**India**, officially the **Republic of India** ([ISO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_15919): ***Bhārat Gaṇarājya***),[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-34) is a country in [South Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia). It is the [seventh-largest country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area) by area and the most populous country in the world.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-35)[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-36) Bounded by the [Indian Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Ocean) on the south, the [Arabian Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Sea) on the southwest, and the [Bay of Bengal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Bengal) on the southeast, it shares land borders with [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan) to the west;[[j]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-37) [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China), [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal), and [Bhutan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhutan) to the north; and [Bangladesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh) and [Myanmar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar) to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka) and the [Maldives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maldives); its [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andaman_and_Nicobar_Islands) share a maritime border with [Thailand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand), Myanmar, and [Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia).

[Modern humans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_humans) arrived on the [Indian subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent) from Africa no later than 55,000 years ago.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-PetragliaAllchin-38)[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Dyson2018p1-39)[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Fisher2018p23-40) Their long occupation, initially in varying forms of isolation as hunter-gatherers, has made the region highly diverse, second only to Africa in human [genetic diversity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_diversity).[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Dyson2018-28a-41) [Settled life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic) emerged on the subcontinent in the western margins of the [Indus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_River) [river basin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_basin) 9,000 years ago, evolving gradually into the [Indus Valley Civilisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilisation) of the third millennium BCE.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-2-42) By 1200 BCE, an [archaic form](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-language) of [Sanskrit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskrit), an [Indo-European language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_language), had [diffused](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-cultural_diffusion) into India from the northwest.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Lowe2015-43)[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-4-Rigveda-44) Its evidence today is found in the hymns of the [*Rigveda*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigveda). Preserved by a resolutely vigilant [oral tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_tradition), the *Rigveda* records the dawning of [Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) in India.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-3-45) The [Dravidian languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dravidian_languages) of India were supplanted in the northern and western regions.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-4-46) By 400 BCE, [stratification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_stratification) and [exclusion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_exclusion) by [caste](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste) had emerged within Hinduism,[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Dyson2018-16a-47) and [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Buddhism_in_India) and [Jainism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jainism) had arisen, proclaiming [social orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_order) unlinked to heredity.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Fisher2018-59-48) Early political consolidations gave rise to the loose-knit [Maurya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurya_Empire) and [Gupta Empires](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gupta_Empire) based in the [Ganges Basin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges_Basin).[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-5-49) Their collective [era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Era) was suffused with wide-ranging creativity,[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-6-50) but also marked by the declining status of women,[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-7-51) and the incorporation of [untouchability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Untouchability) into an organised system of belief.[[k]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-53)[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKulkeRothermund200493-52) In [South India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_India), the [Middle kingdoms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_kingdoms_of_India#The_Deccan_plateau_and_South) exported Dravidian-languages scripts and religious cultures to the kingdoms of [Southeast Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia).[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-AsherAsher2006-17-54)

In the early medieval era, [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), and [Zoroastrianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism) became established on India's southern and western coasts.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-8-55) Muslim armies from [Central Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia) intermittently overran India's northern plains,[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-13-56) eventually founding the [Delhi Sultanate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delhi_Sultanate), and drawing northern India into the cosmopolitan [networks of medieval Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age).[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-10-57) In the 15th century, the [Vijayanagara Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Empire) created a long-lasting composite Hindu culture in south India.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-AsherAsher2006-74-58) In the [Punjab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab), [Sikhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism) emerged, rejecting institutionalised religion.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-AsherAsher2006-267-59) The [Mughal Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Empire), in 1526, ushered in two centuries of relative peace,[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-AsherAsher2006-152-60) leaving a legacy of luminous architecture.[[l]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-62)[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Fisher2018-106-61) Gradually expanding [rule of the British East India Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company_rule_in_India) followed, turning India into a colonial economy, but also consolidating its [sovereignty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereignty).[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-11-63) [British Crown rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Raj) began in 1858. The rights promised to Indians were granted slowly,[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Combined-12-64)[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPeers2013[httpsbooksgooglecombooksiddyQuAgAAQBAJpgPA76_76]-65) but [technological changes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution) were introduced, and modern ideas of education and the public life took root.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-EmbreeHay1988-66) A pioneering and influential nationalist movement emerged, which was noted for nonviolent resistance and became the major factor in ending British rule.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Marshall2001-67)[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Chiriyankandath2016-68) In 1947 the British Indian Empire was [partitioned](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India) into two independent [dominions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion#India,_Pakistan_and_Bangladesh),[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-fisher-partition-69)[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-chatterji-partition-70)[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-talbot-sing-71)[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-khan-great-partition-72) a Hindu-majority [Dominion of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_of_India) and a Muslim-majority [Dominion of Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_of_Pakistan), amid large-scale loss of life and an unprecedented migration.[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-73)

India has been a [federal republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_republic) since 1950, governed through a democratic [parliamentary system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system). It is a [pluralistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluralism_(political_philosophy)), [multilingual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multilingualism) and [multi-ethnic society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism). India's population grew from 361 million in 1951 to almost 1.4 billion in 2022.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Dyson2018-219-74) During the same time, its nominal [per capita income](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Per_capita_income) increased from US$64 annually to US$1,498, and its literacy rate from 16.6% to 74%. From being a comparatively destitute country in 1951,[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Fisher2018-8-75) India has become a [fast-growing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_real_GDP_growth_rate) [major economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G20) and a hub for [information technology services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_technology_in_India), with an expanding middle class.[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-MetcalfMetcalf2012-265-76) It has [a space programme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Space_Research_Organisation) which includes several planned or completed [extraterrestrial missions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Solar_System_probes). Indian movies, music, and spiritual teachings play an increasing role in global culture.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-MetcalfMetcalf2012-266-77) India has substantially reduced its rate of poverty, though at the cost of increasing economic inequality.[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-Dyson2018-216-a-78) India is a [nuclear-weapon state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_states_with_nuclear_weapons), which ranks high in [military expenditure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures). It has disputes over [Kashmir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir) with its neighbours, Pakistan and China, unresolved since the mid-20th century.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-kashmir-disputes-79) Among the socio-economic challenges India faces are [gender inequality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_inequality_in_India), [child malnutrition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malnutrition_in_India),[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-NarayanJohn2018-lead-80) and rising levels of [air pollution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_pollution_in_India).[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-BalakrishnanDey2019-lead-81) India's land is [megadiverse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megadiverse_country), with four [biodiversity hotspots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biodiversity_hotspots).[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-IUCN-India-82) Its forest cover comprises 21.7% of its area.[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-ISFR-83) [India's wildlife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wildlife_of_India), which has traditionally been viewed with tolerance in [India's culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_India),[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKaranthGopal2005374-84) is supported among these forests, and elsewhere, in [protected habitats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protected_areas_of_India).