

# Ancient River Valley Civilizations

## India

### Geography of India

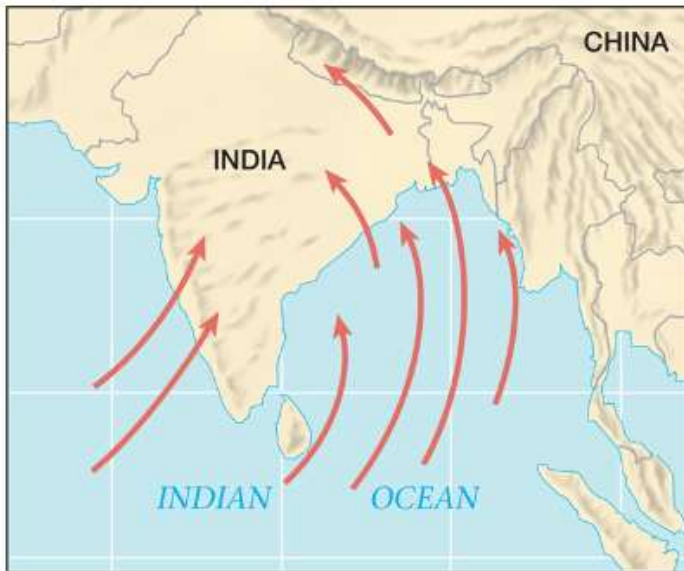
The first civilization in Asia developed along the **Indus River**, in a place called **India**. These humans were at first nomadic, also known as hunter-gatherers. Over time, they developed better ways of doing things, and began to develop into one of the world's earliest civilizations. The Indians created a system of writing, permanent settlements and structures, forms of government, a society dependent on agriculture, and a division of labor. The Indians also developed customs such as formal religions and traditions in family structure, food, and clothing.



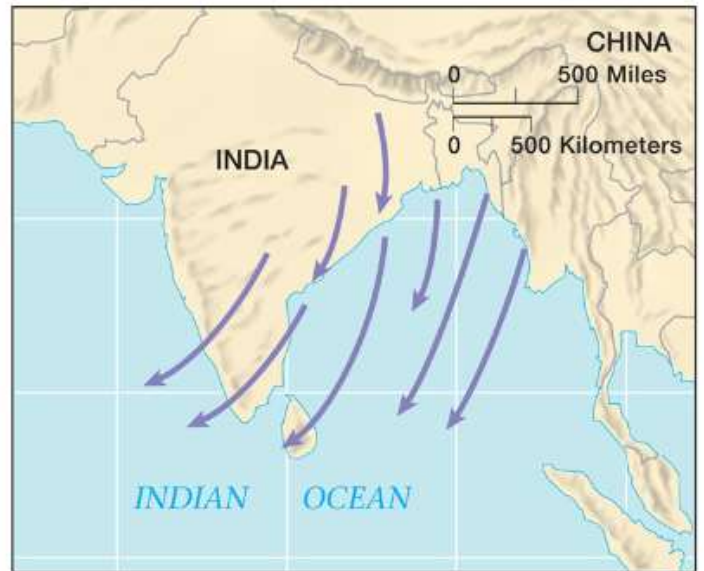
"Historical Chronology » Indus River Valley Writinghistorical Chronology Fliblcs." Travels Worlds. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014.

India is located on **subcontinent**. A subcontinent is a large landmass smaller than a continent and separated by physical features such as a mountain range. In India, the **Himalayan Mountain Range** separates it from Asia and provides a natural barrier for protection. The Himalayas are the highest mountain range in the world.

India experiences distinct seasonal wind patterns called **monsoons**. Monsoons are seasonal wind patterns that cause wet and dry seasons. In summer, the monsoon winds blow into India from the Indian Ocean causing heavy rains and floods. In the winter, the wind blows down from the Himalayan Mountains, creating warm dry winters. These floods provided the Indus River Valley people with fertile soil for farming.



Summer



Winter

## The Harappan Civilization

The first groups of people to live in the Indus River Valley were called the **Harappans**. They lived in two cities called **Harappa** and **Mohenjo-Daro**. Little is known about these people, however, historians have discovered their great achievements.



