**#6—Crash Course World History**

**Buddha & Ashoka**

1. So as you no doubt remember, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was one of the earliest cradles of civilization and that original civilization basically disappeared sometime after 1750 BCE.
2. Then there was a long period of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ migration, people from the Caucasus who left behind religious texts, called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; the earliest texts of what will come to be known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ system is one of India’s most enduring and fascinating institutions. Let us read from one of the Vedas about Purusha, the universe-pervading spirit, was divided and gives a divine explanation for the caste system.
* ***Brahmins*** – the priests, who as Purusha’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ speak (to the gods), are at the top.
* ***Kshatriyas*** – from Purusha’s arms became the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,
* ***Vaishyas*** – the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who provide money for the priests and the warriors came from Purusha’s thighs.
* And the ***Sudras*** – are at the bottom. They’re the feet, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who are the foundation of the social order.
1. The Caste System is the foundation for another big concept in Hinduism, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, basically one’s role in life and society and it is defined primarily by birth and by caste.
2. Samsara, Moksha, and Karma – There are both \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ reasons for doing your dharma. Right, the social reason is obvious that dharma and caste combine for excellent social cohesion.
* The concept of ***Samsara***, or the cycle of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, often called reincarnation, is basic idea is that when you die your soul is transferred to another living thing as it is being born. And if you fulfill your dharma, things improve and you get re-born into a higher being.
* The ultimate goal is to be released from the “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”, this is called ***moksha***.
* The law that holds all this together is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which is summarized really nicely in the Aranyaka Upanishad: “*The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.”*

*There was this prince, Siddhartha Gautama, whose father kept him locked away in a palace because a prophecy foretold that the family would lose the kingdom if he ever left. But as house arrests go, this was a good one: Siddhartha had great food, great entertainment, and a hot cousin for a wife, etc. But he suspected there was more to life, so he snuck out of the palace a few times. On these travels, he encountered an old man, a sick man, and finally a corpse. Having realized the ubiquity of suffering, Siddhartha left the palace, renounced the crown and sought out all the holiest men to try to find out how it could be possible that life would come to such a terrible end.*

1. Eventually Gautama became an ascetic, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and meditating for days at a time, hoping to find \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And finally, after meditating for about a month under a tree, it came to him. Nirvana. He finally understood the meaning of life and began teaching it to people who would become his disciples. He had become the Buddha, which means teacher, and he taught the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They are:
* All life is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* The source of suffering is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Not just sexual desire, but all wanting of stuff and prestige.
* To stop suffering, you must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ yourself of desire.
* So how do you do it? By following the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which as you might suspect is a set of eight prescriptions on how to live.
1. So as a religion, Buddhism involves a lot of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and moderation and if you’re a Buddhist monk you don’t get to have power like most holy people do; you have to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ everything.
2. Buddhism eventually migrated to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and became a religion with fun rituals and all kinds of great stuff that Siddhartha Gautama probably wouldn’t even have recognized.
3. Buddhism was very attractive if you were a low-caste Hindu, because there is no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ system. In theory, anyone who follows the Eightfold path and renounces desire can be freed from suffering and achieve nirvana, maybe even in THIS life instead of having to get re-born for maybe millennia and knowing that each time there is only a tiny chance that you will end up something awesome.
4. For most of Indian history, India it was not one \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ place; it was tons of different principalities and city-states and everything else. But India did experience indigenous political unification twice, first under the Mauryan Dynasty in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ century BCE. And then again under the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dynasty from the 300’s to the 500’s CE. 9:38
5. One particular leader from the Mauryan Dynasty, **Ashoka**, attempted to rule through quasi-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ principles from 269 to 232 BCE. Ashoka was initially a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who ended up expanding the empire that his grandfather started. Ashoka experienced this conversion to Buddhism after he saw his own army devastate the Kingdom of Kalinga. So, Ashoka built stupas, mound-like monuments to the Buddha, all over his kingdom to show his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He also put up pillars throughout his empire that proclaimed his benevolent rule.
6. Ashoka’s empire wasn’t actually very Buddhist because ultimately Buddhism isn’t that concerned with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the world. Buddhism argues that the fulfillment of the self will lead to the order of the world. In the end, Ashoka’s empire didn’t outlast him by much, and soon enough Buddhism \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in India, almost to the point of extinction.
7. Hinduism is the most flexible of all the world religions, which is part of the reason it’s often described as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The belief that god(s) can take many different forms makes it easy for Hinduism to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ other religious traditions; which is exactly what happened with Buddhism. In time the Buddha came to be worshipped as another \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of one of the Hindu gods, and not as a mortal teacher. So in the end, Hinduism, rather than purging the Buddha, enveloped him.
8. So all this means that while Hinduism has a tremendous amount of variety and flexibility, its core tenets of samsara, karma, and the caste system have provided a remarkable amount of cultural and social \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the Indian subcontinent for millennia.