

The [Indian subcontinent](#), the great landmass of [South Asia](#), is the home of one of the world's oldest and most influential civilizations. In this article, the subcontinent, which for historical purposes is usually called simply "India," is understood to [comprise](#) the areas of not only the present-day Republic of India (free from British rule since August 15, 1947, celebrated as the [country's Independence Day](#)) but also the republics of Pakistan (partitioned from India in 1947) and Bangladesh (which formed the eastern part of Pakistan until its independence in 1971). For the histories of these latter two countries since their creation, see [Pakistan](#) and [Bangladesh](#).

Since early times the Indian subcontinent appears to have provided an attractive habitat for human occupation. Toward the south it is effectively sheltered by wide expanses of ocean, which tended to isolate it culturally in ancient times, while to the north it is protected by the massive ranges of the [Himalayas](#), which also sheltered it from the Arctic winds and the air currents of [Central Asia](#). Only in the northwest and northeast is there easier access by land, and it was through those two sectors that most of the early contacts with the outside world took place.

Within the framework of hills and mountains represented by the Indo-Iranian borderlands on the west, the Indo-Myanmar borderlands in the east, and the Himalayas to the north, the subcontinent may in broadest terms be divided into two major divisions: in the north, the basins of the [Indus](#) and [Ganges](#) (Ganga) [rivers](#) (the [Indo-Gangetic Plain](#)) and, to the south, the block of Archean rocks that forms the [Deccan](#) plateau region. The expansive [alluvial plain](#) of the river basins provided the [environment](#) and focus for the rise of two great phases of city life: the civilization of the Indus valley, known as the [Indus civilization](#), during the 3rd millennium bce; and, during the 1st millennium bce, that of the Ganges. To the south of this zone, and separating it from the peninsula proper, is a belt of hills and forests, running generally from west to east and to this day largely inhabited by tribal people. This belt has played mainly a negative role throughout Indian history in that it remained relatively thinly populated and did not form the focal point of any of the principal regional cultural developments of South Asia. However, it is [traversed](#) by various routes linking the more-attractive areas north and south of it. The [Narmada](#) (Narbada) River flows through this belt toward the west, mostly along the [Vindhya Range](#), which has long been regarded as the symbolic boundary between northern and southern India.

The northern parts of India represent a series of contrasting regions, each with its own distinctive cultural history and its own distinctive population. In the northwest the valleys of the [Baluchistan](#) uplands (now largely in [Balochistan](#), Pakistan) are a low-rainfall area, producing mainly wheat and barley and having a low density of population. Its residents, mainly tribal people, are in many respects closely akin to their Iranian neighbours. The [adjacent](#) Indus plains are also an area of extremely low rainfall, but the annual flooding of the river in ancient times and the exploitation of its waters by canal irrigation in the modern period have [enhanced](#) agricultural productivity, and the population is correspondingly denser than that of Baluchistan. The [Indus valley](#) may be divided into three parts: in the north are the plains of the five tributary rivers of the [Punjab](#) (Persian: Panjāb, "Five Waters"); in the center the consolidated waters of the Indus and its tributaries flow through the alluvial plains of Sind; and in the south the waters pass naturally into the Indus delta. East of the latter is the Great Indian, or [Thar, Desert](#), which is in turn bounded on the east by a hill system known as the [Aravali Range](#), the northernmost extent of the Deccan [plateau](#) region. Beyond them is the hilly region of [Rajasthan](#) and the [Malwa Plateau](#). To the south is the [Kathiawar Peninsula](#), forming both geographically and culturally an extension of [Rajasthan](#). All of these

regions have a relatively denser population than the preceding group, but for topographical reasons they have tended to be somewhat isolated, at least during historical times.

