

## India

India, officially the Republic of India (ISO: Bhārat Gaṇarājya), is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area; the most populous country from June 2023 and from the time of its independence in 1947, the world's most populous democracy. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast, it shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north; and Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives; its Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand, Myanmar, and Indonesia.

Modern humans arrived on the Indian subcontinent from Africa no later than 55,000 years ago.

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. Settled life emerged on the subcontinent in the western margins of the Indus river basin 9,000 years ago, evolving gradually into the Indus Valley Civilisation of the third millennium BCE.

By 1200 BCE, an archaic form of Sanskrit, an Indo-European language, had diffused into India from the northwest. Its evidence today is found in the hymns of the Rigveda. Preserved by an oral tradition that was resolutely vigilant, the Rigveda records the dawning of Hinduism in India. The Dravidian languages of India were supplanted in the northern and western regions. By 400 BCE, stratification and exclusion by caste had emerged within Hinduism, and Buddhism and Jainism had arisen, proclaiming social orders unlinked to heredity.

Early political consolidations gave rise to the loose-knit Maurya and Gupta Empires based in the Ganges Basin.

Their collective era was suffused with wide-ranging creativity, but also marked by the declining status of women, and the incorporation of untouchability into an organised system of belief. In South India, the Middle kingdoms exported Dravidian-languages scripts and religious cultures to the kingdoms of Southeast Asia.

In the early medieval era, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism became established on India's southern and western coasts.

Muslim armies from Central Asia intermittently overran India's northern plains, eventually founding the Delhi Sultanate, and drawing northern India into the cosmopolitan networks of medieval Islam.

In the 15th century, the Vijayanagara Empire created a long-lasting composite Hindu culture in south India.

In the Punjab, Sikhism emerged, rejecting institutionalised religion.

The Mughal Empire, in 1526, ushered in two centuries of relative peace, leaving a legacy of luminous architecture.

Gradually expanding rule of the British East India Company followed, turning India into a colonial economy, but also consolidating its sovereignty. British Crown rule began in 1858. The rights promised to Indians were granted slowly, but technological changes were introduced, and modern ideas of education and the public life took root. A pioneering and influential nationalist movement emerged, which was noted for nonviolent resistance and became the major factor in ending British rule. In 1947 the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two independent dominions, a Hindu-majority Dominion of India and a Muslim-majority Dominion of Pakistan, amid large-scale loss of life and an unprecedented migration.

India has been a federal republic since 1950, governed through a democratic parliamentary system. It is a pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society. India's population grew from 361 million in 1951 to almost 1.4 billion in 2022.

During the same time, its nominal per capita income increased from US\$64 annually to US\$2,601, and its literacy rate from 16.6% to 74%. From being a comparatively destitute country in 1951, India has become a fast-growing major economy and a hub for information technology services, with an expanding middle class. India has a space programme with several planned or completed extraterrestrial missions. Indian movies, music, and spiritual teachings play an increasing role in

global culture. India has substantially reduced its rate of poverty, though at the cost of increasing economic inequality. India is a nuclear-weapon state, which ranks high in military expenditure. It has disputes over Kashmir with its neighbours, Pakistan and China, unresolved since the mid-20th century. Among the socio-economic challenges India faces are gender inequality, child malnutrition, and rising levels of air pollution. India's land is megadiverse, with four biodiversity hotspots. Its forest cover comprises 21.7% of its area. India's wildlife, which has traditionally been viewed with tolerance in India's culture, is supported among these forests, and elsewhere, in protected habitats.

### == Etymology ==

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (third edition 2009), the name "India" is derived from the Classical Latin India, a reference to South Asia and an uncertain region to its east. In turn the name "India" derived successively from Hellenistic Greek India ( Ἰνδία ), ancient Greek Indos ( Ἰνδός ), Old Persian Hindush (an eastern province of the Achaemenid Empire), and ultimately its cognate, the Sanskrit Sindhu, or "river", specifically the Indus River and, by implication, its well-settled southern basin. The ancient Greeks referred to the Indians as Indoi ( Ἰνδοί ), which translates as "The people of the Indus".