For example, both cities were extremely **well-planned** and had large populations. Historians estimate as many as 100,000 people lived there! A well-planned city included streets at right-angles and even **sewers**, just like our cities today. Sewers were important to remove waste from the city, especially with a large population. There were **wells** throughout the city so everyone could have fresh water for cooking, bathing, and drinking. Both cities had a **citadel**, a fortress on a hill for protection.

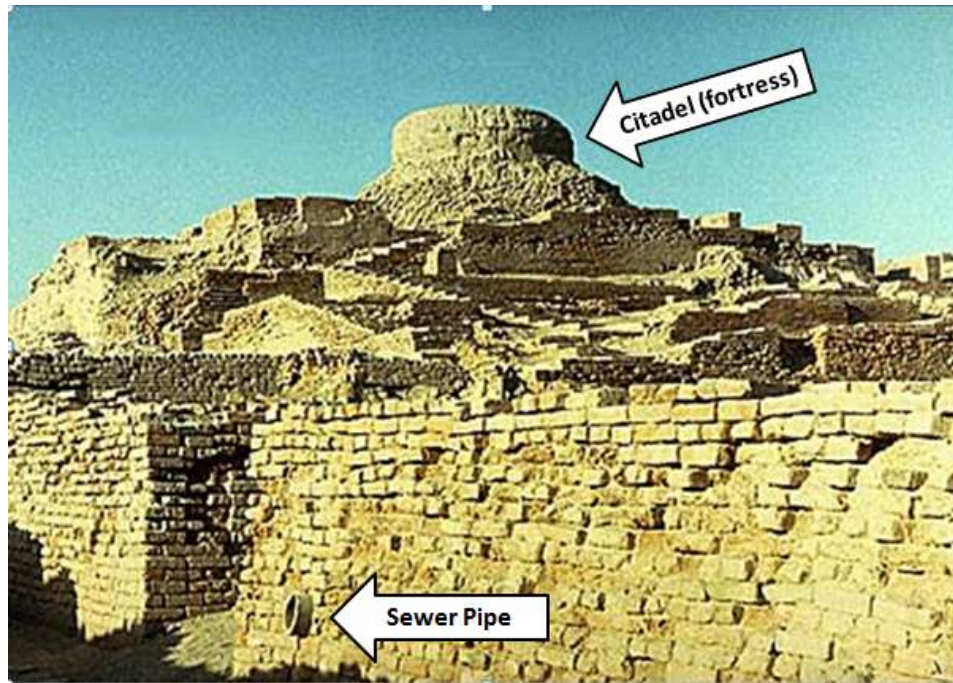


Harappan Sewer



Harappan Well





<http://www.harappa.com/har/gif/mohenjodaro.jpg>

**Question: Compare Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro to a modern-day city or town you have visited. How are they similar? How are they different?**

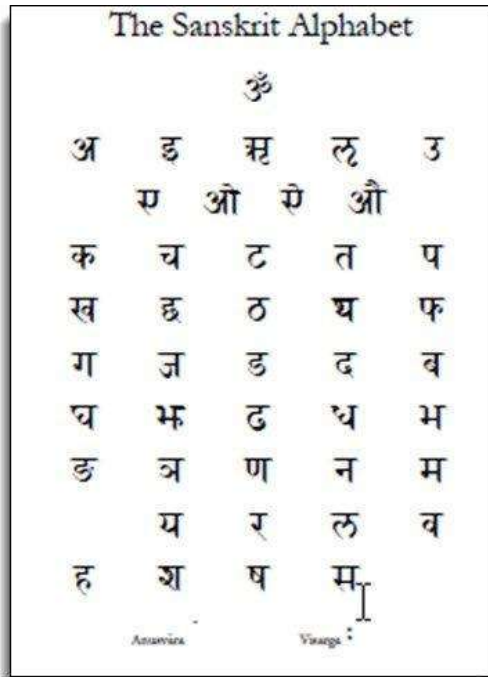
The Harappans had other achievements besides well-planned cities. Harappans created art, jewelry, clothes made of cotton, and a system of weights and measures.



"Fired Steatite Beads in Jewelry." *Fired Steatite Beads in Jewelry*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 July 2014 "Measure & Weights, Mature Harappan Sites, 2700 - 2000 BC." *Flickr*. Yahoo!, n.d. Web. 21 July 2014.

