

Hindu India: 300 to 1100 ce

During these eight centuries, empires, religion, commerce, science, technology, literature and art flourished in India. In ways vitally important to Hindus to this day, the Hindu faith was advanced by temple building, the Bhakti Movement, holy texts and great philosophers, saints and sages.



VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



This is an 8th century South Indian bronze of Supreme God Siva as Nataraja. This divine dance depicts His five cosmic powers of creation, preservation, dissolution, veiling grace and revealing grace.

Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight is the second chapter in our series on Hindu history intended for use in US primary schools. During this period, India was the richest region of the world and one of the most populous. Great agricultural abundance, plus plentiful natural resources, were key to the region's prosperity. India lay in the center of the world's ancient trade routes. Merchants sent spices, cotton, sugar and exotic items east to China and west to Europe. Hindu religion and culture and the Sanskrit language linked all of India. Great scientific discoveries as well as major religious movements came out of this advanced and stable society.

This lesson was written and designed by the editorial

staff of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Northridge. Academic reviewers: Dr. Klaus Klostermaier, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jeffrey D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College; Dr. Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Department of Religion, University of Florida; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; Dr. T.S. Rukmani, Professor and Chair in Hindu Studies, Concordia University. Research Assistant: Justin Stein, MA candidate at the University of Hawaii and former middle school teacher in New York.

Of Kings and Prosperity

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Ancient Indians regarded the subcontinent as one country.
2. From 300 to 1100 ce, India was a land of prosperity whose economic, religious and cultural influence extended across Asia.
3. Empires and kingdoms dominated most of India. Toward the end of this period, more regional powers emerged.



The Big Idea

Hindu culture, Sanskrit language and imperial tradition unified India during this age.



HINDUISM TODAY'S Teaching Standards

This column in each of the three sections presents our subject outline for India and Hinduism from 300 to 1100 ce.

1. Describe the physical and linguistic geography of India, along with population figures.
2. Describe the major empires and kingdoms, including the Guptas, Vakatakas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Pratihars, Palas and Cholas.
3. Discuss the importance of Sanskrit and the *Dharma Shastras* in uniting India.
4. Describe India's early Arab trade settlements and the later Islamic invasions.

If YOU lived then...

You live in a village in a small kingdom in central India. One day you hear that the king of a neighboring realm has attacked your king and conquered the royal city. The conquerer demands that your king pay a portion of his income. In return, he will allow your king to continue to rule, and also protect the kingdom from others.

Should your king accept the offer?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The 4th-century *Vishnu Purana* describes India: "The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata, for there dwelt the descendants of Bharata. It is the land of works, in consequence of which people go to heaven, and ultimately attain oneness with God."

Understanding India

The triangle-shaped Indian subcontinent is naturally bounded by ocean on two sides and the high Himalayan mountains on the third. Hindu tradition, scriptures and the Sanskrit language link people from one end to the other of this immense and fertile area. Our period, 300 to 1100 ce, was a golden age in India. There was widespread prosperity and remarkable social stability. Advances were made in science, medicine and technology. Many Hindu saints lived during this time and magnificent temples were built. Hinduism as practiced today evolved over this glorious period of Indian history.

Geographical regions

There are three major geographical regions in India. The first region is the Indo-Gangetic Plain. This vast, fertile region stretches northeast and southwest along the base of the Himalayas. During our period, this area was heavily forested. The second region is the Deccan Plateau, bounded by the Vindhya mountain range in the north and the Nilgiri Hills in the south. It contains several major rivers and is rich in minerals. The third region is South India, the area south of the Nilgiri Hills extending to Kanyakumari at the tip of India. It has rich agricultural farm lands.



This satellite photo shows India's three major regions, its principal rivers and the major cities of the period 300 to 1100. India lay at the center of the bustling sea and land trade routes to Europe, Arabia, Persia, China and Southeast Asia

Language areas

India is divided linguistically into two major regions. In the north are mainly Sanskrit-based languages, such as Hindi. In the south are the Dravidian languages, such as Tamil, which include many Sanskrit words. This division cuts across the middle of the Deccan Plateau. Often today when people speak of South India, they mean the Dravidian-speaking areas. These are the modern-day states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. During our period, regional dialects developed within both the Sanskrit and Dravidian areas. Sanskrit was the language of religion, law and government throughout India. Travelers could use Sanskrit to communicate wherever they went on the subcontinent.

Empires and regional kingdoms

In 300 ce, an estimated 42 million people lived in India, 23% of the world's population of 180 million. Approximately 60% of the Indian people lived in the Indo-Gangetic Plain. There were many towns and cities, but more than 90% of the population lived in villages.

As our period began, the Indo-Gangetic Plain again became the most important region of India, as it had been in the past. From 300 to 550, the Imperial Guptas established an extensive empire from the Himalayas deep into the south of India. Samudra Gupta (335-370) was the most heroic conqueror. The reign of his son, Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya (375-414), was the most brilliant in the entire Hindu



Linguistic Regions

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

autonomy
self-rule,
independence

history. The Gupta kings granted local and regional autonomy. The frontier states were nearly independent. The empire was responsible for security, major roads, irrigation projects and common welfare.

