India

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The **Republic of India** is a country that occupies a greater part of South Asia. It has a coastline of over seven thousand kilometers (4349 miles) , borders Pakistan to the west[1], the People's Republic of China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north, and Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. In the Indian Ocean, it is adjacent to the island nation of Sri Lanka. India is the seventh-largest country by geographical area and has one of the most diverse populations of wildlife, geographical terrain and climate systems found anywhere in the world.

The name *India* /ˈɪndiə/ is derived from the Old Persian version of *Sindhu*, the historic local appellation for the River Indus (see Origin of India's name). The Constitution of India and common usage also recognise **Bharat** (Hindi: भारत /bʰɑːrət̪/), as an official name of equal status. A third name, **Hindustan** (Hindi: हिन्दुस्तान /hin̪d̪ust̪ɑːn/) (Persian: *Land of the Hindus*) has been used since the twelfth century, though its contemporary use is unevenly applied. Home to one of the four major ancient civilisations, a center of important trade routes and vast empires of the Mauryas, Guptas and the Mughals, India has long played a significant role in human history. Four religions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism– all have their origins in India, and Islam and Christianity enjoy a strong cultural heritage. Colonized in the British Empire in the nineteenth century, India gained independence in 1947 as a unified nation after an intensive struggle for independence.

With over one billion people, it is the second most populous country in the world and the world's largest liberal democracy. India has 28 states and 7 territories, and recognizes 22 official languages spoken across its diverse regions, including the official national language, Hindi, and English, which is widely spoken. After decades of intensive efforts to combat the widespread poverty, illiteracy and poor living conditions across the country, India's economy is today the fourth-largest in the world in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) and the tenth-largest in nominal terms. Once reliant heavily on agriculture, India's economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world, and the nation is home to modern businesses and high-technology industries. India became a declared nuclear weapons state in 1974.

Bhārat Gaṇarājya
Republic of India

Flag	Emblem

Motto: "Satyameva Jayate"
Sanskrit: सत्यमेव जयते
/sət̪yəmeːvə ɟəjəteː/
("Truth Alone Triumphs")

Anthem: "Jana Gana Mana"
/ɟənə gənə mənə/

Capital	New Delhi 28°34′N 77°12′E
Largest city	Mumbai (Bombay)
Official language(s)	Hindi, English, and 21 other languages
Government President Prime Minister	Federal republic APJ Abdul Kalam Manmohan Singh
Independence - Declared - Republic	From the United Kingdom 1947-08-15 1950-01-26
Area - Total	3,287,590 km² (7th)

- Water (%)	1,269,346 sq mi 9.56
Population - 2006 est. - 2001 census - Density	1,095,351,995 (2nd) 1,027,015,247 329/km² (19th) 852/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2005 estimate $3.678 trillion (4th) $3400 (125th)
HDI (2003)	0.602 (127th) – medium
Currency	Rupee (Rs.)[1] (INR)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	IST (UTC+5:30) not observed (UTC+5:30)
Internet TLD	.in
Calling code	+91

[1] **Re.** is singular

History

Main article: History of India

Stone Age rock shelters with paintings at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh are the earliest known traces of human life in present-day India. The first known permanent settlements appeared over 9,000 years ago, and gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilisation, which began around 3300 BCE and peaked between 2600 BCE and 1900 BCE. Cities of this culture exhibit advanced urban features and scientific accomplishments such as superior civil drainage systems and the world's earliest dock at Lothal. It was followed by the Vedic Civilisation, introduced by the Indo-Aryan peoples which laid the ancient foundations of Hinduism and other cultural aspects. In Vedic classical texts and Hindu mythology, the land is referred to as *Bharatavarsha*. From around 550 BCE, many independent kingdoms known as the Mahajanapadas spread across the country. The country was witnessing a complex religious culture, with the birth of Jainism and Buddhism. Ancient universities arose in Taxila, Nalanda, Pataliputra and Ujjain.

The empire built by the Maurya dynasty under Emperor Ashoka united most of modern South Asia. From 180 BCE, a series of invasions from Central Asia followed including the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians and Kushans in the northwestern Indian Subcontinent. From the third century BCE, the Gupta dynasty oversaw the period referred to as ancient India's "Golden Age." In the south, several dynasties, including the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Cheras, Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas prevailed during different periods. Science, engineering, art, literature, mathematics, astronomy, religion and philosophy flourished under the patronage of these kings.