East of the Punjab and Rajasthan, northern India develops into a series of belts running broadly west to east and following the line of the foothills of the Himalayan ranges in the north. The southern belt consists of a hilly, forested area broken by the numerous escarpments in close association with the Vindhya Range, including the Bhandar, [Rewa](#), and Kaimur plateaus. Between the hills of central India and the Himalayas lies the Ganges River valley proper, [constituting](#) an area of high-density population, moderate rainfall, and high agricultural productivity. Archaeology suggests that, from the beginning of the 1st millennium bce, [rice](#) cultivation has played a large part in supporting this population. The [Ganges valley](#) divides into three major parts: to the west is the [Ganges-Yamuna Doab](#) (the land area that is formed by the [confluence](#) of the two rivers); east of the confluence lies the middle Ganges valley, in which population tends to increase and cultivation of rice predominates; and to the southeast lies the extensive delta of the combined Ganges and [Brahmaputra](#) rivers. The Brahmaputra flows from the northeast, rising from the Tibetan Himalayas and emerging from the mountains into the [Assam](#) valley, being bounded on the east by the Patkai Bum Range and the [Naga Hills](#) and on the south by the Mikir, [Khasi](#), [Jaintia](#), and [Garó](#) hills. There is plenty of evidence that influences reached India from the northeast in ancient times, even if they are less prominent than those that arrived from the northwest.

Along the Deccan plateau there is a gradual eastward declivity, which dispenses its major river systems—the [Mahanadi](#), [Godavari](#), [Krishna](#), and [Kaveri](#) (Cauvery)—into the [Bay of Bengal](#). Rising some 3,000 feet (1,000 metres) or more along the western edge of the Deccan, the escarpment known as the [Western Ghats](#) traps the moisture of winds from the [Arabian Sea](#), most notably during the southwest [monsoon](#), creating a tropical monsoon climate along the narrow western littoral and depriving the Deccan of significant precipitation. The absence of snowpack in the south Indian uplands makes the region dependent entirely on rainfall for its streamflow. The arrival of the southwest monsoon in June is thus a pivotal annual event in peninsular [culture](#).

India from the Paleolithic Period to the decline of the Indus civilization

The earliest periods of Indian history are known only through reconstructions from archaeological evidence. Since the late 20th century, much new data has emerged, allowing a far fuller reconstruction than was formerly possible. This section will discuss five major periods: (1) the early prehistoric period (before the 8th millennium bce), (2) the period of the prehistoric agriculturalists and pastoralists (approximately the 8th to the mid-4th millennium bce), (3) the Early Indus, or Early Harappan, Period (so named for the excavated city of [Harappa](#) in eastern Pakistan), [witnessing](#) the emergence of the first cities in the Indus River system (c. 3500–2600 bce), (4) the Indus, or Harappan, civilization (c. 2600–2000 bce, or perhaps ending as late as 1750 bce), and (5) the Post-Urban Period, which follows the Indus civilization and precedes the rise of cities in northern India during the second quarter of the 1st millennium bce (c. 1750–750 bce).

The materials available for a reconstruction of the history of India prior to the 3rd century bce are almost entirely the products of archaeological research. Traditional and textual sources, transmitted orally for many centuries, are available from the closing centuries of the 2nd millennium bce, but their use depends largely on the extent to which any passage can be dated or associated with archaeological

evidence. For the rise of civilization in the Indus valley and for contemporary events in other parts of the subcontinent, the evidence of archaeology is still the principal source of information. Even when it becomes possible to read the short inscriptions of the Harappan seals, it is unlikely that they will provide much information to supplement other sources. In those circumstances it is necessary to approach the early history of India largely through the eyes of the archaeologists, and it will be wise to retain a balance between an objective [assessment](#) of archaeological data and its [synthetic](#) interpretation.

