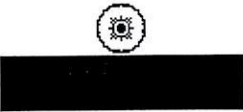# India

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

India, officially the **Republic of India** (Hindi: भारत गणराज्य *Bhārat Gaṇarājya*; see also other Indian languages), is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by geographical area, the second-most populous country, and the most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the west, and the Bay of Bengal on the east, India has a coastline of 7,517 kilometres (4,700 mi).[15] It is bordered by Pakistan to the west;[16] People's Republic of China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north; and Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean.

Home to the Indus Valley Civilisation and a region of historic trade routes and vast empires, the Indian subcontinent was identified with its commercial and cultural wealth for much of its long history.[17] Four major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism originated here, while Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam arrived in the first millennium CE and shaped the region's diverse culture. Gradually annexed by the British East India Company from the early eighteenth century and colonised by the United Kingdom from the mid-nineteenth century, India became an independent nation in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by widespread non-violent resistance.[18]

India is a republic consisting of 28 states and seven union territories with a parliamentary system of democracy. It has the world's twelfth largest economy at market exchange rates and the fourth largest in purchasing power. Economic reforms since 1991 have transformed it into one of the fastest growing economies;[19] however, it still suffers from high levels of poverty,[20] illiteracy, disease, and malnutrition. A pluralistic, multilingual, and multiethnic society, India is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats.

Republic of India भारत गणराज्य* *Bhārat Gaṇarājya*	
Flag	National Emblem
Motto: *"Satyameva Jayate"* (Sanskrit) सत्यमेव जयते (Devanāgarī) "Truth Alone Triumphs"[1]	
Anthem: *Jana Gana Mana* Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people[2]	
National Song[4] *Vande Mataram* **I bow to thee, Mother**[3]	
Capital (and largest city)	New Delhi 28°36.8′N 77°12.5′E Mumbai
Official languages	**Hindi, English** Hindi in the Devanagari script is the official language of the Union[5] and English the "subsidiary official

Contents

- 1 Etymology

Etymology

Main article: Names of India

The name *India* (pronounced /ˈɪndiə/) is derived from *Indus*, which is derived from the Old Persian word *Hindu*, from Sanskrit *Sindhu*, the historic local appellation for the Indus River.[21] The ancient Greeks referred to the Indians as *Indoi* (Ινδοί), the people of the Indus.[22] The Constitution of India and common usage in various Indian languages also recognise *Bharat* (pronounced [ˈbʰaːrʌt̪] (listen)) as an official name of equal status.[23] The name Bharat is derived from the name of the legendary king Bharata in Hindu Mythology. *Hindustan* ([hɪnd̪ʊˈstaːn](listen)), originally a Persian word for "Land of the Hindus" referring to northern India, is also occasionally used as a synonym for all of India.[24]

History

Main articles: History of India and History of the Republic of India

Stone Age rock shelters with paintings at the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh are the earliest known traces of human life in India. The first known permanent settlements appeared over 9,000 years ago and gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilisation,[25] dating back to 3300 BCE in western India. It was followed by the Vedic period, which laid

	language".[6]
	8th Schedule:
Constitutional languages	Assamese Bengali Bodo Dogri Gujarati Hindi Kannada Kashmiri Konkani Maithili Malayalam Manipuri Marathi Nepali Oriya Punjabi Sanskrit Santali Sindhi Tamil Telugu Urdu[7]
Demonym	Indian
Government	Federal republic, parliamentary democracy[8]
- President	Pratibha Patil
- Prime Minister	Manmohan Singh
- Chief Justice	K. G. Balakrishnan
Legislature	Sansad
- Upper House	Rajya Sabha
- Lower House	Lok Sabha
Independence	from United Kingdom
- Declared	15 August 1947
- Republic	26 January 1950
Area	
- Total	3,287,240 km² ‡(7th) 1,269,210 sq mi

the foundations of Hinduism and other cultural aspects of early Indian society, and ended in the 500s BCE. From around 550 BCE, many independent kingdoms and republics known as the Mahajanapadas were established across the country.[26]

Paintings at the Ajanta Caves in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, sixth century

In the third century BCE, most of South Asia was united into the Maurya Empire by Chandragupta Maurya and flourished under Ashoka the Great.[27] From the third century CE, the Gupta dynasty oversaw the period referred to as ancient "India's Golden Age." [28][29] Empires in Southern India included those of the Chalukyas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagara Empire. Science, technology, engineering, art, logic, language, literature, mathematics, astronomy, religion and philosophy flourished under the patronage of these kings.