Following the invasions from Central Asia, between the tenth to the twelfth centuries, much of north India came under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, and later the Mughal dynasty, who gradually expanded their reign throughout the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, several indigenous kingdoms flourished, especially in the south, like the Vijayanagara Empire. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several European countries, including Portugal, Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, initially arrived as traders, later took advantage of the fractious nature of relations between the kingdoms, to establish colonies in the country. By 1856, most of India came under control of the British East India

Company, with the capital at Calcutta. A year later, a nationwide insurrection of rebelling military units and kingdoms, known locally as the First War of Indian Independence broke out, which failed even as it seriously challenged British rule. India thus came under the direct control of the British Empire.

The Sanchi stupa in Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh built by emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC

Mahatma Gandhi is also known as the Father of India.

In the early twentieth century, a nationwide struggle for independence was launched by the Indian National Congress, led by Indians such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak ,Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. Millions of protestors would engage in mass campaigns of civil disobedience with a commitment to *ahimsa* - total non-violence - that was largely kept. Gandhi would lead Indians in the Dandi Salt March to defy the salt tax, and an all-out revolt in 1942 demanding that the British *Quit India*. India gained its independence on August 15th, 1947 - 565 princely states united with British-era provinces to form a united nation, but not before the Muslim-majority provinces were partitioned as a result of the separatist campaign led by the Muslim League to form Pakistan. Since independence, India has seen sectarian violence and insurgencies in various parts of the country, but has maintained its unity and democracy. It has unresolved border disputes with China, which escalated into the brief Sino-Indian War in 1962; and with Pakistan, which resulted in wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and in 1999 in Kargil. India is a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations. In 1974, India conducted an underground nuclear test, making it an unofficial member of the "nuclear club". This was followed by a series of five more tests in 1998. Significant economic reforms beginning in 1991 have transformed India into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, and added to its global and regional clout.

See also: Military history of India and Timeline of Indian history

Government

Main article: Government of India

India is the world's largest democracy. It is a sovereign, secular democratic federation which consists of 28 states and 7 territories. While states have considerable autonomy and powers of self-government, national laws supercede all state laws. It has three branches of government: the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary at the national and state levels. The President is the head of state, guardian of the constitution and the Supreme commander of the Indian Armed Forces. The President and the Vice-president are elected indirectly by an electoral college for five-year terms. The Parliament of India is bicameral, with the popularly-elected lower house, the Lok Sabha (*House of the People*), elected for five-year terms, and the upper house, the Rajya Sabha (*Council of the States*) elected for staggered six-year terms by an electoral college of members of state legislatures.

National symbols of India	
Flag	Tiranga
Emblem	Sarnath Lion
Anthem	"Jana Gana Mana"
Song	"Vandē Mātaram"
Animal	Royal Bengal Tiger
Bird	Indian Peacock
Flower	Lotus
Tree	Banyan
Fruit	Mango
Sport	Field Hockey
Calendar	Saka

The Prime Minister is the head of government and has the most executive powers. He or she is elected by legislators of the political party or coalition commanding a parliamentary majority, and serves a five-year term. The constitution does not explicitly provide for a post of Deputy Prime Minister, but this option has been exercised from time to time. All Indian citizens above the age of 18 are eligible to vote. The Prime Minister heads the Council of Ministers. Any minister holding a portfolio must be a member of either house of parliament. In the Indian parliamentary system, the executive is subordinate to the legislature.

India's independent judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice of India. The Supreme Court has both original jurisdiction over disputes between states and the centre, and appellate jurisdiction over the High Courts of India. There are eighteen appellate High Courts, each having jurisdiction over a state or a group of smaller states. Each of these states has a tiered system of lower courts. A conflict between the legislature and the judiciary is referred to the President.

Politics

Main articles: Politics of India, Foreign relations of India

For most of its independent history, India has been ruled by the Indian National Congress. The party enjoyed a parliamentary majority barring two brief periods during the 1970s and late 1980s. This rule was interrupted betwen 1977 to 1980, when the Janata Party coalition won the election owing to public discontent with the "Emergency" declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The Janata Dal won elections in 1989, but its government managed to hold on to power for only two years. Between 1996 and 1998, there was a period of political flux with the government being formed first by the right-wing nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party followed by a left-leaning United Front coalition. In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with smaller regional parties, and became the first non-Congress and coalition government to complete a full five-year term. The 2004 Indian elections saw the Congress party winning the largest number of seats to form a government leading the United Progressive Alliance, and supported by left-parties and those opposed to the BJP.