## The Aryan Civilization

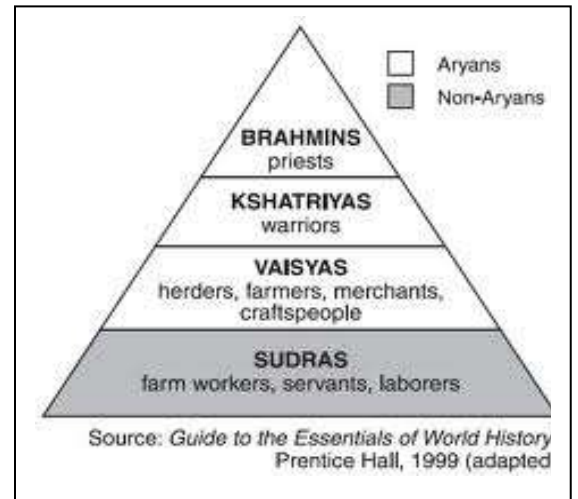
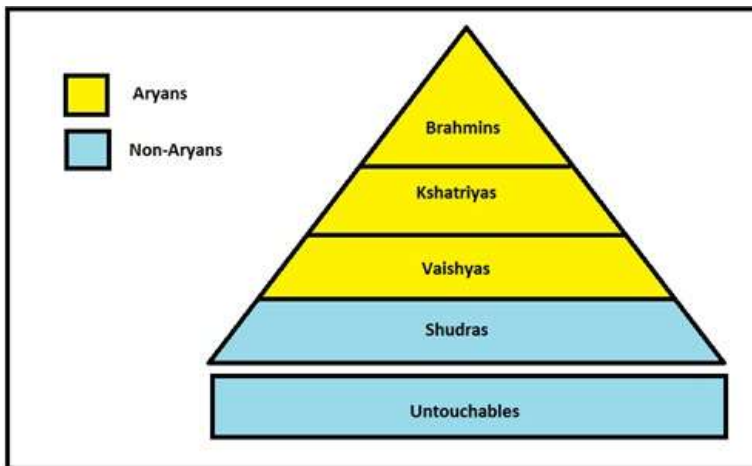
The Harappan civilization mysteriously disappeared. The second group of people to live in the Indus River Valley were the **Aryans**. These nomadic people migrated from central Asia and were very different from the Harappans. The Aryans looked more like Europeans, and treated the people of the subcontinent differently. The Aryans were warriors and not interested in building cities. They spoke a language called **Sanskrit**. It is one of the world's oldest languages, and is spoken in a few parts of India today.



"Courses – Sanskrit Overview." *School of Practical Philosophy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 July 2014.

## The Caste System

The Aryans divided society into the **caste system**. A person's place in the caste system was based on birth, occupation (job), or wealth. Aryans were at the top of the caste system, while non-Aryans were at the bottom. The Aryans created a **theocracy**, or a government led by priest-king. Look at the social hierarchies below. Notice how the Brahmins (priests) are at the top.



Under the caste system, people were expected to follow very strict rules. For example, you could only eat with people in your caste. You could only marry someone in your own caste. You could only perform a job assigned to your caste. You could only live in neighborhoods of your caste. There was no way to move from one caste to another, but through religion (to be explained later). If you did not follow these rules, you would be kicked out of your city and your caste. You would become an **untouchable** (outcast). An untouchable performed



the jobs no one wanted to do, like clean the sewers, tan animal hides, or carry away the dead. Notice above how the untouchables are not really a part of the caste system (and are not Aryans).



The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, 2015. Web. 16 June 2015.

**Question: Why do you think non-Aryans were at the bottom of the caste system?**

## Religion in India

Throughout history, religion has always played a role in the lives of humans. The same is true of ancient Indian culture. **Hinduism** is one of the two major world religions that began on the Indian subcontinent. Another important religious contribution is the philosophy of **Buddhism**.

### Hinduism

Hinduism is the world's oldest and largest polytheistic (many gods and goddesses) religion. No one knows who actually started the religion, but it developed out of Aryan beliefs.

The many gods and goddesses of Hinduism are part of one universal deity (or god) named the Brahman.



Hinduism believes in **reincarnation**, a cycle of life, death, and rebirth. This can be repeated many times by the soul until the soul (called the **atman**) reaches the state of **Nirvana** (eternal peace) and unites with Brahman. The merging of the atman with the Brahman is called **Moksha** (or salvation). It is the goal of every Hindu to achieve.



"Hinduism - World Religions for Kids." Hinduism - World Religions for Kids. 18 Oct. 2013. Web. 16 June 2015.