Following invasions from Central Asia between the 10th and 12th centuries, much of North India came under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. Under the rule of Akbar the Great, India enjoyed much cultural and economic progress as well as religious harmony.[30][31] Mughal emperors gradually expanded their empires to cover large parts of the subcontinent. However, in North-Eastern India, the dominant power was the Ahom kingdom of Assam, among the few kingdoms to have resisted Mughal subjugation. The first major threat to Mughal imperial power came from a Hindu Rajput king Maha Rana Pratap of Mewar in the 14th century and later from a Hindu state known as the Maratha confederacy, that dominated much of India in the mid-18th century.[32]

- Water (%)	9.56
Population	
- 2009 estimate	1,198,003,000 [9] (2nd)
- 2001 census	1,028,610,328[10]
- Density	364.4/km^2 (32nd) 943.9/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	$3.298 trillion [11] (4th)
- Per capita	$2,780[11] (130th)
GDP (nominal)	2008 estimate
- Total	$1.206 trillion [11] (12th)
- Per capita	$1,017[11] (143rd)
Gini (2004)	36.8[12]
HDI (2007)	0.612 [13] (medium) (134th)
Currency	Indian rupee (Rp) (INR)
Time zone	IST (UTC+5:30)
- Summer (DST)	not observed (UTC+5:30)
Drives on the	left
Internet TLD	.in
Calling code	91

Non-numbered Footnotes:

* *Bharat Ganarajya*, that is, the Republic of India in Hindi,[8] written in the *Devanāgarī* script. See also other official names
‡ This is the figure as per the United Nations though the Indian government lists the total area as 3,287,260 square kilometres.[14]

From the 16th century, European powers such as Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom established trading posts and later took advantage of internal conflicts to establish colonies in the country. By 1856, most of India was under the control of the British East India Company.[33] A year later, a nationwide insurrection of rebelling military units and kingdoms, known as India's First War of Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, seriously challenged the Company's control but eventually failed. As a result of the instability, India was brought under the direct rule of the British Crown.

In the 20th century, a nationwide struggle for independence was launched

Mahatma Gandhi (right) with Jawaharlal Nehru, 1937. Nehru would go on to become India's first prime minister in 1947.

by the Indian National Congress and other political organisations.[34] Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi led millions of people in several national campaigns of non-violent civil disobedience.[18]

On 15 August 1947, India gained independence from British rule, but at the same time the Muslim-majority areas were partitioned to form a separate state of Pakistan.[35] On 26 January 1950, India became a republic and a new constitution came into effect.[36]

Since independence, India has faced challenges from religious violence, casteism, naxalism, terrorism and regional separatist insurgencies, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and Northeast India. Since the 1990s terrorist attacks have affected many Indian cities. India has unresolved territorial disputes with P. R. China, which in 1962 escalated into the Sino-Indian War; and with Pakistan, which resulted in wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999. India is a founding member of the United Nations (as British India) and the Non-Aligned Movement. In 1974, India conducted an underground nuclear test [37] and five more tests in 1998, making India a nuclear state.[37] Beginning in 1991, significant economic reforms[38] have transformed India into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, increasing its global clout.[19]

Government

Main article: Government of India

The Constitution of India, the longest and the most exhaustive constitution of any independent nation in the world, came into force on 26 January, 1950.[41] The preamble of the constitution defines India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic.[42] India has a bicameral parliament operating under a Westminster-style parliamentary system. Its form of government was traditionally described as being 'quasi-federal' with a strong centre and weaker states,[43] but it has grown increasingly federal since the late 1990s as a result of political, economic and social changes.[44]

▬ National Symbols of India[39][40]	
Flag	Tricolour
Emblem	Sarnath Lion Capital
Anthem	Jana Gana Mana
Song	Vande Mataram
Animal	Royal Bengal Tiger
Bird	Indian Peacock
Aquatic animal	Dolphin
Flower	Lotus
Tree	Banyan
Fruit	Mango
Sport	Field hockey
Calendar	Saka
River	Ganges