The Guptas created both political and cultural pan-India unity. India made original literary, religious, artistic and scientific contributions that benefitted the entire known world. Chinese Buddhist monk Fa-hsien (Faxian) reported in the early 5th century, “In the cities and towns of this country, the people are rich and prosperous.” Hinduism thrived under the Guptas, taking forms which endure until today. Gupta culture and economy influenced much of Eurasia, notably China and Southeast Asia.

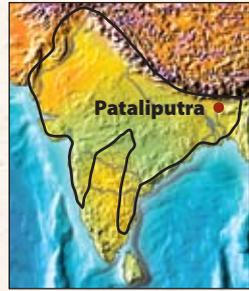
The Gupta Empire declined in the late 5th century because of internal strife and invasions by fierce Central Asian Hunas who ruled areas west of the Indus. The Hunas were driven back in the mid-6th century by emerging Hindu rulers.

During his 17-year journey through India, 7th century Chinese monk-scholar Hsuan-tsang (Xuanzang) wrote that there were about 70 regional powers. Many were part of the empire of King Harsha in the North

and the major empires of the South.

In the 8th century, the Rashtrakutas took control of the entire Deccan, parts of West Central India and much of the South. Between the 8th and 10th centuries, they competed with the Pratiharas and Palas for pan-India dominance. The Pratiharas at their peak ruled much of northern India. They were the first to effectively stop Arab Muslim invasions into western India, holding them in check until the 10th century. The Palas, a Buddhist dynasty centered in eastern India, reached their zenith in the early ninth century. Then the Pratiharas displaced them from much of the Gangetic Plain.

There were several large Hindu kingdoms in the Deccan and South India in our period. They included the Vakatakas, Chalukyas, Pallavas and Pandyas. Rajendra Chola I, who ruled from 1014-1044, unified the entire South. The Cholas had a large army and navy. In an effort to protect their trade routes, they subdued kingdoms as far away as Malaysia and Indonesia. Their expeditions are unique in Indian history. The Cholas dominated trade between South India and the Middle East and Europe in the West, and Southeast Asia and China



Gupta Empire: 300-550, with its capital at Pataliputra (present-day Patna)

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

pan-India
relating to the whole of India

sack
to seize all valuables and destroy buildings

empire
a group of kingdoms under one authority

imperial
of, or relating to, an empire

plunder
property seized by violence

Timeline: 300 to 1100 ce

320
Gupta dynasty flourishes through 550 during a golden age of literature, art, science and religion



Gold Coin of Chandra Gupta II

500
Bhakti Movement begins, gaining strength over the next thousand years. It was led by saints such as Sambandar of South India (at right with God Siva and Goddess Parvati)



Child Saint Sambandar

300 CE

400

500

600

700

300-1000
World-famous Ajanta and Ellora Caves are created

476
Rome falls. Indian trading shifts from Europe to Arabia and the Middle East while continuing with China

542
Hindu kings defeat Hunas and end their brutal rule in central and northern India

641
Harsha, ruler of much of north India, establishes diplomatic relations with China

in the East. Indian traders brought Hindu religion and classical culture to Southeast Asia. Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms arose in present-day Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and South Vietnam.

Government and legal system

The kingdoms of India were guided by the *Shastras*, Hindu legal texts written in Sanskrit. The *Dharma Shastras*, such as *Manu* and *Yajnavalkya*, recorded laws and customs regarding family, marriage, inheritance and occupation, as well as suggested punishments for crimes. The *Artha Shastra* and *Niti Shastras* offered rules and advice on the king's behavior, war, justice, administration and business regulation. People believed that when the king was brave and just, the kingdom prospered. *Shastras*, local customs, advice of the wise and sound judgment of the king together produced sophisticated, stable and enlightened government.

Muslim invasions

Arabia, where the new religion of Islam began in 610 ce, had long traded with India. Arab merchants belonging to Islam settled peacefully in South India in the early 7th century. By 711 Arab Muslim armies had conquered North Africa, Spain and the Persian empire. They attacked India's frontiers as well. Arab Muslims conquered Sindh (now in southern Pakistan) in 712. Their further

invasions were stopped by the Pratiharas, who confined Muslim rule to the Sindh region. Northwestern India remained stable under Hindu rule until the Turkish King, Mahmud of Ghazni (in modern Afghanistan), invaded India for plunder and the expansion of Islam. Ruling from 998-1030, Mahmud raided the country 17 times, wreaking large-scale destruction of temples, cities and palaces. The sack of the famed Siva temple of Somanatha in 1025 was the most horrific, involving the massacre of 50,000 defenders and the theft of fabulous wealth. This battle marked the beginning of Muslim domination of northwestern India.

Section 1 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

1. **List:** What are India's major geographic regions?
2. **Describe:** Where did most Indians live in 300ce? What was it like? Who ruled this area at that time?
3. **Explain:** How did the Cholas succeed in unifying South India and spreading Hindu culture overseas?
4. **Apply:** What do you think are some rules and advice that the *Shastras* should give for kings?
5. **Evaluate:** If you ruled a kingdom that was attacked by a more powerful empire, would you fight back or try to join the empire? Why?