Remember when we mentioned religion with the caste system? People believed if they did good things during their life, they could be reincarnated in the next life into a higher caste. Doing good things is called good **karma**. However, if a person did bad things in his/her life, he/she could be born into a lower caste in his/her next life. Doing bad things is called bad karma. **Karma** is the effects of one's actions on a person's soul.

### HINDUISM CYCLE OF LIFE

BY CCC



"Hinduism Cycle of Life." - Bitstrips. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 July 2014.

Dharma is the idea of fulfilling a person's duty. When a person completed the tasks expected of them in his/her caste, married someone of his/her caste, and did not complain



about it, they fulfilled their dharma. This gave them good karma.

**Question: How did Abu fulfill his dharma in the cartoon above?**



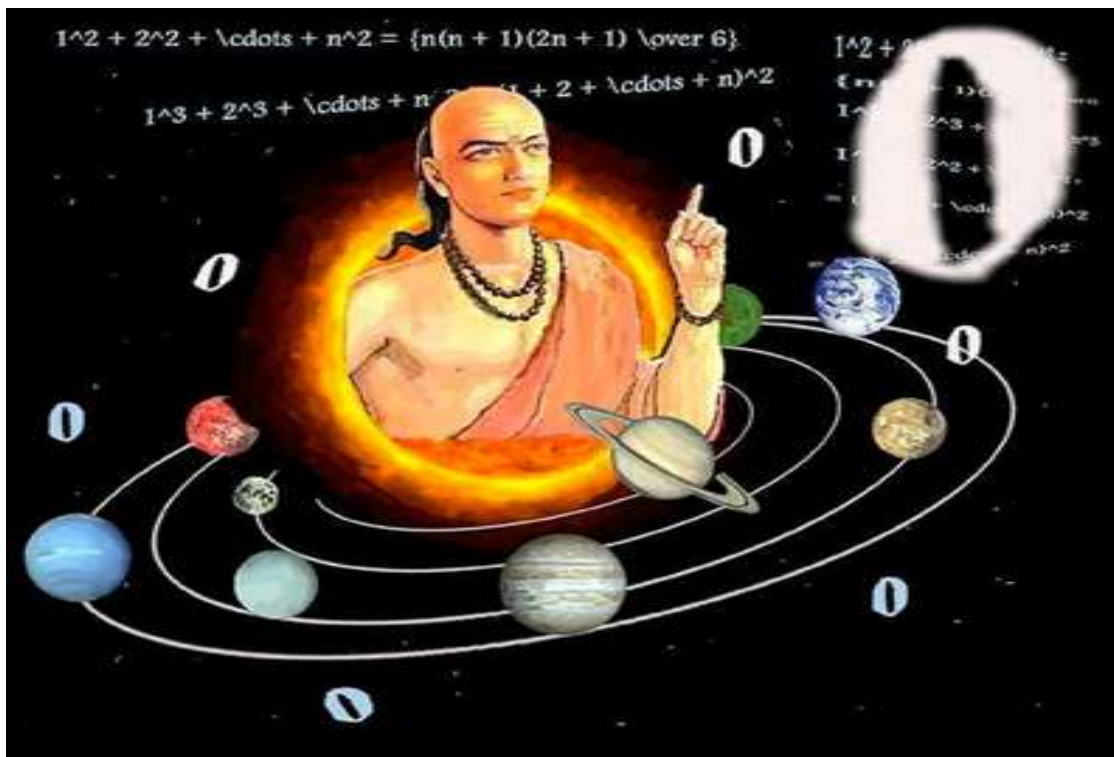
There are several holy books in Hinduism. The most important book is the **Vedas**, which was passed down orally through Sanskrit. Eventually, the Vedas were written down. Other holy books include the **Upanishads** and the **Bhagavad-Gita** (part of the **Mahabharata**).

Hinduism spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, and eventually to Southeast Asia, through trade, education, and the teaching of priests.

[http://www.indianetzone.com/photos\\_gallery/39/RigVeda\\_24807.jpg](http://www.indianetzone.com/photos_gallery/39/RigVeda_24807.jpg)

## The Golden Age of India and Indian Achievements

Under the **Gupta Dynasty**, India's literature, sculpture, and other arts reached high levels of accomplishment. A golden age means a period of great achievement and a peak of civilization. The Guptas created the **Hindu-Arabic numerals** and the **concept of zero**, the same numbers we use today. They used these numbers to create **algebra**. Indians studied medicine. Indians used **inoculations** (or shots) to prevent disease. They even invented **plastic surgery!** Indians were able to work with metals, called **metallurgy**, and created great works of literature. Indians studied the stars and created astronomy.