The President of India is the head of state[45] elected indirectly by an electoral college[46] for a five-year term.[47] [48] The Prime Minister is the head of government and exercises most executive powers.[45] Appointed by the President,[49] the Prime Minister is by convention supported by the party or political alliance holding the majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament.[45] The executive branch consists of the President, Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet being its executive committee) headed by the Prime Minister. 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, with the Prime Minister and his Council being directly responsible to the lower house of the Parliament.[50]

The Legislature of India is the bicameral Parliament, which consists of the upper house called the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the lower house called the Lok Sabha (House of People).[51] The Rajya

Sabha, a permanent body, has 245 members serving staggered six year terms.[52] Most are elected indirectly by the state and territorial legislatures in proportion to the state's population.[52] 543 of the Lok Sabha's 545 members are directly elected by popular vote to represent individual constituencies for five year terms.[52] The other two members are nominated by the President from the Anglo-Indian community if the President is of the opinion that the community is not adequately represented.[52]

India has a unitary three-tier judiciary, consisting of the Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice of India, twenty-one High Courts, and a large number of trial courts.[53] The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction over cases involving fundamental rights and over disputes between states and the Centre, and appellate jurisdiction over the High Courts.[54] It is judicially independent,[53] and has the power to declare the law and to strike down Union or State laws which contravene the Constitution.[55] The role as the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution is one of the most important functions of the Supreme Court.[56]

Administrative divisions

Main article: Administrative divisions of India

India consists of twenty-eight states and seven Union Territories.[57] All states, and the two union territories of Puducherry and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, have elected legislatures and governments patterned on the Westminster model. The other five union territories are directly ruled by the Centre through appointed administrators. In 1956, under the States Reorganisation Act, states were formed on a linguistic basis.[58] Since then, this structure has remained largely unchanged. Each state or union territory is further divided into administrative *districts*.[59] The districts in turn are further divided into *tehsils* and eventually into villages.

States:
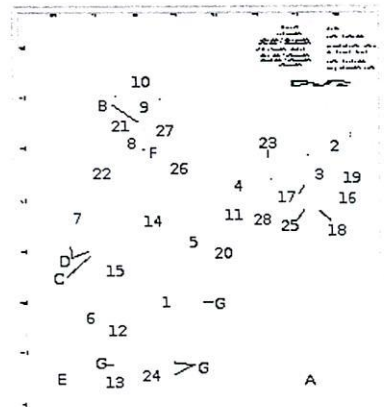
Administrative divisions of India, including 28 states and 7 union territories.

1. Andhra Pradesh	8. Haryana	15. Maharashtra	22. Rajasthan
2. Arunachal Pradesh	9. Himachal Pradesh	16. Manipur	23. Sikkim
3. Assam	10. Jammu and Kashmir	17. Meghalaya	24. Tamil Nadu

4. Bihar	11. Jharkhand	18. Mizoram	25. Tripura
5. Chhattisgarh	12. Karnataka	19. Nagaland	26. Uttar Pradesh
6. Goa	13. Kerala	20. Orissa	27. Uttarakhand
7. Gujarat	14. Madhya Pradesh	21. Punjab	28. West Bengal

Union Territories:

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

Politics

Main article: Politics of India

The North Block, in New Delhi, houses key government offices.

India is the most populous democracy in the world.[60][61] For most of the years since independence, the federal government has been led by the Indian National Congress (INC).[57] Politics in the states have been dominated by several national parties including the INC, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and various regional parties. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed a parliamentary majority. The INC was out of power between 1977 and 1980, when the Janata Party won the election owing to public discontent with the state of emergency declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In 1989, a Janata Dal-led National Front coalition in alliance with the Left Front coalition won the elections but managed to stay in power for only two years.[62] As the 1991 elections gave no political party a majority, the INC formed a minority government under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and was able to complete its five-year term.[63]