The early prehistoric period

In the mid-19th century, archaeologists in southern India identified hand axes comparable to those of [Stone Age](#) Europe. For nearly a century thereafter, evaluation of a burgeoning body of evidence consisted in the attempt to correlate Indian chronologies with the well-documented European and Mediterranean chronologies. As the vast majority of early finds were from surface sites, they long remained without precise dates or cultural [contexts](#). More recently, however, the excavation of numerous cave and dune sites has yielded [artifacts](#) in association with organic material that can be dated using the [carbon-14](#) method, and the techniques of thermoluminescent and paleomagnetic analysis now permit dating of pottery fragments and other inorganic materials. Research beginning in the late 20th century has focused on the unique environment of the subcontinent as the [context](#) for a [cultural evolution analogous](#) to, but not uniform with, that of other regions. Increasing understanding of [plate tectonics](#), to cite one development, has greatly advanced this endeavour.

Most outlines of Indian prehistory have employed [nomenclature](#) once thought to reflect a worldwide sequence of human cultural evolution. The European concept of the Old Stone Age, or [Paleolithic Period](#) (comprising Lower, Middle, and Upper stages), remains useful with regard to South Asia in identifying levels of technology, apart from any universal time line. Similarly, what has been called the Indian [Mesolithic Period](#) (Middle Stone Age) corresponds in general typological terms to that of Europe. For the subsequent periods, the [designations Neolithic Period](#) (New Stone Age) and [Chalcolithic Age](#) (Copper-Stone Age) also are applied, but increasingly, as archaeology has yielded more-detailed cultural profiles for those periods, scholars have come to emphasize the subsistence bases of early societies—e.g., hunting and gathering, pastoralism, and agriculture. The terms [Early Harappan](#) and Harappan (from the site where remains of a major city of the Indus civilization were discovered in 1921) are used primarily in a chronological way but also loosely in a cultural sense, relating respectively to periods or [cultures](#) that preceded the appearance of city life in the Indus valley and to the Indus civilization itself.

The Indian [Paleolithic](#)

The oldest [artifacts](#) yet found on the subcontinent, marking what may be called the beginning of the Indian [Lower Paleolithic](#), come from the western end of the [Shiwalik Range](#), near [Rawalpindi](#) in northern [Pakistan](#). These quartzite pebble tools and flakes date to about two million years ago, according to paleomagnetic analysis, and represent a pre-hand-ax industry of a type that appears to have persisted for an extensive period thereafter. The artifacts are associated with extremely rich sedimentary evidence and fossil fauna, but thus far no correlative hominin (i.e., members of the human lineage) remains have been found. In the same region the earliest [hand axes](#) (of the type commonly associated with [Acheulean industry](#)) have been dated paleomagnetically to about 500,000 years ago.

The [Great Indian Desert](#), straddling what is now the southern half of the India-Pakistan border, supplied significant archaeological materials in the late 20th century. Hand axes found at Didwana, [Rajasthan](#), similar to those from the Shiwalik Range, yield slightly younger dates of about 400,000 years ago. Examination of the desert soil strata and other evidence has revealed a correlation between prevailing climates and the successive levels of technology that [constitute](#) the Paleolithic. For example, a prolonged humid phase, as attested by reddish brown soil with a deep profile, appears to have commenced some 140,000 years ago and lasted until about 25,000 years ago, roughly the extent of the [Middle Paleolithic Period](#). During that time the area of the present desert provided a rich [environment](#) for hunting. The Rohri Hills, located at the [Indus River](#) margins of the desert, contain a group of sites associated with sources of chert, a type of stone that is a principal raw material for making tools and weapons. Evidence surrounding these chert bands—in an [alluvial plain](#) otherwise largely devoid of stone—suggests their development as a major factory center during the Middle Paleolithic. The transition in this same region to a drier climate during the period from about 40,000 to about 25,000 years ago coincides with the onset of the [Upper Paleolithic](#), which lasted until about 15,000 years ago. The basic [innovation](#) marking this stage is the production of parallel-sided blades from a prepared core. Also, tools of the Upper Paleolithic exhibit [adaptations](#) for working particular materials, such as leather, wood, and bone. The earliest rock paintings yet discovered in the region date to the Upper Paleolithic.

