

Ancient India Vocabulary



Key Terms

Subcontinent: a large land mass that forms a distinct part of a continent

Monsoons: Winds that mark the seasons in India

Indigenous: original settlers

Migration: movement of people from one region to another

Citadel: strong central fortress of a city

Vedas: sacred literature of the Indo-Aryans

Upanishads: written explanations of the Vedas

Sanskrit: written language of the Indo-Aryans

Caste System: Indo-Aryan social structure

Varnas: social class within the caste system

Mahabharata and Ramayana: Epics used to teach Hinduism

Bhagavada Gita: last 18 chapters of the Mahabharata, stressing the idea of proper conduct for one's status

Monism: belief in the unity of god and creation

Maya: belief that the world around us is an illusion

Reincarnation: rebirth of the soul

Karma: knowledge that all thoughts and actions result in future consequences

Dharma: doing one's moral duty

Nirvana: perfect spiritual peace

Enlightenment: wisdom

Stupa: mounded stone structures built over holy relics

Nalanda: Buddhist university

Epics: long poems

Polygamy: practice in which a man is allowed to have more than one wife

Suttee: practice of a woman committing suicide after her husband's death

Inoculation: practice of infecting people with a mild form of a disease to protect them from more serious illness

Important People

Harappan Civilization: dark-skinned indigenous people of the Indus River Valley

Indo-Aryans: light-skinned nomads who migrated into India through the Khyber Pass

Brahmins: Indo-Aryan priests

Raja: prince who ruled an Indo-Aryan city-state

Siddhartha Gautama: founder of Buddhism; also known as Buddha

Chandragupta Maurya: Founded the Mauryan Empire

Asoka: Chandragupta's grandson; enlarged the Mauryan Empire and helped spread Buddhism

Chandra Gupta II: ruled during India's Golden Age

Aryabhata: a mathematician who was the first to use algebra and solve quadratic equations