FOCUS ON WRITING

7. **Analyze:** Describe the Indian empires of the time and explain why they were attacked by Mahmud of Ghazni.

712
Arab Muslims conquer the Sindh region of western India. Their further advance is halted by Hindu armies. No further conquests occur for nearly 300 years.



Thanjavur Temple

1025
Chola dynasty is at its height. Its influence extends across Southeast Asia. Builds great temples at Thanjavur and creates world-famous bronze statues of Siva Nataraja.

800

900

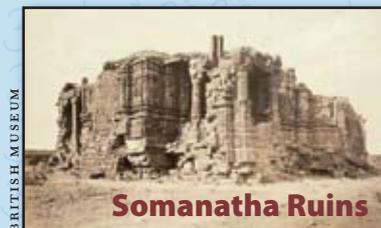
1000

1100

732
Charles Martel decisively stops Arab expansion into Europe at the Battle of Tours (in central France)

802
Jayavarman II founds Indianized kingdom of Kambuja in what is now Cambodia, with capital at Angkor

1025
Mahmud of Ghazni sacks Somanatha temple in western India as part of his campaigns to plunder the fabulous wealth of India and expand Islam



Somanatha Ruins

Society, Science And the Arts

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. India was a wealthy country during this period.
2. Towns and villages provided economic and social structures that brought prosperity.
3. Important advances in science, technology, literature and art were made.

The Big Idea

India's towns and villages were largely self-governing.

Key Terms

Gross Domestic Product, p. 6
 commerce, p. 7
 varna, p. 8
 jati, p. 8
 panchayat, p. 9



HINDUISM TODAY'S TEACHING STANDARDS

5. Explain how India was the world's richest country during this period.
6. Describe the main features of town and village life.
7. Explain the principal advances in art, science, technology and mathematics, especially the decimal system.

If YOU lived then...

Your father is a master potter. One day a leader of the potter's guild visits from a nearby city. He says he can sell your father's wares at a better price than he gets in the village. He explains that a caravan will come periodically through the village to collect his pots. In fact, he tells your father the guild can sell all the pots the village potters can make.

Should the potters accept the guild's offer?

BUILDING BACKGROUND: Scholars used to call the period from 500 to 1000 ce the Dark Ages or Medieval Period of European history. *Medieval*, a Latin word, came to mean "backward," though it really just means "middle age." Unfortunately, these terms were also applied to Indian history. In fact, Europe and—much more so—India flourished greatly in this age.

The Abundance of India

Throughout the period from 300 to 1100, India was a wealthy country. It produced a large amount of food, manufactured goods and various items for domestic and foreign trade. The nation made advances in medicine, mathematics, astronomy and metallurgy. People enjoyed prosperity, peace and freedom and achieved unprecedented artistic and culture excellence.

The richest nation in the world for over 1,000 years

Economic historians estimate that between the first and eleventh century ce, India produced roughly 30% of the world's Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. The GDP is the total value (the "gross") of everything a country or region produces. It includes the value of food, manufactured items (such as cloth, jewelry, tools and pottery) and services (such as the incomes of doctors, teachers, authors and artists). India had the highest GDP in the world for this entire period. China was the next highest, with 25% of the world's GDP. By comparison, in 1,000 ce Europe's GDP was just 11%.

Cities: centers of wealth and culture

The Indian subcontinent's population in the fifth century is estimated at 50 million, of which perhaps five million lived in cities and towns.

The capitals where the kings lived were usually the biggest. Cities and towns grew up along important trade routes, at sea and inland river ports and adjacent to major temples and pilgrimage centers. Temples had become an important focus of life in cities and villages. They served as places of worship, scholarship, education and performing arts. City life was dynamic, diverse and fulfilling, as seen in the excerpt from an ancient poem, *The Ankle Bracelet*, on pages 10 and 11.

Larger houses were two- or three-story structures with tile roofs, built around an open-air, central courtyard. The homes of wealthy citizens had attached gardens. Cities maintained public gardens, parks and groves. Prosperous citizens were expected to be highly sophisticated and to lead an active social and cultural life. Ordinary citizens lived in humbler circumstances.

Then, as now, the Hindu calendar was filled with home celebrations and public festivals. Some festivals, such as Sivaratri, took place in temples. Others, like Diwali, Holi and Ramnavami, were held city-wide.

Singing, dancing and gambling were available in special city areas throughout the year. Traveling troupes of musicians, acrobats, storytellers and magicians provided entertainment.

Cities served as centers of commerce and were largely self-governing. A four-person ruling council included a representative from the big business community, the smaller merchants and the guilds of artisans. The fourth member, the chief clerk, was responsible for making and keeping records, such as land deeds.

