

Sri Lanka History Overview

1. Prehistoric Era

Sri Lanka's history dates back over 125,000 years, with evidence of prehistoric settlements such as the Balangoda Man. Early humans practiced hunting and gathering, later forming more complex societies.

2. Ancient Kingdoms (543 BCE – 1232 CE)

According to the Mahavamsa, Prince Vijaya arrived from North India around 543 BCE, marking the start of recorded history. The Anuradhapura Kingdom (377 BCE–1017 CE) was famous for irrigation systems, stupas like Ruwanwelisaya, and the spread of Buddhism under King Devanampiya Tissa with the arrival of Arahata Mahinda.

The Polonnaruwa period (1017–1232 CE) saw rulers like King Parakramabahu I who built Parakrama Samudra and strengthened the kingdom's military and economic systems.

3. Transitional Kingdoms (13th–16th Century)

Power shifted across Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, Kurunegala, Gampola, and Kotte. The Jaffna Kingdom in the North flourished during this period with strong Tamil influence.

4. Colonial Era (1505–1948)

Sri Lanka was colonized in three stages:

- Portuguese (1505–1658): Controlled coastal areas, introduced Christianity, and fought with local kingdoms.
- Dutch (1658–1796): Reformed administration, codified laws like Thesawalamai, and enhanced trade.
- British (1796–1948): Unified the island in 1815 after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom, expanded plantations, railways, and modern education.

5. Independence and Post-colonial Era (1948–present)

Sri Lanka gained independence on 4 February 1948. Major developments:

- 1972: Became a republic, renamed Sri Lanka.
- 1978: New constitution introduced executive presidency.
- 1983–2009: Civil war between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE.
- 2009–present: Focus on rebuilding, economic development, and reconciliation.

6. Cultural Heritage

Sri Lanka is home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Dambulla, Kandy Temple of the Tooth, Galle Fort, Sinharaja Forest, and the Central Highlands.

7. Modern Sri Lanka

The nation is known for tea production, tourism, biodiversity, and cultural diversity. It continues to face economic and political challenges but remains significant in South Asian history.

This document provides a concise yet comprehensive overview suitable for educational and research purposes.