Ancient India

1. What was the land like in Ancient India?

http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/geography/home_set.html
Click this link to learn about important places and to see searchable maps.

2. What happened in the Indus Valley?

http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/indus/home_set.html
Click this link to explore the civilization and see their artifacts.
3. Who is Buddha? Why is he important?

http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/buddha/home_set.html
Click this link to learn about his life and teachings.

4. What is Hinduism? Why is it important in India?

http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/hinduism/home_set.html
Click this link to learn about the beliefs of Hinduism and their Gods and Goddesses.
5. What is Indian writing like?

http://www.ancientindia.co.uk/writing/home_set.html
Find out by clicking here.

6. The Golden Temple

The Harmandir Sahib (or Hari Mandir) in Amritsar, Punjab, is the holiest shrine in Sikhism. Previously (and still more commonly) known as the Golden Temple, it was officially renamed Harmandir Sahib in March 2005. The temple (or gurdwara) is a major pilgrimage destination for Sikhs from all over the world, as well as an increasingly popular tourist attraction.

Unlike many historical sacred sites, the Golden Temple of Amritsar is still fully alive with religious fervor and sacredness, and visitors are welcomed to join in the experience. Although the building itself has great historical and architectural interest, it is the Golden Temple’s great spiritual meaning for Sikh believers (and others) that is most memorable to visitors. In a country that is exceptionally rich with vibrant devotion, Frommer's rates the Golden Temple "the most tangibly spiritual place in the country."

7. Learn more about daily life in Ancient India by clicking below:

http://india.mrdonn.org/indus.html

8. Personal Hygiene in Ancient India from ABC CLIO

Grooming practices in ancient India included bathing and the use of cleansing tools and cleansing substances, as well as scented oils and powders, cosmetics, and ornate jewelry.

The country is rich in scented flowers, resins, woods, and sources for musk, and fragrances were made for religious purposes, as well as for household and personal use. It became customary for women to bathe daily in perfumed water for a month before their wedding day. An old Hindu custom, still followed today, dictates that a handmaiden will rub the bride with fragrant ointments on the day of her wedding. The bridal couple sits underneath a canopy that is scented with sandalwood.

Indian women used a variety of cosmetics, including perfume ointments and a mascara-like substance for their eyelashes. They applied color to their hair, nails, and bodies. Directions for making cosmetics appear in the Kama Sutra, written by Vatsyayana. Both men and women used a paste made from ground-up sandalwood on their skin. This paste was sometimes tinted and used to paint designs on the body. Men and women of all social classes reddened their lips and used eyeshadow.

High-ranking women and the king's mistresses were carefully groomed. Their clothing was perfumed with incense, and their bodies were massaged with fragrant oils and ointments. Colored designs were applied to their skin, and their eyelids were tinted with a gold or silver paste.

Both men and women used wooden picks to clean their teeth and ears. They also used tweezers and shaving razors, as well as instruments to apply cosmetic substances to their faces.

Both genders also wore earrings. Hair was often adorned with jewels in the parts, and ivory combs were used in the hair. Ankle bracelets often adorn that body part.

A wealthy man prepared for the day by performing several morning grooming rituals, including cleaning his teeth with a special root, then chewing a plant substance to sweeten his breath. He then applied perfumed ointments and used eyeshadow and lip rouge and bathed. On alternating days, he used oil on his body, had a massage, then exercised and had his bath. After the bath came a second application of perfumed ointments and facial makeup. Men of fashion painted designs on their arms and placed
a red mark on their foreheads. About twice a week, men shaved their faces. They shaved their other body hair once each five to ten days.

The beauty spot (tilaka) is one of the most recognized cosmetic applications traditional in India. Women applied a red or yellow stain, from the resin of the lac-insect, for this purpose. Women also used this dye to tint the hands and feet. Perfumers sold these dyes in their shops, along with scented oils, incense sticks, eye salves, and other cosmetic items.

Victoria Sherrow


9.

Village Life from ABC CLIO

The village community was the most basic focus of economic life in traditional India. Villages were typically rural and agricultural. The most common crops produced were wheat, barley, millet, rice, beans, and lentils. Sugar cane and cotton were other widespread crops, and a variety of spices—cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, and black pepper—were grown in the south of India. Bananas and mangoes were the most common fruit harvested.

Cattle were employed for plowing the fields. From cows came milk and curds, as well as ghee, made from melted butter with the fat skimmed off. In ancient India, the cow was revered, and although slaughter of cows was forbidden in later times, in the era of the vegetarian emperor Asoka, cow slaughter was still permitted, although this practice may have ceased after Asoka embraced Buddhism.

At the level of the village, economic distribution of labor relied on the jajmani system. Within the caste system, various jati were specialized for different kinds of labor: carpentry, weaving, tailoring, and so on. Craftsmanship was the cornerstone of the economy. Goods produced, as well as crops, were distributed in a natural economy whereby each worker produced with regard to the good of the whole community. The same held for crops: food was collected and distributed by the head of the community, and shares were distributed to each family in the community.

Matthew Bingley