Other important Paleolithic sites that have been excavated include those at Hunsgi in [Karnataka](#) state, at Sanghao cave in [North-West Frontier Province](#), Pakistan, and in the [Vindhya Range](#) separating the Ganges basin from the [Deccan](#) plateau. At the latter, local workers readily identified a weathered Upper Paleolithic limestone carving as a representation of a [mother goddess](#).

[Mesolithic](#) hunters

The progressive diminution in the size of stone artifacts that began in the Middle Paleolithic reached its climax in the small parallel-sided blades and microliths of what has been called the Indian Mesolithic. A great proliferation of Mesolithic [cultures](#) is evident throughout India, although they are known almost exclusively from surface collections of tools. Cultures of this period exhibited a wide variety of subsistence patterns, including hunting and gathering, fishing, and, at least for part of the period, some herding and small-scale agriculture. It may be inferred from numerous examples that hunting cultures frequently coexisted and interacted with agricultural and pastoral [communities](#). These relationships must have continually varied from region to region as a result of environmental and other factors. Strikingly, such patterns of interaction persisted in the subcontinent throughout the remainder of the prehistoric period and long into the historic, with vestiges still discernible in some areas in the 20th century.

Thus, chronologically, the Mesolithic cultures cover an enormous span. In [Sri Lanka](#) several Mesolithic sites have been dated to as early as about 30,000 years ago, the oldest yet recorded for the period in [South Asia](#). At the other end of the subcontinent, in caves of the [Hindu Kush](#) in northern [Afghanistan](#), evidence of occupation dating to between 15,000 and 10,000 bce represents the Epipaleolithic Stage, which may be considered to fall within the Mesolithic. The domestication of sheep and goats is thought to have begun in this region and period.

Many of the [caves](#) and rock shelters of central India contain rock paintings depicting a variety of subjects, including game animals and such human activities as hunting, honey collecting, and dancing. This art appears to have developed from Upper Paleolithic [precursors](#) and reveals much about life in the period. Along with the art have come increasingly clear indications that some of the caves were sites of religious activity.

The earliest agriculturalists and pastoralists

[Neolithic agriculture](#) in the Indus valley and Baluchistan

The Indo-Iranian borderlands form the eastern extension of the [Iranian plateau](#) and in some ways mirror the environment of the [Fertile Crescent](#) (the arc of agricultural lands extending from the [Tigris-Euphrates river system](#) to the Nile valley) in the [Middle East](#). Across the plateau, lines of communication existed from early antiquity, which would suggest a broad parallelism of developments at both the eastern and western extremities. During the late 20th century, knowledge of early [settlements](#) on the borders of the [Indus](#) system and [Baluchistan](#) was revolutionized by excavations at [Mehrgarh](#) and elsewhere.

The group of sites at Mehrgarh provides evidence of some five or six thousand years of occupation [comprising](#) two major periods, the first from the 8th through the 6th millennium bce and the second from the 5th through the 4th (and possibly the 3rd) millennium. The earliest evidence occurs in a mound 23 feet (7 metres) deep discovered beneath massive alluvial deposits. Two subphases of Period I are apparent from the mound artifacts.

Phase IA, dating to the 8th–7th millennium bce, was an aceramic (i.e., lacking pottery) Neolithic occupation. The main tools were stone blades, including lunates and triangles, some probably [mounted](#) in wooden hafts with bitumen mastic; a relatively small number of ground stone axes have been found. Domestication of wheat and barley apparently reached the area sometime during this phase, as did that of sheep and goats, although the preponderance of gazelle bones among the animal remains suggests continued dependence on hunting. Houses of mud brick date from the beginning of this phase and continue throughout the occupation. Accompaniments to the simple burial of human remains included shell or stone-bead necklaces, baskets, and occasionally young caprids (both sheep and goats) slaughtered for the purpose.