The wealth of the region depended upon the abundant agricultural harvests and the diverse products of many artisans. It was in the city that this wealth was concentrated. The king and well-to-do citizens actively supported the fine arts, including literature, music, dance and drama. They promoted medicine, technology and science. They patronized the skilled jewelers, weavers, painters, metalworkers and sculptors.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

commerce
buying and selling of goods

sophisticated
educated and refined

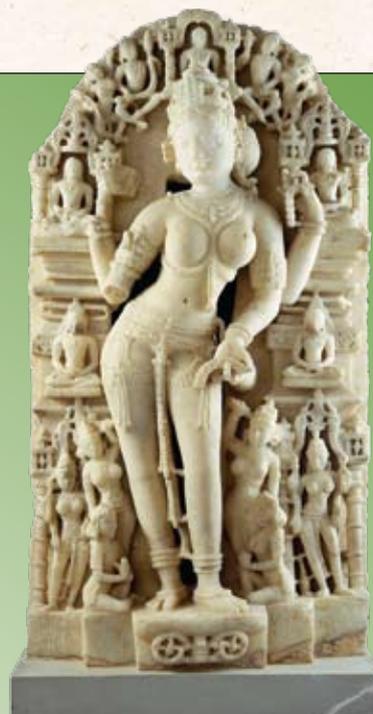
ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

The artisans of India produced masterpieces which included huge temples, metal and stone statues and ornate gold coins.



Three Chola-era bronze statues: Lord Vishnu (center), Bhudevi, the Earth Goddess (left), and Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity (right)

This Gupta-era gold coin (actual size) has a horse on one side and Goddess Lakshmi on the other. It weighs about eight grams.

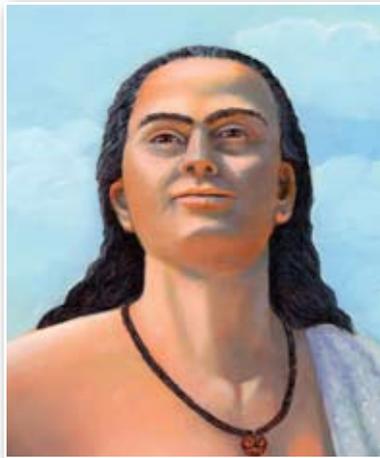


Sarasvati, Hindu Goddess of knowledge, music and the arts, was also worshiped in the Jain religion

PHOTOS: BRITISH MUSEUM

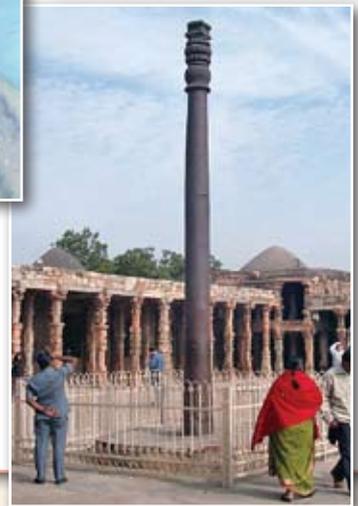
SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT

Among India's greatest contributions to the world are the concept of zero and counting with ten numbers. This **decimal system** was best explained by Brahmagupta. He was born in 598 ce and lived during the time of King Harsha. It was much easier to multiply, divide, add and subtract with the Indian system. At right you can see the English numbers and the Sanskrit they were derived from. Note how you can recognize some shapes, such as 3 and some names, such as *nava* for nine. **Aryabhata** (pictured here), born in 476 ce, lived in the Gupta age. He determined that the Earth is a sphere spinning on its axis. He calculated its **circumference** within just 67 miles. He understood and accurately predicted solar and lunar **eclipses**. He also made discoveries in mathematics. The **Delhi Iron Pillar** (lower right) is 23 feet 8 inches tall, 16 inches in diameter at the base, and weighs 6.5 tons. This victory pillar was forged in the 4th century and has stood without rusting for the past 1,700 years. Scientists have determined that an unusual chemical composition has made it rustproof. Only a few foundries in the world today could duplicate it.



DONALEE HOUSTON

0	shunya	०
1	eka	१
2	dvi	२
3	tri	३
4	chatur	४
5	pancha	५
6	shash	६
7	sapta	७
8	ashta	८
9	nava	९



DINODIA

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Find a few English words or parts of words that are related to the Sanskrit numbers. For example, the *tri* in triangle is related to Sanskrit *tri*, 3.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

foundry
a workshop for casting metal

barter
exchange of goods or services for other goods or services (without using money)

guild
an association of craftsmen who cooperate in the production and sale of goods

Understanding the village

The villages, where 90 percent of the people lived, were usually surrounded by agricultural land. Each had for common use a pond or water reservoir, wells, grazing grounds and at least one temple. The year-round warm climate and monsoon rains allowed farmers to produce two crops a year. The villages enjoyed a food surplus, except when struck by natural disaster. The villages had priests, doctors and barbers and skilled craftsmen, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, oil pressers and weavers. Some villages specialized in one or more trades, which were organized into guilds, or *shrenis*. There were daily and weekly markets in the villages and nearby towns to barter and sell goods.

Hindu society evolved into many *jatis*,

based on specific occupations. The *jatis* are called *castes* in English. *Jatis* are grouped under the four-fold class division, or *varna*: priests, warriors, merchants and workers. A fifth group gradually developed that included scavengers, leather workers, butchers, undertakers and some tribal people. This group, about ten percent of the population, was considered “untouchable” and lived outside the city or village.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien reported that when a member of one of these castes entered a city, he had to clap two sticks together to announce his presence.

