natural forces and the land. These ideas had wide influence in China. Medical doctors focused on restoring the natural balance among the forces in a person's body. Poets wrote about nature and human involvement with it. Scholars tried to understand the natural properties of metals and how one might be transformed into another. Architects attempted to create structures that integrated well with their natural surroundings.

Comparing Daoism and Greek Mythology			
Topic	Taoism Only	Both Taoism and Greek Mythology	Greek Mythology Only
Nature of Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent abstract ideas • Are benevolent • Are detached from human affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pantheon of separate deities that oversee every aspect of society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have human characteristics • Can be petty, jealous, and vengeful • Can intervene in human affairs
Hierarchy among Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Great High God has abstract deities above him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One head deity who rules over other gods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The head deity, Zeus, has no deities above him
Relationship Between People and Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can become deities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deities can procreate with humans, producing demigods
Common Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner peace • Balance between opposites (yin/yang) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War and love • Heroic action
Afterlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A state of non-being 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tangible place, Hades

Legalism Creating a sharp contrast to Confucianism and Daoism was the third philosophical tradition of China's Classical period, Legalism. As the name suggests, the philosophy of Legalism was less concerned with questions of the meaning of life, and more with how people behaved. Since human nature was understood to be essentially bad, Legalists believed that society needed a system of strict laws and punishments to control people. Because most citizens, according to Legalism, should live their lives as either farmers or soldiers, education was not considered to be especially necessary. Legalists argued that society should discourage people from becoming teachers, merchants, poets, or artists. Another tenet of legalism was collective responsibility of a family or community for every member. One should observe one's relatives and neighbors and turn them into authorities if they break the law.

Legalism was led by two philosophers, *Han Fei Zu* and *Li Si*. Their ideas struck a chord with many people during the often-violent Qin Dynasty (see below). However, after that dynasty ended and the following dynasty brought greater stability, Legalism faded. It failed to have the long-term impact of either Confucianism or Daoism.

The Qin Dynasty in China

The instability of the Zhou ended when, in 221 B.C.E., an ambitious leader named Qin Shihuangdi raised his own army and defeated what remained of the Zhou leaders. One by one, he also conquered the nearby regional authorities,

taking control of all of China and establishing his own dynasty. The Qin (or Ch'in) dynasty was brief, lasting only until 207 B.C.E., but memorable—in part due to the cruelty of its leader.

Not content to just be king, the title claimed by Qin, *Shihuangdi*, means "first emperor." He created a very centralized state with all of the government under his personal control. In particular, he abolished local laws and appointed magistrates to replace local leaders. Books that were not in keeping with Qin's own beliefs were burned, and hundreds of scholars were buried alive. Anyone who resisted his authority could be executed or sent into exile. Many dissenters were sent north, to work on building a network of walls to keep out invaders—workers who died while building these walls were buried within the walls themselves. Hundreds of thousands of people were conscripted to construct the northern walls and to toil on other infrastructure projects. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph connecting the Qin walls with the Great Wall of China. See pages 181 and 373.)

Achievements of Qin Dynasty Despite his despotism, Qin did much to change China in ways that won him praise.