Phase 1B, dating to the 7th–6th millennium, is characterized by the emergence of pottery and improvements in agriculture. By the beginning of Phase 1B, cattle (apparently [Bos indicus](#), the Indian humped variety) had come to predominate over game animals, as well as over sheep and goats. A new type of building, the small regular compartments of which identify it almost certainly as a granary, first appeared during this phase and became prevalent in Period II, indicating the frequent occurrence of crop [surpluses](#). [Burial](#) took a more elaborate form—a funerary chamber was dug at one end of a pit, and, after inhumation, the chamber was sealed by a mud brick wall. From the latter phase of Period I also come the first small, hand-modeled female figurines of unburned clay.

The Period I evidence at Mehrgarh provides a clear picture of an early agricultural settlement exhibiting domestic architecture and a variety of well-established crafts. The use of seashells and of various semiprecious stones, including turquoise and [lapis lazuli](#), indicates the existence of trade networks extending from the coast and perhaps also from [Central Asia](#).

Striking changes characterize Period II. It appears that some major tectonic event took place at the beginning of the period (c. 5500 bce), causing the [deposition](#) of great quantities of silt on the plain, almost completely burying the original mound at Mehrgarh. Nearly all features of the earlier [culture](#) persisted, though in altered form. There was an increase in the use of pottery. The granary structures proliferated, sometimes on a larger scale. The remains of several massive brick walls and platforms suggest something approaching monumental architecture. Evidence appears of several new crafts, including the first examples of the use of copper and ivory. The area of the settlement appears to have grown to accommodate an increasing population.

While the settlement at Mehrgarh merits extensive consideration, it should not be perceived as a unique site. There are indications (not [yet](#) fully explored) that other equally early sites may exist in other parts of Baluchistan and elsewhere on the Indo-Iranian borderlands.

In the northern parts of the Indus system, the earliest known settlements are substantially later than Mehrgarh. For example, at Sarai Khola (near the ruins of [Taxila](#) in the Pakistan Punjab) the earliest occupation dates from the end of the 4th millennium and clearly represents a tradition quite distinct from that of contemporary Sind or Balochistan, with ground stone axes and plain burnished red-brown pottery. The same is the case at Burzahom in the [Vale of Kashmir](#), where deep pit dwellings are associated with ground stone axes, bone tools, and gray burnished pottery. Evidence of the “aceramic Neolithic” stage is reported at Gufkral, another site in the [Kashmir](#) region, which has been dated by radiocarbon to the 3rd [millennium](#) and later.

Developments in the Ganges basin

In the hills to the south of the Ganges (Ganga) valley, a group of sites has been assigned to the “Vindhya Neolithic”; for at least one of these, Koldihwa, dates as early as the 7th millennium have been reported. The sites contain circular huts made of timber posts and thatch; associated [implements](#) and vessels include stone blades, ground stone axes, bone tools, and crude handmade pottery, often bearing the marks of cords or baskets used in shaping the clay. In one case a small cattle pen has been excavated. Rice husks occur, though whether from wild or [cultivated](#) varieties remains to be determined. There exists considerable uncertainty about the chronology of these settlements; very few radiocarbon dates penetrate further than the 2nd millennium.

Earliest settlements in peninsular India

The earliest dates recorded for settlements in peninsular India belong to the opening centuries of the 3rd millennium. A pastoral character dominates the evidence. In the northern parts of [Karnataka](#), the nucleus from which stone-ax-using pastoralists appear to have spread to many parts of the southern peninsula has been located. The earliest radiocarbon dates obtained in this area are from ash mounds formed by the burning on these sites of great masses of cow dung inside cattle pens. These indicate that the first settlers were seminomadic and that they had large herds of [Brahman](#) (zebu) cattle. The earliest known settlements, which were located at Kodekal and Utnur, date to about 2900 bce. Other important sites are Brahmagiri and Tekkalkota in [Karnataka](#) and Utnur and Nagarajunikonda in [Andhra Pradesh](#). At Tekkalkota three [gold](#) ornaments were excavated, indicating exploitation of local ore deposits, but no other metal objects have been found, suggesting a relative scarcity of metals. These early sites produced distinctive burnished gray pottery, smaller quantities of black-on-red painted pottery, stone axes, and