Algebra, concept of zero, astronomy

Mishra, Prachi. "Aryabhata: The Man from Bihar Who Gave World the Concept of Modern Day Mathematics." NewsGram. 7 May 2015. Web. 16 June 2015.



Advancements in medicine



Metallurgy

"Ancient India Medicine." , Ancient India Ayurveda, Medicine in Ancient India. 2015. Web. 16 June 2015.  
[http://www.foundsf.org/images/5/54/Rivera\\_CCSF\\_indian-metallurgy1915.jpg](http://www.foundsf.org/images/5/54/Rivera_CCSF_indian-metallurgy1915.jpg)

**Question: List Indian achievements we still use today. Which achievement do you feel has the biggest impact on modern day life? Explain your choice.**

## **Buddhism**

Hinduism isn't the only belief to emerge out of the subcontinent of India. Buddhism was a philosophy that became important to the people of India, founded by a man named **Siddhartha Gautama**.

Siddhartha Gautama was a Hindu Indian prince. He was raised in a rich and comfortable lifestyle. His parents kept him isolated in his palace away from the misery and suffering of the real world. One day he snuck out, seeing a sick man, a poor man, an old man, and a funeral. This had an impact on Siddhartha, and he began to question the meaning of life.

**Question: Why do you think a prince would care about those less fortunate?**

Siddhartha Gautama abandoned (left) his life of luxury, and wandered through the land to find his answer. He witnessed the pain, suffering, grief and sickness experienced by others. As a result, he began to care for others and wanted to find ways to **eliminate** (get rid of) **human suffering**. Siddhartha Gautama **meditated** (focus one's mind) under a tree, looking for answers, **fasting** (going without food), until he realized the root of all suffering. He had reached enlightenment (a state of reaching knowledge). He became known as the **Buddha, the Enlightened One**. He concluded that **the cause of all suffering is desire**. This revelation, along with developing the means to eliminating desire, became the basis of Buddhism. As part of his search for answers, Siddhartha was opposed to (against) the caste system.