Map of India.[2]

Since independence, India has maintained cordial relationships with most nations. It took a lead in the 1950s in advocating the independence of European colonies in Africa and Asia. During the Cold War, India tried to maintain its neutrality and was one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement. After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, India's relationship with the Soviet Union warmed at the expense of its ties with the United States and continued to remain so till the end of the Cold War. India has consistently refused to sign the CTBT and the NPT to maintain sovereignty over its nuclear program despite criticism and military sanctions from leading nations. Recent overtures by the Indian government have strengthened India's relations with United States, China and Pakistan. In the economic sphere, India has close relationships with other developing nations of South America, Asia and Africa, especially Brazil and Mexico. In recent years, India has played an influential role in the ASEAN, SAARC and the WTO, and it is a signatory to the landmark South Asia Free Trade Agreement. India has been a long time supporter of the United Nations, with over 55,000 Indian military and police personnel having served in 35 UN peace keeping operations over four continents.[3]

Administrative Divisions

Main article: States and territories of India

India is divided into twenty-eight states (which are further subdivided into districts) and seven union territories. All states and the union territories of Delhi and Pondicherry have elected governments. The remaining five union territories have centrally-appointed administrators.

States:

1. Andhra Pradesh
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Assam
4. Bihar
5. Chhattisgarh
6. Goa
7. Gujarat
8. Haryana
9. Himachal Pradesh
10. Jammu and Kashmir
11. Jharkhand
12. Karnataka
13. Kerala
14. Madhya Pradesh
15. Maharashtra
16. Manipur
17. Meghalaya
18. Mizoram
19. Nagaland
20. Orissa
21. Punjab
22. Rajasthan
23. Sikkim
24. Tamil Nadu
25. Tripura
26. Uttaranchal
27. Uttar Pradesh
28. West Bengal

States and territories of India

Union Territories:

A. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
B. Chandigarh
C. Dadra and Nagar Haveli
D. Daman and Diu
E. Lakshadweep
F. Pondicherry
G. National Capital Territory of Delhi

Geography

Main article: Geography of India

The territory of India constitutes a major portion of the Indian subcontinent, situated on the Indian Plate, the northerly portion of the Indo-Australian Plate, in southern Asia. India's northern and northeastern states are partially situated in the Himalayan Mountain Range. The rest of northern, central and eastern India consists of the fertile Indo-Gangetic plain. In the west, bordering southeast Pakistan, lies the Thar Desert. The southern Indian Peninsula is almost entirely composed of the Deccan plateau, which is flanked by two hilly coastal ranges, the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats.

India is home to several major rivers, including the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Yamuna, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, and Krishna. India has three archipelagos – Lakshadweep off the southwest coast, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands volcanic island chain to the southeast, and the Sunderbans in the Gangetic delta in West Bengal.

Climate in India varies from tropical in the south to more temperate
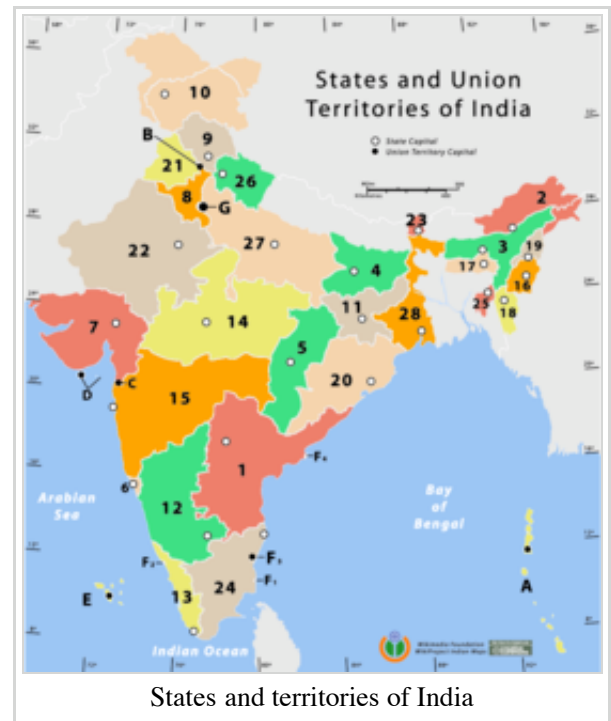
The Himalayas stretch from Jammu and Kashmir in the north to Arunachal Pradesh in the far east making up most of India's eastern borders

in the north, with elevated regions in the north receiving sustained snowfall. India's climate is strongly influenced by the Himalayas and the Thar Desert. The Himalayas, along with the Hindu Kush mountains in Pakistan, provide a barrier to the cold winds from Central Asia. This keeps most of the Indian subcontinent warmer than most locations in similar latitudes. The Thar Desert is responsible for attracting the moisture laden southwest monsoon winds in that provide most of India's rainfall between June to September.