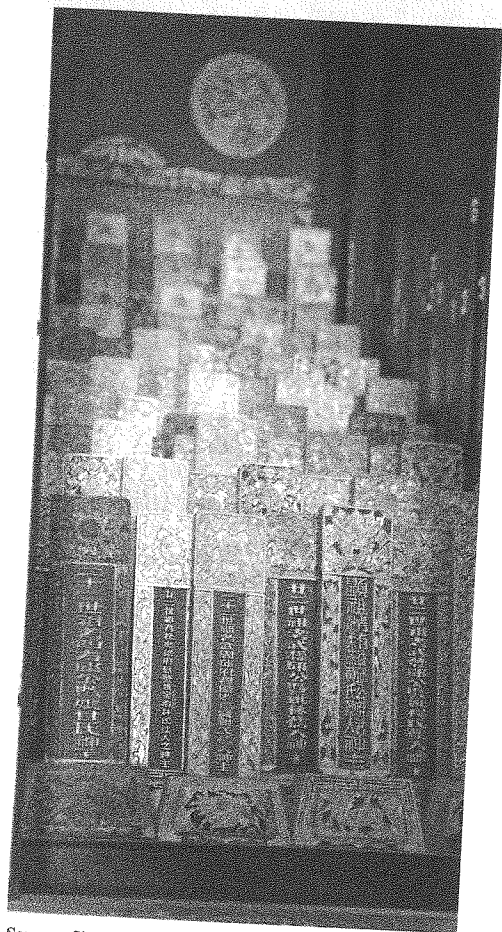
- He expanded the size of the Chinese empire, mostly to the south and the west.
- He gave peasants the right to own land.
- He standardized the Chinese script, which had developed many local variations during the Shang dynasty, thereby making communication and trade easier.
- He standardized coinage as well as weights and measures. These steps greatly aided commerce.
- He ordered the building of canals and roads, which improved trade.

Qin's most remarkable legacy was not discovered until 1974 when his tomb was unearthed. Inside Qin's tomb, which had gone untouched for 2000 years, were more than 7,000 life-sized soldiers made out of terra-cotta—an army for the afterlife. Each soldier was unique, demonstrating a level of realism that had not been seen in Chinese art to this point. (Test Prep: List the differences and similarities between Qin's royal burial with the burial of the pharaohs of Egypt. See page 27.)

In 210 B.C.E., Qin died, and his son took the throne. However, four years later, in 206 B.C.E., a Qin general led a revolt. The rebels killed the emperor and the entire royal family, and the rebel general seized power. He and his family began the *Han Dynasty*, which lasted for more than 400 years.

The Han Dynasty

Han Wudi (who ruled 141–87 B.C.E.) was the Han Dynasty's most significant emperor. He oversaw a vast expansion of the empire, as China invaded and took over Korea and northern Vietnam. Wudi also sent Chinese forces into Central Asia, almost all the way west to Bactria, to defeat the nomadic *Xiongnu*



Source: Shutterstock

While Confucians honor early generations by keeping ancestor tablets in their homes (left), Daoists honor nature through painting (right).



Source: LACMA

peoples, who had been raiding Chinese villages for years. To maintain control of the new western lands, Wudi relocated landless Chinese farmers into Central Asia to establish agricultural colonies.

Central Government Meanwhile, at home, Wudi expanded the efficient, centralized government started by the Qin. One of his most important accomplishments was the introduction of a *civil service examination*. Under this system, people were hired based on their test-taking abilities instead of their personal or family connections. Because at first not many young men were qualified for government positions, Wudi created a national university to prepare them for employment. The combination of the exams and the university began China's tradition of having a well-trained and highly respected bureaucracy to administer government policies. As a result, China prospered for many years.

Wudi's rule—and the period immediately following—is sometimes referred to as the *Pax Sinica*, Chinese Peace. During this period, the country enjoyed peace, the economy grew, and the population increased. As the common people prospered, so did the rich, who created a thriving market for luxury goods.

Silk Roads Trade Traders moved Chinese products west along a series of routes that became known as the *Silk Roads*. This trade brought China into contact with the Roman Empire. The Silk Roads would also eventually bring Buddhism into China from Central Asia.

Silk production increased greatly during Emperor Wudi's rule. Because Chinese silk was of such high quality, silk and silk garments could be sold as far away as the Roman Empire, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India.

Paper, Calendar, and Farming Chinese science and technology prospered under Han rule. The Chinese invented paper around 100 C.E. and calculated the current calendar year of 365.25 days. Improvements to the iron plow and developing a yoke that did not put pressure on an animal's windpipe made farming more productive.