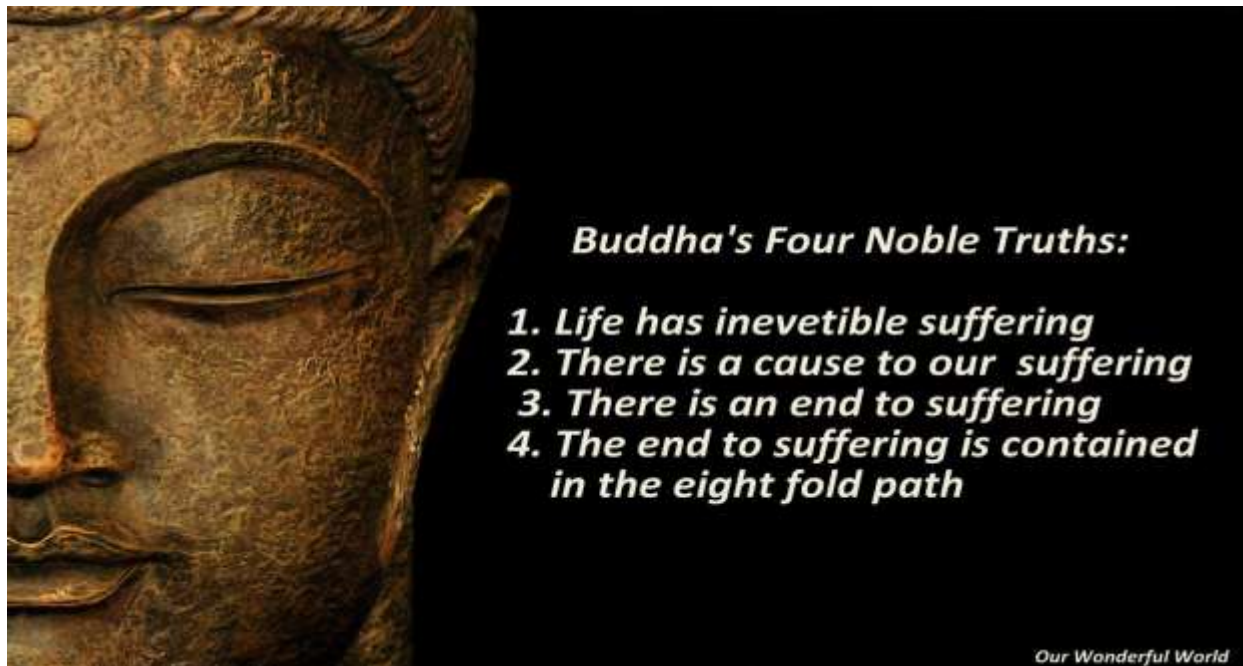
Buddha, the Enlightened One

"Prepaid Taxi Nepal." *Prepaid Taxi Nepal*. N.p., n.d.  
Web. 21 July 2014.

**Question: Imagine you are speaking with Siddhartha Gautama. Why is he opposed to the caste system?**

In Buddhism, desire is the cause of suffering and the way to end suffering is to end desire. Buddhists do believe in reincarnation, as a way to reach a state of perfect peace (nirvana). There is no god in Buddhism, just a teacher, so it isn't really a religion. It is a philosophy (a way/guideline of living one's life).

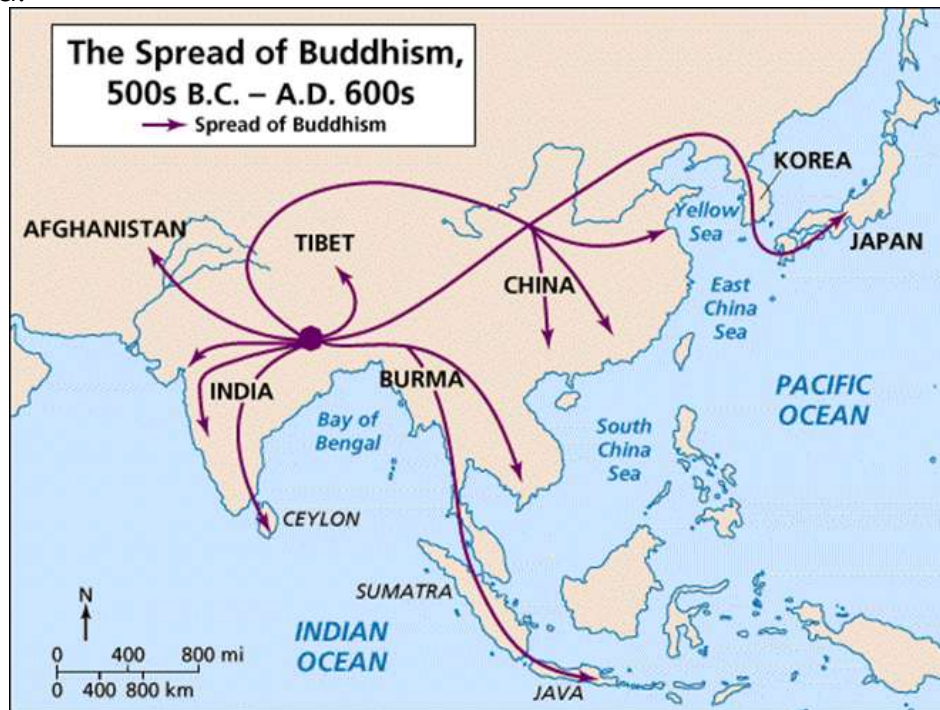
The principles of Buddhism are based on the **Four Noble Truths** and **Eightfold Path**, and can be practiced many ways.



"學英文部落格." RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 July 2014.

## Diffusion of Buddhism

Buddhism diffused (spread) throughout Southeast and east Asia through trade routes and by **missionaries** (people who actively spread religion to new locations). The Gupta Empire sent missionaries to other parts of Asia to spread Buddhist teachings. **Ashoka**, a warlord of the Mauryan Empire, was friends with the Buddha, and built many **stupas** (Buddhist religious buildings) in Asia.



The Spread of Buddhism



Ashoka

Ashoka." Ancient World History. Web. 16 June 2015.



Stupa

"Pictures of Indonesia | PlanetWare." Pictures of Indonesia | PlanetWare. 2015. Web. 16 June 2015.