Because the *jatis* were hereditary, the families became expert farmers, craftsmen, merchants, etc. Each family in the village interacted with all other *jatis* and were bound together in a permanent relationship.

There would be a family barber, washerman, priest, doctor, carpenter, etc., routinely serving the family needs. Thus the village was an interlocked economic unit. Each village was self-governed by an assembly of five elders, called the *panchayat*.

The central unit of the town and village was the joint family, as it is today among many Hindus. Father, mother, sons and their wives, unmarried daughters and grandchildren all lived under one roof. Land and finances were held in common, and everyone worked for the advancement of the family.

Marriages were often arranged by the parents. The boy and girl had little say in the matter, but if a couple eloped, the marriage was recognized. In the system called *swayamvara*, a woman, usually a princess, could choose her husband from a group of assembled suitors.

Villages were interconnected with one another, due in part to arranged marriages. The girl often came from a different village, one not more than a day's journey away. A day's journey (on foot or by bullock cart) was about 60 kilometers. Visits to relatives created an interlocking communications network through which news, technology and ideas freely flowed. Merchants, Hindu holy men and women, storytellers and pilgrims added to this network of communication and to cultural enrichment. Such itinerants often traveled long distances throughout India. Each village along the way offered abundant hospitality.

Science, technology and art

India's enduring prosperity allowed for great progress in science, technology and the arts. The most visible examples are the great stone temples that stand today. These temples were expertly carved using simple iron chisels and hammers.

Knowledge was taught in many schools. The world's first universities were built,

including Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila and Vallabhi. Students entered Takshashila at age 16 and studied the *Vedas* and the "eighteen arts and sciences," which included medicine, surgery, astronomy, agriculture, accounting, archery and elephant lore. One could later specialize in medicine, law or military strategy. Nalanda was described by Hsuan-tsang as a center of advanced studies with 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers.

Indian medicine, ayurveda, developed sophisticated systems of disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Widely practiced today, this holistic system aims to create and preserve health, rather than just cure disease.

From the Gupta Empire onward, India witnessed a vast outpouring of literature in the form of plays, poems, songs and epics. Performing arts were noted for portraying the nine *rasas*, or emotions: love, humor, compassion, anger, heroism, fear, disgust, tranquility and wonder.

All these achievements created what historians call a "classical age." India developed strong moral values and noble ethical principles. High standards of intellectual and artistic sophistication and refined patterns of living were set that served as models for following generations.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

elope
to run away and get married without parent's consent

itinerant
one who travels from place to place

ayurveda
Literally, "science of life," a system of health and prevention of disease

Section 2 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

- a. **Define:** What is Gross Domestic Product?

b. **Identify:** What country had the biggest GDP in the world for 1,000 years? What country was next richest?
- a. **Explain:** Where were cities and towns located?

b. **Analyze:** Who ran the city? Do you think this was a good system? Why?

c. **Contrast:** Give three ways that Indian villages were different from the cities.
- a. **Evaluate:** Do you think the system of *jatis* was a good system? How is it different from modern life?

FOCUS ON WRITING



- a. **Analyze:** Why is this time a "classical age" in India?

City Life in South India

Translation by Alain Danielou

The Ankle Bracelet is an ancient Tamil poem. This excerpt describes the port city of Puhar during an annual Hindu festival. Puhar was typical of the port cities of our period.

AS YOU READ Try to visualize what the city looked and felt like.

The Sun appeared, peering over the eastern hills. He tore off the mantle of night, spread his warm and friendly rays over the pale Earth. The sunshine lighted up the open terraces, the harbor docks, the towers with their arched windows like the eyes of deer. In various quarters of the city the homes of

1 wealthy Greeks were seen. Near the harbor, seamen from far-off lands appeared at home. In the streets hawkers were selling unguents, bath powders, cooling oils, flowers, perfume, incense. Weavers brought their fine silks and all kinds of fabrics made of wool or cotton. There were special streets for merchants of coral, sandalwood, myrrh, jewelry, faultless pearls, pure gold and precious gems.

In another quarter lived grain merchants, their stocks piled up in mounds. Washermen, bakers, vintners, fishermen and dealers in salt crowded the shops, where they bought betel nuts, perfume, sheep, oil, meat and bronzes. One could see coppersmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, tailors, shoemakers and clever craftsmen making toys out of cork or rags, and expert musicians, who demonstrated their mastery in the seven-tone scale on the flute and the harp. Workmen displayed their skills in hundreds of small crafts. Each trade had its own street in the workers' quarter of the city.