bone points, and in some instances evidence of a stone-blade industry. The axes have a generally oval section and triangular form with pointed butts. Among bone remains, those of cattle are in the majority, while those of sheep or goats are also present. Other settlements have been excavated in recent years in this region, but so far they have produced dates from the 2nd millennium, suggesting that the [culture](#) continued with little change for many centuries. Stone axes of a generally similar form have been found widely throughout the southern peninsula and may be taken as indications of the spread of pastoralists throughout the region during the 2nd millennium bce.

Earliest settlements in eastern India

Archaeologists have long postulated the existence of [Neolithic](#) settlements in the eastern border regions of [South Asia](#) on the basis of widespread collections of ground stone axes and adzes, often of distinctive forms, comparable to those of [Southeast Asia](#) and south [China](#). There is, however, little substantial evidence for the date of these collections or for the culture of the people who made them. Excavations at one site, Sarutaru, near the city of [Guwahati](#), revealed stone axes and shouldered [celts](#) (one of the distinctive tool types of the Neolithic) in association with cord- or basket-marked pottery.

What is the brief history of India? The history of India starts with the existence of India itself as it located in the continent of Asia, India covers 2,973,193 square kilometers of land and 314,070 square kilometers of water.

Making it the 7th largest nation in the world with a total area of 3,287,263 square kilometers. Surrounded by Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh to the North East, China to the North, Pakistan to the North West, and Sri Lanka on the South East coast.

India is a land of ancient civilizations. India's social, economic, and cultural configurations are the products of a long process of regional expansion. Indian history begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization and the coming of the Aryans. These two phases are usually described as the pre-Vedic and Vedic age. Hinduism arose in the Vedic period.

The fifth-century saw the unification of India under Ashoka, who had converted to Buddhism, and it is in his reign that Buddhism spread in many parts of Asia. In the eighth century, Islam came to India for the first time and by the eleventh century had firmly established itself in India as a political force. It resulted in the formation of the Delhi Sultanate, which was finally succeeded by the Mughal Empire, under which India once again achieved a large measure of political unity.

It was in the 17th century that the Europeans came to India. This coincided with the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, paving the way for regional states. In the contest for supremacy, the English emerged 'victors'. The Rebellion of 1857-58, which sought to restore Indian supremacy, was crushed; and with the subsequent crowning of Victoria as Empress of India, the incorporation of India into the empire was complete. It was followed by India's struggle for independence, which we got in the year 1947. Here is a brief timeline about the history of India:

Ancient India History

The History of India begins with the Indus Valley Civilization and the coming of the Aryans. These two phases are generally described as the pre-Vedic and Vedic periods. The earliest literary source that sheds light on India's past is the Rig Veda. It is difficult to date this work with any accuracy on the basis of tradition and ambiguous astronomical information contained in the hymns. Indus valley civilization,

which flourished between 2800 BC and 1800 BC, had an advanced and flourishing economic system. The Indus valley people practiced agriculture, domesticated animals, made tools and weapons from copper, bronze, and tin and even traded with some Middle East countries.

