

Ancient Indian Contributions to Civilization

1. Art and Architecture

Ancient Indian art stressed religious symbolism involving humans and animal statues, cave wall paintings, and temple construction. Indian architects used wood, brick, and stone in buildings featuring pointed domes, columns and towers.



2. Literature

Ancient India produced literature written in the “Sanskrit” language. The “Vedas” contain hymns, prayers, and religious principles. The “Mahabharata” and the “Ramayana” are great epic poems, often compared with the Homeric epics of Greece. Hindu storytellers delighted in animal fables illustrating morals. These stories possibly provided the basis for Aesop’s fables in Greece. Kalidasa, a 5th century A.D. poet and playwright is sometimes called “India’s Shakespeare”.

3. Science and Technology

Indian physicians diagnosed major diseases, prescribed medicine, and placed the sick in hospitals. They observed an ethical code similar to the Greek “Hippocratic Oath”. The Indians applied chemical principals in dyeing cloth, tanning leather, manufacturing soap and glass, and refining iron ore. Later, the process for purifying iron passed to the Arabs and then to Medieval Europe.

4. Mathematics

In mathematics, India was the most advanced of the ancient civilizations. Indian mathematicians devised the concept of zero, employed the decimal system, developed algebra, and created our modern written numbers. Transmitted by the Arabs to Medieval Europe, these numeric symbols are misleadingly called “Arabic numerals”.

5. Hindu Religion

Hinduism teaches that people must purify their souls by performing religious duties and living righteously. “Reincarnation” is the belief in the rebirth of the soul in another body after death. The two sacred objects are cows and the Ganges River.

6. Buddhist Religion

Buddhism teaches that life consists of suffering caused by desire. A person can eliminate desire by following righteous living. Righteous living consists of renouncing (giving up) material pleasures, controlling emotions, meditating selflessly, respecting all living creatures, acquiring knowledge, cultivating goodness, speaking truth, and acting generously.

Questions to Answer

1. How did the ancient Indians contribute to art and architecture?
2. How did ancient Indians contribute to literature?
3. How did ancient Indians contribute to science and technology?
4. How did ancient Indian contribute to mathematics?