The years 1996–1998 were a period of turmoil in the federal government with several short-lived alliances holding sway. The BJP formed a government briefly in 1996, followed by the United Front coalition that excluded both the BJP and the INC. In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several other parties and became the first non-Congress government to complete a full five-year term. [64] In the 2004 Indian elections, the INC won the largest number of Lok Sabha seats and formed a government with a coalition called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), supported by various Left-leaning parties and members opposed to the BJP. The UPA again came into power in the 2009 general election; however, the representation of the Left leaning parties within the coalition has significantly reduced.[65] Manmohan Singh became the first prime minister since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962 to be re-elected after completing a full five-year term.[66]

Foreign relations and military

Main articles: Foreign relations of India and Indian Armed Forces

Since its independence in 1947, India has maintained cordial relationships with most nations. It took a leading role in the 1950s by advocating the independence of European colonies in Africa and Asia.[68] India was involved in two brief military interventions in neighbouring countries – Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka and Operation Cactus in Maldives. India is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement.[69] After the Sino-Indian War and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, India's relationship with the Soviet Union warmed and continued to remain so until the end of the Cold War. India has fought two wars with Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute. A third war between India and Pakistan in 1971 resulted in the creation of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan).[70] Additional skirmishes have taken place between the two nations over the Siachen Glacier. In 1999, India and Pakistan fought an undeclared war over Kargil.

The Sukhoi-30 MKI "Flanker" is the Indian Air Force's air superiority fighter.[67]

India and Russia share an extensive economic, defence and technological relationship. [71] Shown here is PM Manmohan Singh with President Dmitry Medvedev at the 34th G8 Summit.

In recent years, India has played an influential role in the SAARC, and the WTO.[72] India has provided as many as 55,000 Indian military and Indian police personnel to serve in thirty-five UN peace keeping operations across four continents.[13] Despite criticism and military sanctions, India has consistently refused to sign the CTBT and the NPT, although Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently stated that India would be willing to join the NPT as a recognized nuclear weapons state (NWS). Recent overtures by the Indian government have strengthened relations with the United States, China and Pakistan. In the economic sphere, India has close relationships with other developing nations in South America, Asia and Africa.

India maintains the third-largest military force in the world, which consists of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force[36] and auxiliary forces such as the Paramilitary Forces, the Coast Guard, and the Strategic Forces Command. The President of India is the supreme commander of the Indian Armed Forces. India maintains close defence cooperation with Russia, Israel and France, who are the chief suppliers of arms. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) oversees indigenous development of sophisticated arms and military equipment, including ballistic missiles, fighter aircraft and main battle tanks, to reduce India's dependence on foreign imports. India became a nuclear power in 1974 after conducting an initial nuclear test, Operation Smiling Buddha and further underground testing in 1998. India maintains a "no first use" nuclear policy.[73] On 10 October, 2008 Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement was signed, prior to which India received IAEA and NSG waivers, ending restrictions on nuclear technology commerce with which India became de facto sixth nuclear power in world.[74]

Geography

Main article: Geography of India

See also: Geological history of India and Climate of India

India, the major portion of the Indian subcontinent, sits atop the Indian tectonic plate, a minor plate within the Indo-Australian Plate.[75]

India's defining geological processes commenced seventy-five million years ago, when the Indian

subcontinent, then part of the southern supercontinent Gondwana, began a northeastwards drift—lasting fifty million years—across the then unformed Indian Ocean.[75] The subcontinent's subsequent collision with the Eurasian Plate and subduction under it, gave rise to the Himalayas, the planet's highest mountains, which now abut India in the north and the north-east.[75] In the former seabed immediately south of the emerging Himalayas, plate movement created a vast trough, which, having gradually been filled with river-borne sediment,[76] now forms the Indo-Gangetic Plain.[77] To the west of this plain, and cut off from it by the Aravalli Range, lies the Thar Desert.[78]
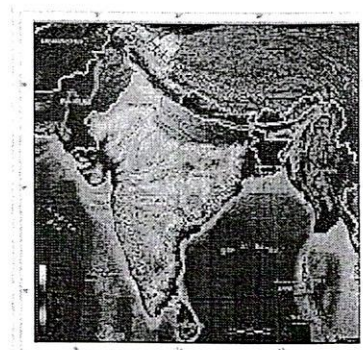
Topographic map of India.