The Indus Valley Civilization

A long time ago, in the eastern world, there rose a few civilizations. The main reasons for the rise of these urban civilizations were access to rivers, which served various functions of human beings. Along with the Mesopotamian civilization and the Egyptian civilization, rose the Indus Valley civilization spanning Northwest India and modern-day Pakistan. The largest amongst the three civilizations, the Indus Valley civilization flourished around 2600 BC, at which time agriculture in India started flourishing. The fertile Indus valley made it possible for agriculture to be carried out on a large scale. The most well-known towns of the Indus Valley in today's date are Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. Unearthing these two towns showed excavators glimpses into the richness of the Indus Valley civilization, evidenced in ruins and things like household articles, war weapons, gold and silver ornament - and so on. The people of the Indus Valley civilization lived in well-planned towns and well-designed houses made of baked bricks. In an era of developments and prosperity, civilization, unfortunately, came to an end by around 1300 BC, mainly due to natural calamities.

Vedic Civilization

The next era that India saw was that of the Vedic civilization, flourishing along the river Saraswati, named after the Vedas, which depict the early literature of the Hindus. The two greatest epics of this period were the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, still held in great reverence by the followers of Hinduism.

Buddhist Era

Next came the Buddhist era, during the time of the Mahajanapadas which were the sixteen great powers, during the 7th and the 6th centuries BC. Prominent powers at the time were the Sakyas of Kapilavastu and the Licchavis of Vaishali. Buddha, whose original name was Siddhartha Gautam, was born in Lumbini near Kapilavastu and was the founder of Buddhism - a religion based on spiritualism. He died at the age of 80 in 480 BC but his teachings spread throughout southern and eastern Asia and are followed across the world today.

The Invasion of Alexander

When Alexander invaded India in 326 BC, he crossed the Indus river and defeated the Indian rulers in battle. Noteworthy of the Indians' attempts at war, was the use of elephants, something that the Macedonians had never seen before. Alexander then took over the lands of the defeated kings.

The Gupta Dynasty

The Gupta period has been referred to as the Golden Age of Indian history. When Chandragupt I received the gift of Pataliputra in dowry when he married the daughter of the chief of the 'Licchavis', he started to lay down the foundation of his empire, which extended from the river Ganges or the Ganga to the city of Allahabad. He ruled for 15 years and was also referred to as the 'king of kings' for his strategic conquests and the flourishing state of India.

Harshavardhana

The last of the ancient kingdoms in India was by the king Harshavardhana, who ascended the throne at Thanneshwar and Kannauj after his brother died. While successful in a few of his conquests, he eventually got defeated by the Chalukya Kingdom of Deccan India. Harshavardhana was well-known for

establishing relations with the Chinese, and also for having high religious tolerance and strong administrative capabilities.

Medieval Indian History

The medieval history of India is renowned for deriving a lot of its character from Islamic kingdoms. Extending across almost three generations, medieval India included a number of kingdoms and dynasties:

- The Chalukyas
- The Pallavas
- The Pandyas
- The Rashtrakutas
- The Cholas

The Cholas were the most important rulers at this time, the 9th Century AD. Their kingdom covered a large part of South India, including Sri Lanka and the Maldives. While the rulers ruled bravely and carried out the annexation of multiple territories in India, the empire came to an end in the 14th Century AD with an invasion by a man named Kafur Malik. The monuments from the Chola Dynasty are still intact and are known for their rustic charm.

The next major empire was that of the Mughals, preceded by a rise in Islamic rulers. The invasion of Timur was a significant point in Indian history before a Hindu revival movement called the Bhakti movement, came to be. Finally, in the 16th Century, the Mughal empire started to rise. One of the greatest empires of India, the Mughal empire was a rich and glorious one, with the whole of India united and ruled by one monarch. The Mughal Kings were Babar, Humayun, Sher Shah Suri (not a Mughal king), Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb. They were responsible for setting up efficient public administration, laying out infrastructure, and promoting the arts. A large number of monuments in India today exist from the Mughal period. The death of the last Mughal King, Aurangzeb, sowed the seeds of disintegration within India. Influencers of Islamic architecture in India, the Mughal kings are still looked back in awe.

Akbar

Emperor Akbar, also known as Akbar the Great or Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, was the third emperor of the Mughal Empire, after Babur and Humayun. He was the son of Nasiruddin Humayun and succeeded him as the emperor in the year 1556 when he was only 13 years old.