Capital Cities The city of *Chang'an* was the capital of the Han Empire as well as its cultural center. Surrounded by a wall, the city had parks, many homes, and some palaces. *Chang'an* served as the eastern end of the Silk Roads. Many of its residents were bureaucrats and people who served bureaucrats. Later in the Han dynasty, because of civil unrest in *Chang'an*, the capital city was moved to Luoyang in eastern China.

Disease, Inequality, and Unrest The Pax Sinica did not last. One problem for the late Han dynasty was the spread of diseases, which came to China along the Silk Roads with the movement of traders and other migrants. Smallpox, measles, and bubonic plague were the most destructive of these epidemic diseases, which reduced the population of China by as much as one-fourth. (Test Prep: Create a Venn Diagram based on the impact of epidemic diseases in the Han and Roman Empires. See pages 83–84.)

Another problem was economic. Many small farmers had to give up their lands to large landowners to satisfy their debts. Inequality increased as a small number of landholders came to own more and more of the land. One non-Han emperor, Wang Mang (who ruled 9–23 C.E.), attempted to redistribute land from large landowners to landless peasants. However, this land reform was not well received, creating more unrest and leading to his replacement by a member of the Han family. In 126 C.E., peasants began what became a series of revolts, which further weakened Han rule.

Subsequent Han emperors also failed to address the land distribution problem and the associated famines. This inspired more peasant uprisings, most notably the *Yellow Turban Rebellion*—so named because of the scarves worn by the peasants involved. The death toll probably reached several million, making it one of the bloodiest conflicts in the world before the 1900s. The dynasty came to an end when the emperor was overthrown in 220 C.E. and China was divided into three kingdoms.

India and China Trade

While the Himalayas separated the centers of civilization in South and East Asia, the eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea connected them. These routes were part of a vast trading network linking most of Afro-Eurasia. Sailors in Indian Ocean made several technological advances that facilitated trade. The astrolabe and improvements to the compass allowed sailors to navigate more precisely. The sternpost rudder enabled them to control the direction of a ship more accurately. Determining monsoon patterns helped them to plan their trips more safely and use winds more effectively. This network would make possible the spread of religion, technology, and goods to shape the next period in human history.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DID SO MANY BELIEF SYSTEMS DEVELOP IN ONE PERIOD?

The years from 800 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E. were a fertile time for new religions and ways of thought. Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Greek philosophy, and Jewish monotheism all emerge from this period. Historians have debated how to explain the rise of so many systems of belief and thought in a 600-year period. In a 1949 book, German philosopher Karl Jaspers called these years the “axial age” because they formed the foundation for later thought in several major civilizations. Jaspers noted most of these systems developed on their own—they were not all offshoots of one development in one place. They all emerged in small states, often in the period when one great empire was declining and a new elite was arising. In 2006, Karen Armstrong, a British author who has written several widely read books on religion, published *The Great Transformation*. She expanded on the idea of an axial age, arguing that the violence and suffering of the times spurred people to be more reflective, which led to new systems of thinking.

Another British scholar, Diarmaid McCulloch, called the idea of an axial age “an optical illusion.” He suggested that people became no more reflective at a certain time in history, but that humans’ ability to write had developed to the point that they could write down their thoughts.

Others have suggested that any clustering of new belief systems in this period is insignificant. Several of the world’s most influential religions developed outside of this period. Two major traditions, Hinduism and Judaism, came earlier. Three others, Sikhism and the two largest faiths in the world, Christianity and Islam, came later. In addition, several new faiths have arisen in the last two centuries, including Baha’ism in the Middle East and Falon Gong in China.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

STATE-BUILDING

provinces
council of ministers
districts
Ashoka Maurya
Kalinga
Ceylon
Bactria
Pataliputra
Ganges River
Rock and Pillar Edicts
Kushan Empire
Gupta Dynasty
Mauryan Dynasty
Chandragupta Maurya
White Huns
Han Dynasty
Pax Sinica
Shihuangdi
Xiongnu
civil service
examination
Yellow Turban
Rebellion