See also: Climate of India, Ecoregions of India, and Geology of India

Economy

Main article: Economy of India

The economy of India is the fourth-largest in the world as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP), with a GDP of US $3.36 trillion. When measured in USD exchange-rate terms, it is the tenth largest in the world, with a GDP of US $691.87 billion. India was the second fastest growing major economy in the world, with a GDP growth rate of 8.1% at the end of the first quarter of 2005–2006. However, India's huge population results in a relatively low per capita income of $3,400 at PPP and is classified as a developing nation.

For most of its independent history India has adhered to a socialist-inspired approach, with strict government control over private sector participation, foreign trade, and foreign direct investment. Since the early 1990s, India has gradually opened up its markets through economic reforms by reducing government controls on foreign trade and investment. Privatisation of public-owned industries and opening up of certain sectors to private and foreign players has proceeded slowly amid political debate.

The Bombay Stock Exchange sensitive index is used as a determinant of the strength of the Indian economy.

India has a labour force of 496.4 million of which agriculture constitutes 60%, industry 17%, and services 23%. India's agricultural produce include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes; cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry and fish. Major industries include textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum and machinery.[4]

In recent times, India has also capitalised on its large number of highly educated people who are fluent in the English language to become an important location for global companies outsourcing customer service and technical support call centers. It is also a major exporter of skilled workers in software services, financial services, and software engineers. India's most important trading partners are the United States, the European Union, Japan, the People's Republic of China, and the United Arab Emirates.
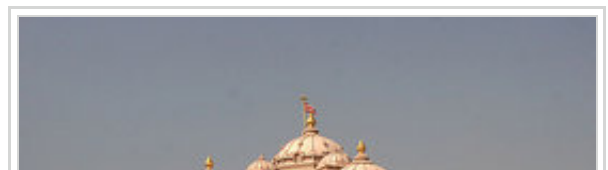
Demographics

Main article: Demographics of India

India is the second-most populous country in the world with an estimated 1.19 billion people in 2006. Almost 70% of its population reside in rural areas. India's largest urban agglomerations are Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai and Bangalore. Efforts to irradicate illiteracy have met with little success since India's

independence with only 65.1% of its population (53.4% for females and 75.3% of males) being able to read or write. Rampant sex-selective abortion and infanticide exists in rural areas; the national sex ratio is 933 females per 1000 males. India's median age is 24.66, and the population growth rate is 22.32 births per 1,000.[5]

Although 80.5% of the people are Hindus, India is also home to the third-largest Muslim population in the world (13.4%). Other religious groups include Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.84%), Buddhists (0.76%), Jains (0.40%), Jews, Zoroastrians and Bahá'ís.[5]

The Akshardham Hindu temple, Delhi

The number of mother tongues in India is estimated to be as high as 1,652.[6] Most of these languages are derived from two major linguistic families: Indo-Aryan (spoken by about 74% of the population) and Dravidian (spoken by about 24%). The remaining 2% are based on the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic families. Hindi is India's national language though English is used by the government for official purposes, and in higher education. An additional 21 languages are also given official status.

Culture

Main article: Culture of India

Face of a Kathakali artist, a type of Indian classical dance, from Kerala.

India has a rich and unique cultural heritage, and has managed to preserve its established traditions throughout history whilst absorbing customs, traditions and ideas from both invaders and immigrants. Many cultural practices, languages, customs and monuments are examples of this co-mingling over centuries. Famous monuments, such as the Taj Mahal and other examples of Islamic-inspired architecture have been inherited from the Mughal dynasty. These are the result of a syncretic tradition that combined elements from all parts of the country.

The Taj Mahal in Agra is India's most popular tourist destination.

Indian music is represented in a wide variety of forms. The two main forms of classical music are *Carnatic* from South India, and *Hindustani* from North India. Popular forms of music also prevail, the most notable being Filmi music. In addition to this are the diverse traditions of folk music from different parts of the country. Many classical dance forms exist, including the Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri. They often have a narrative form and are usually infused with devotional and spiritual elements. The earliest literary traditions in India were mostly oral, and were later transcribed. Most of these are represented by sacred works like the Vedas and the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Sangam literature from Tamil Nadu represents some of India's oldest traditions. There have been many notable modern Indian writers, both in Indian languages and in English. India's only Nobel laureate in literature was the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore. India produces the world's largest number of films every year. The most recognisable face is that of cinema production based in Mumbai, which produces mainly commercial

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Hindi films, often referred to as "Bollywood". There are also strong cinema industries based on the Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Bengali languages. Religious practices of various faiths are an integral part of everyday life in society. Education is highly regarded by members of every socio-economic stratum. Traditional Indian family values are highly respected, and considered sacred, although urban families have grown to prefer a nuclear family system, owing to the socio-economic constraints imposed by the traditional joint family system. Religion in India is a very public affair, with many practices imbued with pomp and vitality accompanying their underlying spiritual qualities.

