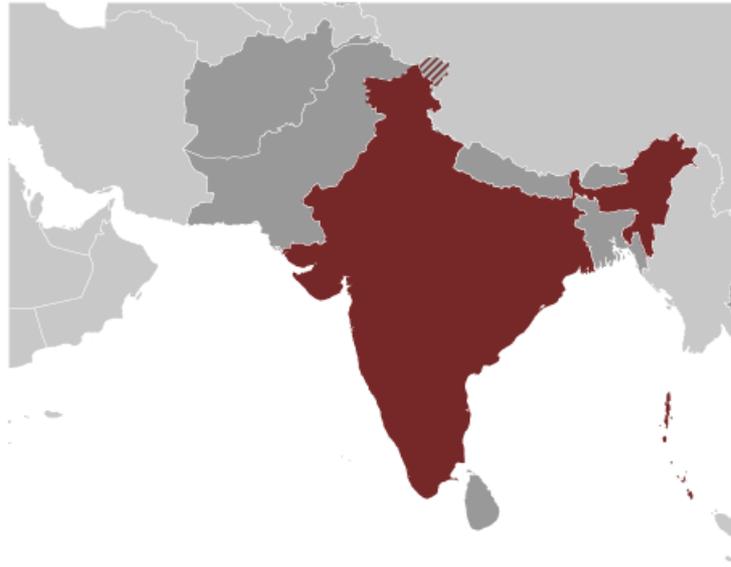


# INDIA

## A Quick Overview of Indian History



# FYI:

- Historically, India's geographic boundaries were bigger than they are today

Bangladesh + India + Pakistan = India

- Bangladesh and Pakistan did not exist as separate countries until after India gained independence from Great Britain in 1947
- “Northwest India” generally means Pakistan
- Ancient Indian cities, such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, are located in what is now Pakistan

# India's Geography

- As large as Europe, minus Russia
- Population: 1.15 billion (2010 estimate)
  - Second only to China
- Himalayan Mountains (northeast)
  - Separate India from Tibet and western China
- Northwest
  - Historic route of land invasions
    - Alexander the Great, Mughals
- Indian Ocean (route of British conquest)
- Climate
  - Hot (except in highlands)
  - Land – very fertile to semi-desert

# Ganges and Indus River Valleys

- Northern India
- Early 1900s
  - Archaeologists discovered ruins of Mohenjo-daro (circa 2600 BCE) and Harappa (circa 2600 BCE)
- Bronze and copper
- Fired brick
- Picture writing (undeciphered)
- Farming, jewelry-making, and woven cloth
- Engineering – drainage systems
- Civilization ended circa 1900 BCE

# Aryan Invasion (ca. 1700-1300 BCE)

- Invaders came from Europe
  - Traced through Indo-European language roots
- Ruled India for hundreds of years
- Set up small kingdoms ruled by rajahs
- Conquered native Dravidians
- Created modern Hinduism from Dravidian religious traditions and their own ideas
- Established India's caste system

# Vedic Age (circa 1500-500 BCE)

- *Vedas* written in Sanskrit (India's literary language)
- *Mahabharata*
- *Ramayana*

# Alexander the Great

(ca. 327/326 BCE)

- Macedonian (Greek) who led conquering forces across northern India
- Ruled briefly
- Greeks expelled from most of India after Alexander's death
- Continued contact with Alexandrian successor state, the Seleucid empire, to the west

# Maurya Empire (322-185 BCE)

- Dynasty begun by Chandragupta Maurya
- Asoka (grandson), 273-232 BCE
  - Ruled all of India
  - Converted to Buddhism
  - Religious tolerance, generosity, wisdom, and kindness
  - Spread Buddhism – Burma, Ceylon, Siam, Tibet
  - War and disunity after his death

# Gupta Dynasty (320-467 CE)

- Northern India reunited
- Trade
  - With West
  - Burma, Indochina, Java, Sumatra
  - Buddhism and Hinduism spread out
    - Cultural diffusion

# Mughal Empire (1526-1858)

- 12<sup>th</sup> century – Muslim invasion
- 1500 – Central Asians, led by Mughals (Moguls), established a kingdom in northern India
- Akbar (1556-1605)
  - Conquest of central India
  - Efficient and strong government
  - Religious tolerance
  - Business and commerce encouraged
- Architecture
  - Forts, mosques, palaces, tombs
    - Taj Mahal – Agra, India – Tomb for a Mogul emperor's favorite wife

# End of the Mughal Empire

- 17<sup>th</sup> century – empire crumbled
  - Fighting between smaller kingdoms
  - English, French, and Portuguese traders gained influence
- 1763 – Seven Years' War
  - English (British East India Company) won control of India from the French
  - Taken over by the British government under Queen Victoria (British Raj, 1858-1947)
    - Independent after World War II (1947)

# Hinduism

- Escape sins of life by attaining purity and perfection of the soul
- Caste system
  - Process starts in lowest caste (Untouchables)
  - Soul reincarnated in person of higher caste
  - Must carry out duties of the caste
  - Repeated rebirths
  - Soul ultimately becomes perfect and merges with the soul of Brahma (principal god)

# Castes

- Original castes
  - Brahmin (priests)
  - Warriors
  - Farmers and traders
  - Sudra (servants)
- Eventually divided by occupation into thousands of castes
  - Lowest – the Untouchables
    - Strict purification rituals if others contact them
    - Today – legal protections under Indian law, but prejudice still exists

# Hinduism (Continued)

- All life is sacred
  - Animals respected
  - Cow is sacred
  - Most Hindus are vegetarians
- Basic beliefs
  - World is evil
  - Reincarnation after death (animal or human)
  - Soul purified by completion of caste duties
  - Reverence for animals
  - Escape world's evils through prayer

# Buddhism

- **Founded by Gautama (563-483 BCE)**
  - Age 30 – Gave up position and wealth to study the right way to live
  - Called Buddha (“the enlightened one”)
- **Life is evil and suffering**
  - Can be avoided by good desires
- **Eightfold Path**
  - Do not gossip, have impure thoughts, hate, lie, or steal
- **Rare in India today, but spread throughout East Asia**

# Culture

- Kalidasa (6<sup>th</sup> century CE)
  - Playwright and poet
  - Fairy stories and animal fables
- Art and architecture
  - Temples covered with designs and figures

# Science

- Mathematics
  - Zero
  - Decimal point
  - Minus sign
  - “Arabic” numerals (Europe got them from Arab traders, who got them from India)
- Gupta Period (320-467 CE)
  - Leaders in dyeing, tanning leather, soap and glass making
- Textiles
  - Cotton, cashmere, calico, chintz – all originally Indian terms

# Review Questions

1. After 1947, India split into what three separate countries?
2. What two ancient Indus River Valley civilizations were discovered by archaeologists in the early 1900s?
3. The *Vedas* were written in what language?
4. What religion was practiced by the Mughal emperors?
5. Describe India's caste system.
6. What is the origin of the term "Arabic numerals"?