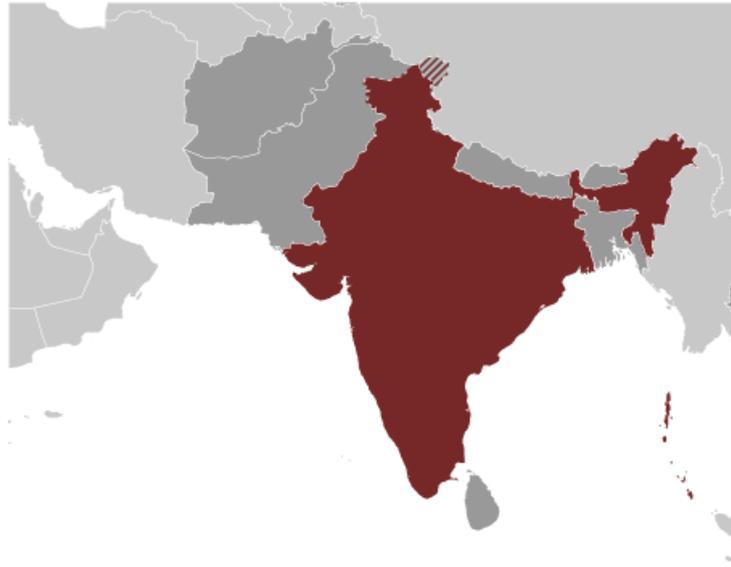


INDIA

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)

- 12th 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

- 17th 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 (6th 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"?