The term Bharat (Bhārat; pronounced [bʱaˈɾaːt̪] ), mentioned in both Indian epic poetry and the Constitution of India, is used in its variations by many Indian languages. A modern rendering of the historical name Bharatavarsha, which applied originally to North India, Bharat gained increased currency from the mid-19th century as a native name for India.

Hindustan ([ɦɪˈndʊˈstaːn] ) is a Middle Persian name for India that became popular by the 13th century, and was used widely since the era of the Mughal Empire. The meaning of Hindustan has varied, referring to a region encompassing the northern Indian subcontinent (present-day northern India and Pakistan) or to India in its near entirety.

## == History ==

### === Ancient India ===

By 55,000 years ago, the first modern humans, or *Homo sapiens*, had arrived on the Indian subcontinent from Africa, where they had earlier evolved. The earliest known modern human remains in South Asia date to about 30,000 years ago. After 6500 BCE, evidence for domestication of food crops and animals, construction of permanent structures, and storage of agricultural surplus appeared in Mehrgarh and other sites in Balochistan, Pakistan. These gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilisation, the first urban culture in South Asia, which flourished during 2500?1900 BCE in Pakistan and western India. Centred around cities such as Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Dholavira, and Kalibangan, and relying on varied forms of subsistence, the civilisation engaged robustly in crafts production and wide-ranging trade.

During the period 2000?500 BCE, many regions of the subcontinent transitioned from the Chalcolithic cultures to the Iron Age ones. The Vedas, the oldest scriptures associated with Hinduism, were composed during this period, and historians have analysed these to posit a Vedic culture in the Punjab region and the upper Gangetic Plain. Most historians also consider this period to have encompassed several waves of Indo-Aryan migration into the subcontinent from the north-west. The caste system, which created a hierarchy of priests, warriors, and free peasants, but which excluded indigenous peoples by labelling their occupations impure, arose during this period. On the Deccan Plateau, archaeological evidence from this period suggests the existence of a chiefdom stage of political organisation. In South India, a progression to sedentary life is indicated by the large number of megalithic monuments dating from this period, as well as by nearby traces of

agriculture, irrigation tanks, and craft traditions.

In the late Vedic period, around the 6th century BCE, the small states and chiefdoms of the Ganges Plain and the north-western regions had consolidated into 16 major oligarchies and monarchies that were known as the mahajanapadas. The emerging urbanisation gave rise to non-Vedic religious movements, two of which became independent religions. Jainism came into prominence during the life of its exemplar, Mahavira. Buddhism, based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha, attracted followers from all social classes excepting the middle class; chronicling the life of the Buddha was central to the beginnings of recorded history in India. In an age of increasing urban wealth, both religions held up renunciation as an ideal, and both established long-lasting monastic traditions. Politically, by the 3rd century BCE, the kingdom of Magadha had annexed or reduced other states to emerge as the Mauryan Empire. The empire was once thought to have controlled most of the subcontinent except the far south, but its core regions are now thought to have been separated by large autonomous areas. The Mauryan kings are known as much for their empire-building and determined management of public life as for Ashoka's renunciation of militarism and far-flung advocacy of the Buddhist dhamma.

The Sangam literature of the Tamil language reveals that, between 200 BCE and 200 CE, the southern peninsula was ruled by the Cheras, the Cholas, and the Pandyas, dynasties that traded extensively with the Roman Empire and with West and Southeast Asia. In North India, Hinduism asserted patriarchal control within the family, leading to increased subordination of women. By the 4th and 5th centuries, the Gupta Empire had created a complex system of administration and taxation in the greater Ganges Plain; this system became a model for later Indian kingdoms. Under the Guptas, a renewed Hinduism based on devotion, rather than the management of ritual, beg