**India/South Asia Empires Vocabulary**

1. Monsoon- rainy season in southern Asia when the southwestern monsoon blows, bringing heavy rains
2. Ganges River- Sacred river in India; pilgrimage of millions of devoted worshippers each year bathe in water promotes contact and exchange of ideas among people from different parts of India and has helped create a broad Hindu identity
3. Vedas (rig veda)- Sacred texts in the Hindu religion, they are a set of four collections of hymns and religious ceremonies transmitted by memory through the centuries by Aryan priests
4. Dharma- Behaviors that are considered to be in accord with Rta (the natural order that makes life and universe possible) and includes duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues, and “right way of living”
5. Karma- (Hinduism and Buddhism) the effects of a person's actions that determine his destiny in his next incarnation
6. Moksha- The Hindu concept of the spirit's 'liberation' from the endless cycle of rebirths. There are various avenues- such as physical discipline, meditation, and acts of devotion to the gods
7. Buddha- An Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama (born 563 or 480 BCE), who renounced his wealth and social position. After becoming 'enlightened' (the meaning of Buddha) he enunciated the principles of Buddhism.
8. Hinduism- A body of religious and philosophical beliefs and cultural practices native to India and characterized by a belief in reincarnation and a supreme being of many forms and natures, by the view that opposing theories are aspects of one eternal truth; been called the oldest religion in the world; this religion is regarded as a fusion or “synthesis” of various Indian cultures and tradition with diverse roots and no founder (developing between 500 BCE following the Vedic Period)
9. Vedic Period- Period in the history of the northwestern Indian subcontinent (1500- 500 BCE) between the end of the urban Indus Valley Civilization and a second urbanization in the central Gangetic Plan; the [Vedic tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Vedic_religion) formed one of the main constituents of the so-called "[Hindu synthesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism#Roots_of_Hinduism)"
10. Varna- The four major social division in Hinduism (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra= caste system)
11. Caste System- a form of social stratification characterized by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a lifestyle which often includes an occupation, status in a hierarchy, customary social interaction, and exclusion
12. Mauryan Empire- The first state to unify most of the Indian subcontinent. It was founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 324 B.C.E. and survived until 184 B.C.E. From its capital at Pataliputra in the Ganges Valley it grew wealthy from taxes.
13. Ashoka- a ruler of the Mauryan Empire (268-232 BCE) who converted to Buddhism; he converted to Buddhism after witnessing the mass deaths of the Kalinga War which he had waged out of a desire for conquest and which reportedly directly resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and 150,000 deportations
14. Gupta Empire- Golden Age of India; ruled through central government but allowed village power; restored Hinduism (319- 550 CE)
15. Brahman- Priest class
16. Kshatriya- Warrior/administrator class
17. Vaishya- Merchant/artisans
18. Shudra- Laborer/farmer/peasant class
19. Brahma- Supreme God force present within all things in Hinduism
20. Vishnu- Benevolent deity in Hinduism who helps his devotees in time of need (the protector)
21. Shiva- Deity in Hinduism that represents both creation and destruction (the destroyer)