Shah Jahan

Shah Jahan, also known as Shahbuddin Mohammed Shah Jahan, was a Mughal Emperor who ruled in the Indian Subcontinent from 1628 to 1658. He was the fifth Mughal ruler, after Babur, Humayun, Akbar, and Jahangir. Shah Jahan succeeded the throne after revolting against his father, Jahangir.

Chhatrapati Shivaji

Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was the founder of the Maratha Empire in western India. He is considered to be one of the greatest warriors of his time and even today, stories of his exploits are narrated as a part of the folklore. King Shivaji used the guerrilla tactics to capture a part of, the then, dominant Mughal empire.

Modern Indian History

During the late 16th and the 17th Centuries, the European trading companies in India competed with each other ferociously. By the last quarter of the 18th Century, the English had outdone all others and established themselves as the dominant power in India. The British administered India for a period of about two centuries and brought about revolutionary changes in the social, political and economic life of the country.

However, the zenith of colonisation was achieved when the British arrived in the early 1600s as traders. Capitalizing on the disintegration that existed in India after the Mughal rule, the British actively used the strategy of 'divide-and-rule' to rule over India for over 2 centuries. While the British had come in earlier, they only achieved political power in 1757 AD after the Battle of Plassey.

They took a keen interest in the resources that India had to offer and have been looked back at as plunderers of India's wealth of resources - as they took cotton, spices, silk, and tea, amongst numerous other resources. While they did lay out a massive chunk of India's infrastructure, by also bringing the Indians steam engines, it is seldom looked back at as an equal relationship. The British Raj was divisive and pit Indians against one another, on the basis of religion; and also mistreated the laborers. The Indians were essentially slaves of the British rule and were working hard without any returns on their work. This, naturally, led to multiple mutinies; and prominent freedom fighters came to the forefront. Different ideologies of thought believed that there were different ways of gaining freedom; however, they all had one common goal - freedom.

The British queen had asserted that the aim of the British was to help India progress - however, multiple problems arose without the consultation of Indian leaders. One important instance of this was when in the First World War, Britain launched an attack on Germany on behalf of India, even though India did not wish for that to happen; and millions of Indian soldiers were at the forefront of the British Indian Army during both the world wars - further fuelling the Indian resistance. Over a million Indian soldiers were killed in both the World Wars.

People Also Ask questions about the history of India:

What is the earliest period of Indian history?

The earliest period of Indian history is the Indus Valley Civilization, which existed from approximately 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE.

What were the major empires that ruled India?

India was ruled by several major empires, including the Maurya Empire, the Gupta Empire, the Mughal Empire, and the British Raj.

Who were some famous leaders of India's independence movement?

Some famous leaders of India's independence movement include Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Sardar Patel.

What was the partition of India?

The partition of India was the division of British India into two separate countries, India and Pakistan, in 1947. This resulted in widespread violence and the displacement of millions of people.

What is the significance of the Indian Constitution?

The Indian Constitution is significant as it is the supreme law of India and lays out the fundamental rights and duties of Indian citizens. It was adopted on November 26, 1949, and came into effect on January 26, 1950.

What is the importance of the caste system in Indian history?

The caste system has been a significant part of Indian society for thousands of years, and its influence can still be seen today. It has been a source of both social order and discrimination, and has been a topic of much debate and reform in modern India.

What were some major events in Indian history during the 20th century?

Some major events in Indian history during the 20th century include the Indian independence movement, the partition of India in 1947, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and economic liberalization in the 1990s.

What is the impact of Indian culture on the world?

Indian culture has had a significant impact on the world, particularly in the areas of religion, philosophy, and the arts. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism all originated in India, and Indian literature, music, and dance are renowned around the world. Additionally, Indian cuisine, yoga, and meditation have become popular throughout the world.