At the center of the city were the wide royal street, the street of temple cars, the bazaar and the main street, where rich merchants had their mansions with high towers. There was a

GUIDED READING

Word Help

Tamil

Ancient language of South India

Puhar

A port city 240 kilometers south of modern Chennai

unguent

an ointment

bazaar

a large marketplace

1 Greek merchants had homes in the city of Puhar.

Why do you think they were wealthy?

street for priests, one for doctors, one for astrologers, one for peasants. In a wide passage lived the craftsmen who pierce gems and pearls for the jewelers. Nearby were those who make trinkets out of polished sea shells. In another quarter lived the coachmen, bards, dancers, astronomers, clowns, actresses, florists, betel-sellers, servants, *nadaswaram* players, drummers, jugglers and acrobats.

On the first day of spring, when the full moon is in Virgo, offerings of rice, cakes of sesame and brown sugar, meat, paddy, flowers and incense were brought by young girls, splendidly dressed, to the altar of the God who, at the bidding of Indra, king of heaven, had settled in the town to drive away all perils. As they went away from the altar, the dancers cried, “May the king and his vast empire never know famine, disease or dissension. May we be blessed with wealth—and when the season comes, with rains.”

The people made merry on Indra’s chosen day. Great rituals were performed in the temples of the Unborn Siva, of Murugan, the beautiful god of Youth, of Valiyon, brother of Krishna, of the dark Vishnu and of Indra himself, with His strings of pearls and His victorious parasol. A festive crowd invaded the precincts of the temple, where Vedic rituals, once revealed by the God Brahma, were faultlessly performed. The four orders of the Gods, the eighteen hosts of paradise and other celestial spirits were honored and worshiped. Temples of the Jains and their charitable institutions could be seen in the city. In public squares, priests were recounting stories from the scriptures of the ancient *Puranas*.



V&A MUSEUM/SHIVA DAYAL LAL OF PATNA

This 19th-century painting portrays a typical Indian food market. About 50 different items are for sale. *How many can you identify?*

GUIDED READING

Word Help

nadaswaram

a high-pitched, double-reed wooden horn

paddy

unhusked rice

famine

extreme shortage of food

parasol

here, a highly decorated, ceremonial umbrella

2 The city had both Hindu and Jain temples.

How does this show religious tolerance on the part of the citizens?

Understanding Original Sources

1. **Comparing:** The scenes described in this poem took place over 1,800 years ago. What are the similarities and differences between the people and activities portrayed here and those of a modern city?

2. **Analyzing:** In these times, each craft or trade was the work of a separate *jati*. How many *jatis* can you identify from the crafts and trades mentioned in this poem?

Leading a Sacred Life

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Hinduism permeated the lives of India's people.
2. A great devotional movement developed during this time.
3. The Hindu religion made it possible for anyone to reach God.



The Big Idea

India's rulers and people held a tolerant attitude toward all religions.

Key Terms

religious harmony, p. 12
 Bhakti Movement, p. 13
puja, p. 13
Agama, p. 14
Purana, p. 14



HINDUISM TODAY'S TEACHING STANDARDS

8. Explain how Hindu kings maintained religious harmony.
9. Describe the Bhakti Movement and the importance of the *Puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.
10. Describe the importance of the *Agamas* and the development of temple worship during this period.

If YOU lived then...

It is your first visit to the thriving city of Puhar. When you arrive with your parents, you see not only Hindus but also Jains and Buddhists. You observe Buddhist monks debating philosophical points with Hindus, but afterwards all having snacks together as friends. The king of Madurai, you learn, is a Hindu, but he also shows his religious tolerance by supporting Jain temples and Buddhist monasteries.

What is the value of religious harmony?

BUILDING BACKGROUND: Physical evidence of ancient culture is sparse. Wood, paper and cloth disintegrate over time; bricks and stones are recycled. This makes it hard to answer some questions about history. But scientific methods such as carbon dating and DNA analysis are giving new data and correcting wrong theories about ancient times.

Leading a Sacred Life

Daily life in villages and towns was guided by the principles of righteous living as taught in the Hindu scriptures. Every day began with a time of worship in the home shrine. Temples were the center of village and city life. Families visited them to worship God and participate in festivals and celebrations which were held throughout the year. Holy men and women were honored. One's daily work was considered sacred. The people respected all the religions.

Truth is One, paths are many

Most kings of this period were Hindus; some were Buddhists and Jains. With rare exceptions, all supported the various religions during their reign. A *Rig Veda* verse declares: *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*. "Truth is one, sages describe it variously." This means that there are different ways to speak of the One Truth that is God.

The Rashtrakuta rulers, for example, not only patronized Saivism and Vaishnavism, but also supported Jainism and Buddhism. Rulers of the period welcomed Christians, Jews, Muslims and Parsis and encouraged them to settle in their kingdoms and practice their faiths. This policy maintained religious harmony in society and even aided international trade.



Lord Krishna, depicted at center with blue complexion, celebrates the Holi festival with friends in Vrindavan, a town of his youth

Evolution of temple worship

From ancient times, Vedic fire worship rites, called *yajna*, had been practiced. Families continued to perform these rites at home each day. Rulers across India held spectacular Vedic ceremonies, including coronations and other royal celebrations. Scholars believe that the devotional worship of God and the Gods in small shrines existed alongside or even predated Vedic rites everywhere, especially in South India.