The original Indian plate now survives as peninsular India, the oldest and geologically most stable part of India, and extending as far north as the Satpura and Vindhya ranges in central India. These parallel ranges run from the Arabian Sea coast in Gujarat in the west to the coal-rich Chota Nagpur Plateau in Jharkhand in the east.[79] To their south, the remaining peninsular landmass, the Deccan Plateau, is flanked on the left and right by the coastal ranges, Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats respectively;[80] the plateau contains the oldest rock formations in India, some over one billion years old. Constituted in such fashion, India lies to the north of the equator between 6°44' and 35°30' north latitude[81] and 68°7' and 97°25' east longitude.[82]

India's coast is 7,517 kilometres (4,700 mi) long; of this distance, 5,423 kilometres (3,400 mi) belong to peninsular India, and 2,094 kilometres (1,300 mi) to the Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep Islands.[15] According to the Indian naval hydrographic charts, the mainland coast consists of the following: 43% sandy beaches, 11% rocky coast including cliffs, and 46% mudflats or marshy coast.[15]

The Himalayas form the mountainous landscape of Northern India. Seen here is Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir

Major Himalayan-origin rivers that substantially flow through India include the Ganga (Ganges) and the Brahmaputra, both of which drain into the Bay of Bengal.[83] Important tributaries of the Ganga(Ganges) include the Yamuna and the Kosi, whose extremely low gradient causes disastrous floods every year. Major peninsular rivers whose steeper gradients prevent their waters from flooding include the Godavari, the Mahanadi, the Kaveri, and the Krishna, which also drain into the Bay of Bengal;[84] and the Narmada and the Tapti, which drain into the Arabian Sea.[85] Among notable coastal features of India are the marshy Rann of Kutch in western India, and the alluvial Sundarbans delta, which India shares with Bangladesh.[86] India has two archipelagos: the Lakshadweep, coral atolls off India's south-western coast; and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a volcanic chain in the Andaman Sea.[87]

India's climate is strongly influenced by the Himalayas and the Thar Desert, both of which drive the monsoons.[88] The Himalayas prevent cold Central Asian Katabatic wind from blowing in, keeping the bulk of the Indian subcontinent warmer than most locations at similar latitudes.[89][90] The Thar Desert plays a crucial role in attracting the moisture-laden southwest summer monsoon winds that, between June and October, provide the majority of India's rainfall.[88] Four major climatic groupings predominate in India: tropical wet, tropical dry, subtropical humid, and montane.[91]

Flora and fauna

Main articles: Flora of India and Fauna of India

India, which lies within the Indomalaya ecozone, displays significant biodiversity. One of eighteen megadiverse countries, it is home to 7.6% of all mammalian, 12.6% of all avian, 6.2% of all reptilian, 4.4% of all amphibian, 11.7% of all fish, and 6.0% of all flowering plant species.[92] Many ecoregions, such as the *shola* forests, exhibit extremely high rates of endemism; overall, 33% of Indian plant species are endemic.[93][94]
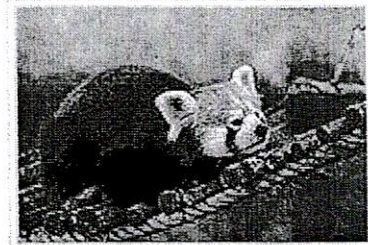
The red panda is found in the Himalayan foothills, which extend through Northeast India.

India's forest cover ranges from the tropical rainforest of the Andaman Islands, Western Ghats, and North-East India to the coniferous forest of the Himalaya. Between these extremes lie the sal-dominated moist deciduous forest of eastern India; the teak-dominated dry deciduous forest of central and southern India; and the babul-dominated thorn forest of the central Deccan and western Gangetic plain.[95] Important Indian trees include the medicinal neem, widely used in rural Indian herbal remedies. The pipal fig tree, shown on the seals of Mohenjo-daro, shaded Gautama Buddha as he sought enlightenment. According to latest report, less than 12% of India's landmass is covered by dense forests.[96]