CULTURE

Vedas *Upanishads*
Brahma
dharma
karma
Mahavir Jain
Jainism
Buddhism
ahimsa
Siddhartha Gautama
ascetic
enlightenment
Four Noble Truths
Bhagavad Gita
Mahabharata
nirvana
reincarnation
monasteries
Ramayana
Gandhara Buddhas
inoculations
Arabic numerals
Nalanda
Sarnath

Confucius
Confucianism
Daoism
Dao De Jing
dao

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

caste system
varna
brahmins
kshatriyas
vaishyas
shudras
untouchables
dalits
jatis

GEOGRAPHY

Deccan Plateau

ECONOMICS

Indian Ocean sea lanes
Silk Roads

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

- Emperor Ashoka’s sending of ambassadors and Buddhist missionaries to other countries reflected his
 - steadfast opposition to Alexander the Great
 - determination to rule nonviolently through dharma
 - strong support for Hindu traditions
 - lack of tolerance for religious diversity
- The Pax Sinica and Pax Romana were similar in that both
 - ended suddenly when pastoral nomads began attacking communities
 - were periods of peace when trade prospered
 - reflected the influence of a religion that emphasized peace
 - lasted only the lifetime of a single ruler

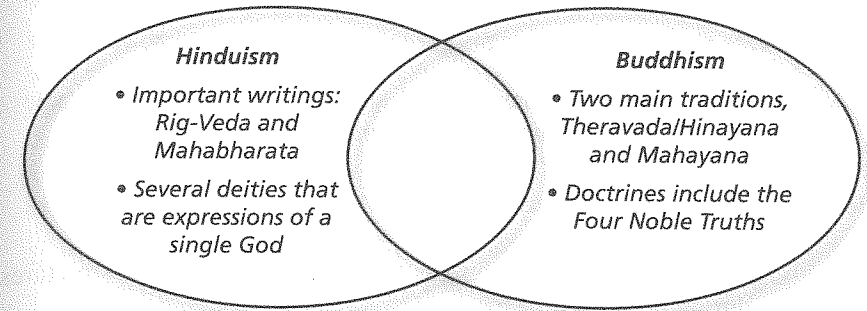
Questions 3–4 refers to the excerpt below.

To know the masculine and be true to the feminine
is to be the waterway of the world.
To be the waterway of the world is to flow with the Great Integrity,
always swirling back to the innocence of childhood.
To know yang and to be true to yin is
to echo the universe.
To echo the universe is to merge with the Great Integrity,
ever returning to the infinite.

—Verse 28, *Dao De Jing*, trans. Ralph Alan Dale

3. The excerpt above expresses Daoism's vision of
 - (A) a better world by dominating and using nature
 - (B) peace through education in natural science
 - (C) harmony as people let the natural world guide their actions
 - (D) how feminine values should overrule masculine violence
4. Followers of which system of thought would most object to the above statement?
 - (A) Legalism
 - (B) Hinduism
 - (C) Confucianism
 - (D) Jainism
5. Which of these rulers followed policies toward religious unity in his empire similar to those practiced by Ashoka?
 - (A) Darius
 - (B) Qin Shihuangdi
 - (C) Akhenaton and other Egyptian pharaohs
 - (D) Roman empires before Constantine
6. One important contribution of ancient India to other societies is
 - (A) the belief in reincarnation
 - (B) the effective, unified governance
 - (C) the war chariot
 - (D) an easy-to-use number system
7. With which statements would Confucius agree with most strongly?
 - (A) People should be free to find and pursue their true calling in life.
 - (B) Men and women should share power equally.
 - (C) Treating others properly is the key to a good society.
 - (D) Scholars are less valuable to society than are merchants.

Question 8 refers to the following Venn diagram.