Since at least the third century bce, devotional worship became increasingly popular. It eventually became the central practice of Hinduism. Some small shrines evolved into great temples with more complex worship, called *puja*. *Puja* is the ritual offering of water, food, flowers and other sacred substances to the enshrined Deity. *Yajna* rites, Sanskrit chanting and verses from the *Vedas* were all incorporated into the temple rituals.

The Bhakti Movement

Many Hindu saints of this time preached the importance of devotion to God in what is called the Bhakti Movement. Adoration for God, known as *bhakti*, stresses one's personal relationship with the Divine as a love-centered path of spiritual advancement. It comple-

mented meditation and yoga, offering an all-embracing means to enlightenment and liberation from birth and rebirth through divine grace.

The most famous early saints of the Bhakti Movement are the Vaishnavite Alvars and the Saivite Nayanars. They came from all castes and were a voice for equality. Four of the Nayanars enjoy prominence to this day: Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manikkavasagar.

While pilgrimaging from temple to temple, the Nayanars composed poems and songs in praise of the loving God Siva. These became part of a massive body of scripture called the *Tirumurai*. These passionate hymns, composed in the Tamil language, remain popular today in South India. Saints emerged all over India composing devotional songs to Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, Rama and Devi in local languages. There was a massive response to this stirring call of divine bliss.

Great teachers and philosophers, such as Ramanuja and Yamunacharya, were critical to the Bhakti Movement. They explained how to relate to God through worship.

THE IMPACT TODAY

Hindu temple worship continues to be performed in modern times, using Sanskrit chanting and following instructions from the *Agama* scriptures.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

adoration

deep love and respect

Saivite

worshiper of Siva

Vaishnavite

worshiper of Vishnu

ROCK-CUT TEMPLE

The Kailasa Temple to Lord Siva at Ellora, Maharashtra, in West India, was begun in the 8th century by Rashtrakuta King Krishna I and completed by his successor. Amazingly, it was carved out of a solid mountain of rock. It took the stone workers 100 years to remove 200,000 tons of rock. The temple, measuring 160 feet by 280 feet, was created in the South Indian style by architects of that region. It was designed to resemble Mount Kailasa, the Himalayan home of God Siva. Along the same rock cliff are 34 caves that were excavated from the solid rock between the 5th and 10th centuries. They served as monasteries and temples. Twelve were built for the Buddhists, 17 for Hindus and five for Jains. The fact that these were all built in the same complex testifies to the religious harmony and diversity of the period.

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Why do you think the king went to so much time and expense to build this large temple?



ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

assimilation
the absorption and integration of a people, idea, religion or culture into a society

guru
teacher

epic
a long poem about heroic deeds and people

Adi Shankara

The guru Adi Shankara (788-820) developed the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta during this time. In summary, his philosophy can be stated as: “Brahman (the Supreme Being) is the only truth. The world is an appearance. There is ultimately no difference between Brahman and the *atma*, or individual soul.” He taught this philosophy across India. He established four monastic centers which remain influential today. His teachings and the Bhakti Movement together brought back many Jains and Buddhists to Hinduism.

Temple worship

All over India great Hindu temples were built or expanded between 300 and 1100 ce. Many are at the center of large cities, such as Varanasi on the Ganga in the North, and Madurai in the South, and remain powerful places of worship.

In the temples, the people worshiped

their chosen Deity with great devotion and paid respects to the many other enshrined Deities. The priest conducted the holy rituals, but did not stand between the devotee and God.

Temple worship was defined in great detail in the *Agamas* and parts of the *Puranas*. The refined art of building with stone, brick and other materials was the subject of the *Vastu Shastras*. These books on architecture cover temple design, town planning and house construction. All these texts are in Sanskrit. The *Agamas* include rituals and Sanskrit chants for every act connected with the temple, from its conception and construction to the details of daily worship.

Temples were central to the social and economic life of the community. Large temples also served as centers for education and training in music and dance. Over the centuries, many temples acquired agricultural land and great wealth. During festivals, thousands of people pilgrimaged

to the famous temples. This flow of visitors helped the local economy and spread cultural practices and religious belief.

The Purana Scriptures

Puranas are dedicated to a particular Deity. Each contains a description of the origin of the universe, lists of kings, Hindu philosophy and traditional stories about the Gods and Goddesses. Among the most important *Puranas* are the *Bhagavata*, *Vishnu*, *Siva* and the *Markandeya*, especially for its *Devi Mahatmya* section. The *Bhagavata* narrates the greatness of Lord Vishnu and His ten avatars, of whom the two most important are Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. The *Siva Purana* extols the four-fold path leading to oneness with Lord Siva: service, worship, yoga and wisdom. It also explains *Namah Sivaya*, regarded by Saivites as the most sacred of mantras.

The *Puranas* record an important feature of Hinduism, the assimilation of different ethnic and religious groups. They tell us that earlier migrants into India, such as the Greeks, Persians and central Asian peoples, including the Hunas, had been completely absorbed into Indian society and Hindu religion. Various tribes were also brought into the mainstream and their beliefs and practices assimilated. The stories of these people are recorded in the *Puranas*.

