Rivers, Beliefs, Empires

Trace the forces that shaped early South Asia

SS24.7.12 "Analyze the development of civilization in South Asia from the settling of the Indus River Valley to the beginning of the Gupta Empire..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two details about geography or trade, underline two details about beliefs or social groups, and number two developments in Buddhism. Use your marks to track what shaped South Asian civilization.

Changes Across South Asia

1. Around 2600 BCE, people built planned cities beside the Indus River and its tributaries. Workers laid out streets and drains, while farmers grew crops on nearby floodplains. Seasonal monsoon rains helped refill rivers, but weak rains or floods could damage harvests. Indus merchants exchanged goods with places as far away as Mesopotamia. Rivers and routes across the Arabian Sea helped carry goods and ideas. When many Indus cities declined after 1900 BCE, settlement continued in South Asia, but later communities developed different ways of life.

2. In the centuries after the Indus cities declined, new communities spread across northern India. Vedic religious traditions, local practices, and later debates about the self and the universe shaped Hinduism over many centuries. Ideas about *dharma*, or duty, and *karma*, the effects of actions, became important. Society also developed a caste system: broad social classes called *varnas* and many smaller birth-based groups called *jatis*. Religious teachings were sometimes used to support inherited roles, yet people also questioned whether birth should determine a person's worth.

3. Around the fifth century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama taught that suffering could be reduced by following the Eightfold Path. His teachings became Buddhism and offered a path open to people across social groups. In the third century BCE, Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire supported Buddhist communities and had messages about nonviolence and respect carved on pillars and rocks. Travelers and traders helped spread Buddhism beyond India. By the start of the Gupta Empire around 320 CE, Hindu traditions remained influential, while Buddhist communities and places of learning were also part of South Asian life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did monsoon rains create both an opportunity and a risk for Indus farmers?

2. How did different traditions and beliefs shape Hinduism and inherited social roles?

3. How did Ashoka's actions and travel or trade affect Buddhism in different ways?

4. What changed in South Asia between the time of the Indus cities and the start of Gupta rule? Give two examples from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Plan three objects for a museum tour: one representing Indus city life, one representing Hindu traditions or caste, and one representing Buddhism under Ashoka. In 4 or 5 sentences, explain how the objects show changes over time and include a link to monsoons or trade.

ANSWER KEY

Rivers, Beliefs, Empires

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.12

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two details about geography or trade, underline two details about beliefs or social groups, and number two developments in Buddhism. Use your marks to track what shaped South Asian civilization. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did monsoon rains create both an opportunity and a risk for Indus farmers?	**Monsoon rains helped refill rivers used by farmers, but weak rains or floods could damage harvests.**
2	How did different traditions and beliefs shape Hinduism and inherited social roles?	**Vedic traditions, local practices, and philosophical debates shaped Hinduism. Religious teachings about ideas such as duty were sometimes used to support inherited roles in the caste system.**
3	How did Ashoka's actions and travel or trade affect Buddhism in different ways?	**Ashoka supported Buddhist communities and shared messages on pillars and rocks. Travelers and traders helped spread Buddhism beyond India.**
4	What changed in South Asia between the time of the Indus cities and the start of Gupta rule? Give two examples from the passage.	**Early Indus communities built planned cities and traded with distant places. By the start of Gupta rule, Hindu traditions and Buddhist communities were also important parts of South Asian life.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A model of an Indus drain shows how people built cities near rivers, where monsoon rains helped farmers but could also cause floods. Cards labeled with different duties show how beliefs about dharma were sometimes used to support inherited social roles. A copy of an Ashoka pillar message about nonviolence shows how a ruler shared Buddhist ideas. These stops move from Indus city life to changing religious traditions and social organization. By the start of Gupta rule, both Hindu traditions and Buddhist communities were part of South Asian life.

Accept other historically plausible objects if each represents the required period or tradition. Look for a clear sequence and an accurate connection to monsoons or trade.