8. Which statement would fit in the section where the two circles overlap in the above Venn diagram?
 - (A) Widely followed in Indian today
 - (B) Teach that individuals go through repeated cycles of birth and death
 - (C) Focus on obedience to a single deity
 - (D) Were founded upon the teachings of one individual
9. Which statement best summarizes the relationship of Jainism to Hinduism and Buddhism?
 - (A) Jainism is a variation of Hinduism.
 - (B) Jainism shares all of the traits that Hinduism and Buddhism share.
 - (C) Jainism shares aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism, but is separate from them.
 - (D) Jainism is unlike Hinduism and Buddhism in all of its basic beliefs and practices.
10. Which of the following is most accurate about the spread of Buddhism?
 - (A) It grew after it began to emphasize the worship of local deities.
 - (B) It remained closely linked to Hinduism.
 - (C) It became more popular outside the country of its origin than inside.
 - (D) It did not change as it spread from one culture to another.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE-OVER-TIME ESSAY QUESTIONS

Directions: You are to answer the following question. You should spend 5 minutes organizing or outlining your essay. Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with appropriate historical evidence.
- Addresses all parts of the question.

- Uses world historical context to show continuities and changes over time.
- Analyzes the process of continuity and change over time.

1. Analyze continuities and change in religion in India between the Vedic age and the age of the Mauryans and Guptas.

Questions for Additional Practice

2. Analyze the changes and continuities that occurred in political structures in India during the Classical Era.
3. Analyze the continuities and change of the Chinese interaction with other cultures beginning with the Zhou era and ending with the Han era.

COMPARATIVE ESSAY QUESTIONS

Directions: You are to answer the following question. You should spend 5 minutes organizing or outlining your essay. Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with appropriate historical evidence.
- Addresses all parts of the question.
- Makes direct, relevant comparisons.
- Analyzes relevant reasons for similarities and differences.

1. Analyze similarities and differences in the economic systems of the Gupta and Mauryan Empires.

Questions for Additional Practice

2. Analyze similarities and differences in the decline of TWO of the following empires:
 - Roman
 - Han
 - Mauryan and Gupta
3. Analyze similarities and differences in Confucianism and TWO of the following religions or systems of thought:
 - Greek philosophy from Socrates to Aristotle
 - Greek and Roman religion prior to Christianity
 - Christianity

THINK AS A HISTORIAN: RECOGNIZE CONTEXTUALIZATION

To contextualize is to look at an idea, event, person, or situation together with everything that relates to it. After you place events in context, you begin to see themes and patterns emerge in history and ultimately you understand how laws, institutions, customs, and other factors give rise to a particular period in time. *Which THREE of the following statements or questions explore context?*

1. In the Bhagavad Gita, the warrior Aryuna hesitates to go into battle, in part because he does not want to fight against members of his own family on the opposing side.
2. The caste system in India began around 1500 B.C.E. and consisted of four castes: brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras.
3. In the fourth century B.C.E., the Mauryan Dynasty grew to prominence because it had no other comparable competitors in Northern India.
4. By 180 B.C.E., India was controlled by foreigners. Nonetheless, the region became an important trading crossroads between China and the Mediterranean.

WRITE AS A HISTORIAN: INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

Starting an essay with a sentence or two of general or background information on the topic establishes the context for the rest of what you write. For example, to answer a question about the significance of the office of satrap, you could start by noting that as empires grew larger, they needed new methods of controlling local regions. *For each question below, select the sentence that best provides context for the topic.*

1. Discuss the weaknesses of the Greek government that led to its decline.
 - a. Greece's fragmented landscape made uniting under a single government difficult.
 - b. Alexander the Great spread Greek culture far beyond the traditional borders of Greece.
2. Describe the significance of theater in Greek culture.
 - a. Greek plays heavily influenced William Shakespeare.
 - b. Many of the leisure activities stemmed from facets of the Greek religion and were used to mimic or please the gods.