Ramayana and Mahabharata

You read in chapter one about the two great historical tales of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These epics were revised into their present form and gained popularity all over India, and beyond, during our period. They played a crucial role in the development of devotional Hinduism. Unlike the *Vedas*, which could be understood only by those who studied Sanskrit, the epics were retold into local languages. Drama, dance, song, painting and sculpture

based on the epics became the main means of teaching the Hindu way of life.

During our period, Hinduism and Buddhism spread to Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. It was made popular in these countries through the epics and other Sanskrit texts.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The time from 300 to 1100 ce was a golden age in India. Its prosperity, stability and religious harmony encouraged scientific and artistic achievements that set standards for the entire world. Devotional Hinduism developed in a powerful manner. Through songs and stories, it brought Hindu principles and values into the languages of the common people. Temples became popular centers for worship of Gods and Goddesses. The *Puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* provided an abundant library of history, philosophy, religious practices and moral teachings in stories that were passed from generation to generation. This great devotional tradition inspired and sustained the people in their daily life, as it continues to do today.

THE IMPACT TODAY

The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* continue to enrich religious life. They have even been made into popular movies and TV programs.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

avatar

the Supreme Being appearing in human form

yoga

practices that bring union with God

mantra

sacred sound

Section 3 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

1. a. **Explain:** How did Hindu rulers show tolerance?
b. **Define:** What is bhakti?
c. **Elaborate:** What is the purpose of the temple priest?
2. **List:** Name three important *Puranas*.
3. a. **Explain:** What does *assimilation* mean?
b. **List:** What peoples were assimilated into Hindu society?
4. a. **Explain:** What is the Bhakti Movement?
b. **Explain:** What caste did its saints belong to?
c. **Elaborate:** What are the ways the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are presented today?

FOCUS ON WRITING

5. **Explain:** Why do you think the Bhakti Movement became popular all across India?

DIRECTIONS: READ EACH QUESTION AND CIRCLE THE LETTER OF THE BEST RESPONSE

1. The Indian subcontinent was united as a one country by:
 - A Hindu religion, customs and the Sanskrit language
 - B The Buddhist Pala kings of Northeast India
 - C Outside invaders who conquered the subcontinent
 - D A confederation of rulers
2. From 300 to 1100 ce, India comprised about what percent of the world population?
 - A 5%
 - B 15%
 - C 25%
 - D 35%
3. What were the Guptas not famous for?
 - A Advances in art, science and technology
 - B Creating a pan-Indian empire
 - C Suppressing the Buddhist and Jain religions
 - D A prosperous economy with strong foreign trade
4. Why did Mahmud of Ghazni invade India?
 - A To remove unjust Hindu kings from power
 - B To establish his own pan-India empire
 - C To seek revenge for an Indian invasion of his country
 - D For plunder and the expansion of Islam
5. Which is the correct list of GDPs for our period?
 - A India 50%, China 25%, Europe 5%
 - B India 20%, China 20%, Europe 20%
 - C India 11%, China 25%, Europe 30%
 - D India 30%, China 25%, Europe 11%
6. The cities of India were ruled by whom?
 - A A council representing the major interest groups
 - B A council elected by vote of all residents
 - C A hereditary ruler
 - D A military general
7. What is a *jati*?
 - A A priest, warrior, merchant or worker
 - B A group following the same hereditary occupation
 - C A group of foreign sailors
 - D A group assigned to an occupation by the king
8. Hindu villages were in close contact because:
 - A Runners daily delivered news from village to village
 - B Many women married into families of nearby villages
 - C People wrote letters to each other frequently
 - D Villages met monthly
9. Why was our time period considered a “classical age?”
 - A Greeks ruled India throughout this time
 - B Great Hindu kings conquered areas outside of India
 - C India’s advances in knowledge and development of refined patterns of living
 - D The land was very prosperous
10. The city of Puhar described in the poem, *Ankle Bracelet*:
 - A Was a city intolerant of religions other than Hinduism
 - B Was an underdeveloped city
 - C Was home to many merchants and craftsmen
 - D Had little to offer by way of entertainment
11. Which of these religious groups were welcomed in India?
 - A Muslims
 - B Jews and Christians
 - C Parsis
 - D All of the above
12. Why is the Kailasa Temple in Ellora unusual?
 - A It was built from 10,000 granite blocks
 - B It was carved out of solid rock
 - C It was the largest clay brick structure in India
 - D Though made of wood, it lasted 500 years
13. The Bhakti Movement was based on:
 - A Rules set by the brahmin caste
 - B Temple worship, scriptures and devotional songs
 - C The religions of Buddhism and Jainism
 - D A royal command of the Rashtrakuta rulers
14. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* influenced:
 - A Mainly the community of merchants
 - B Only the people of the Indo-Gangetic Plain region of India
 - C Mostly South India
 - D All of India and countries in Southeast Asia

Internet Resources: Go to <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/education/> for a PDF version of this chapter, as well as Chapter One, “Hinduism from Ancient Times,” with clickable links to resources. Also at the same

URL are additional teaching resources and letters of endorsement from academics and community leaders. To order additional copies of this educational insight, go to <http://www.minimela.com/booklets/>.