Ancient India/South Asia

A (1)**subcontinent** is a large landmass, such as India, that is part of a continent but is considered either geographically or politically as an independent unit. The subcontinent of India has fertile soil and is a vital resource for the region. It allows farmers to produce tea, rice, and other staple crops.

Farming is also completely dependent on the (2)**Monsoon** seasons, however, which can be unpredictable.

Located on the (3)**Indus River,** (one of the longest rivers in Asia) the (4)**Harappan** civilization traded with people across India and into Mesopotamia. Harappan achievements included India's first writing system, well-designed cities, and skilled artwork. No one is sure what happened to the Harappans.

The (5)**Aryans** divided people into strict social classes, called Varnas which eventually led to a more complex (6)**caste system** dividing Indian society into many groups based on birth, wealth, or occupation. The lowest members of society, known as (7)**untouchables**, were permitted only the occupations considered unclean.

The Aryan civilization formed a religion that became known as (8)**Hinduism**. Hinduism is a complex religion consisting of hundreds of deities (gods). The three best known and most followed of these are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

Hindu beliefs and cultural values have been passed down for thousands of years in religious texts known as the (9)**Vedas**.

The ultimate goal of a Hindu is to see through the illusionary nature of the natural world. Hindus believe this process requires (10)**reincarnation** and takes many lifetimes.

Hindus believe that each person has their own (11)**Dharma**, or mission in life.

Hindus also believe that one's current life is the result of one's actions, even those in past lifetimes. This cycle of cause and effect is known as (12)**Karma**.