The cuisine of India is extremely diverse, as ingredients, spices and cooking methods vary from region to region. Rice and wheat are the staple foods in the country. The country is notable for its wide variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian cuisine. Spicy food and sweets are popular in India. Traditional dress in India greatly varies across the regions in its colours and styles, and depend on various factors, including climate. Popular styles of dress include the traditional sari for women and the traditional dhoti for men.

India's national sport is field hockey, although cricket is now the *de facto* national game. In some states, particularly in the northeast, football (soccer) is the most popular sport and is widely watched. In recent times, tennis has gained popularity in India with the rise of players such as Leander Paes and Sania Mirza. India is also represented in chess, with international-level players such as Vishwanathan Anand. Traditional indigenous sports include kabaddi and gilli-danda, which are played in most parts of the country.

Holidays

Main article: List of Festivals in India

India is also known as a land of festivals. A melting pot of many religions, India has a rich diversity of festivals, many of which are celebrated irrespective of caste and creed. The most widely known and popular celebrations include the Hindu festivals of Diwali, Holi, and Dussehra, and the Muslim celebration of Eid.

A number of festivals are common to most parts of India; however, they may be called by different names in the various parts of the country or may be celebrated in a different fashion. Every festival is celebrated in a unique style.

India has three National Holidays. Other sets of holidays, varying between nine to twelve, pertains to festivals, religious holidays and births of leaders which are legislated by the individual states.

Holi, the festival of colours has emerged as one of the most popular Indian festivals.

Date	Holiday	Remarks
26 January	Republic Day	The Constitution of India came into effect on this day in 1950.
15 August	Independence Day	India gained its independence from the British Empire on this day in 1947.
2 October	Gandhi Jayanti	The Birth Date of Mahatma Gandhi.

See also

	Topics related to India
History	Timeline of Indian history Indus Valley Civilization, Indian science and technology, Meluhha, Aryan invasion theory, Indo-Aryan migration, Greek Conquests in India, Indian Ancient Maritime History, Mauryan dynasty, Ashokan Era, Sunga dynasty, Satavahana, Indo-Greek kingdom, Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthian Kingdom, Kushan Empire, Western Kshatrapas, Gupta Empire, Cholas, Pala Empire, Islamic incursions in India, Mughal Era, Maratha Empire, British Raj, British East India Company, Governor-General, Viceroy, War of Independence, 1857, Indian independence movement, Quit India Movement, Partition of India, Non-Aligned Movement, Sino-Indian War, Indo-Pakistani War of 1947, Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, Kargil War, Military, Demographic, Historical maps of India
Politics	Law, Constitution, Political parties (Communist Party of India (Marxist), Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party), Foreign relations, Elections, Political divisions
Government	Government agencies, Legislative branch (Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha) Executive branch (President & Vice-President, Prime Minister & Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Attorney-General, Election Commission, Foreign Minister; Law enforcement: CBI, CID, Intelligence: IB, RAW), Judicial branch (Supreme Court), Military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Border Security Force, Coast Guard)
Geography	The Himalayas, Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, Indo Gangetic Plain, Deccan Plateau, Thar Desert, Ganges River, Rann of Kutch, Brahmaputra River, North-East India; Mountains, Valleys, Islands, Rivers; States and territories, Cities, Districts, Regions, Fauna and flora
Economy	Rupee, Bombay Stock Exchange, National Stock Exchange, Standard of living, Companies, Reserve Bank of India
Demographics	Languages, Standard of living, Religion
Arts & Culture	Music (Carnatic, Hindustani, Indi-pop), Film & TV (Bollywood), TV stations, Literature, Cuisine, Holidays, Folklore, Dance, Architecture; Education, Languages, Media
Other	Indian English, Indian nationality law, Numbering system, Indian Space Research Organization, Communications, Transportation (Highways, Rail transport, Auto rickshaw), National Highways Development Project, Flag, Tourism, Licence plates, Potential Superpowers - India

International ties of India

Geographical and geopolitical: Asia | South Asia | Indies

Historical and cultural: Commonwealth of Nations

International organisations: United Nations | World Trade Organization |ADB | SAARC | IOR-ARC | Non-Aligned Movement

G20 industrial nations | G20 developing nations | G24 | G4 | BRIC | Group of 77

Life in India

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