Many Indian species are descendants of taxa originating in Gondwana, from which the Indian plate separated. Peninsular India's subsequent movement towards, and collision with, the Laurasian landmass set off a mass exchange of species. However, volcanism and climatic changes 20 million years ago caused the extinction of many endemic Indian forms.[97] Soon thereafter, mammals entered India from Asia through two zoogeographical passes on either side of the emerging Himalaya.[95] Consequently, among Indian species, only 12.6% of mammals and 4.5% of birds are endemic, contrasting with 45.8% of reptiles and 55.8% of amphibians.[92] Notable endemics are the Nilgiri leaf monkey and the brown and carmine Beddome's toad of the Western Ghats. India contains 172, or 2.9%, of IUCN-designated threatened species.[98] These include the Asiatic Lion, the Bengal Tiger, and the Indian white-rumped vulture, which suffered a near-extinction from ingesting the carrion of diclofenac-treated cattle.

In recent decades, human encroachment has posed a threat to India's wildlife; in response, the system of national parks and protected areas, first established in 1935, was substantially expanded. In 1972, India enacted the Wildlife Protection Act[99] and Project Tiger to safeguard crucial habitat; in addition, the Forest Conservation Act[100] was enacted in 1980. Along with more than five hundred wildlife sanctuaries, India hosts thirteen biosphere reserves,[101] four of which are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves; twenty-five wetlands are registered under the Ramsar Convention.[102]

Economy

Main article: Economy of India

See also: Economic history of India and Economic development in India

From the 1950s to the 1980s, India followed socialist-inspired policies. The economy was shackled by extensive regulation, protectionism, and public ownership, leading to pervasive corruption and slow growth.[103][104][105][106] Since 1991, the nation has moved towards a market-based system.[104][105] The policy change in 1991 came after an acute balance of payments crisis, and the emphasis since then has been to use foreign trade and foreign investment as integral parts of India's economy.[107]

With an average annual GDP growth rate of 5.8% for the past two decades, the economy is among the fastest growing in the world.[108] It has the world's second largest labour force, with 516.3 million people. In terms of output, the agricultural sector accounts for 28% of GDP; the service and industrial sectors make up 54% and 18% respectively. Major agricultural products include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes; cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry; fish.[57] Major industries include textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transport equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software.[57] India's trade has reached a relatively moderate share 24% of GDP in 2006, up from 6% in 1985.[104] India's share of world trade has reached 1%. Major exports include petroleum products, textile goods, gems and jewelry, software, engineering goods, chemicals, leather manufactures. [57] Major imports include crude oil, machinery, gems, fertilizer, chemicals.[57]

The Bombay Stock Exchange, in Mumbai, is Asia's oldest and India's largest stock exchange by market capitalisation.

Tata Nano, the world's least expensive car.[109] India's annual small-car exports have surged fivefold in the past five years.[110]

India's GDP is US$1.237 trillion, which makes it the twelfth-largest economy in the world[111] or fourth largest by purchasing power adjusted exchange rates. India's nominal per capita income US$1,068 is ranked 128th in the world. In the late 2000s, India's economic growth has averaged 7½% a year, which will double the average income in a decade.[104]

Despite India's impressive economic growth over recent decades, it still contains the largest concentration of poor people in the world, and has a higher rate of malnutrition among children under the age of three (46% in year 2007) than any other country in the world[112][113]. The percentage of people living below the World Bank's international poverty line of $1.25 a day (PPP, in nominal terms Rs. 21.6 a day in urban areas and Rs 14.3 in rural areas in 2005) decreased from 60% in 1981 to 42% in 2005 [114] Even though India has avoided famines in recent decades, half of children are underweight, one of the highest rates in the world and nearly double the rate of Sub-Saharan Africa.[115]

A 2007 Goldman Sachs report projected that "from 2007 to 2020, India's GDP per capita will quadruple," and that the Indian GDP will surpass that of the United States' before 2050, but India "will remain a low-income country for several decades, with per capita incomes well below its other BRIC peers."[106] Although the Indian economy has grown steadily over the last two decades; its growth has been uneven when comparing different social groups, economic groups, geographic regions, and rural and urban areas. [116] The World Bank suggests that the most important priorities should be public sector reform, infrastructure, agricultural and rural development, removal of labor regulations, reforms in lagging states, and combating HIV/AIDS.[117]

Demographics

Main article: Demographics of India

See also: Religion in India, Languages of India, and Ethnic groups of South Asia

With an estimated population of 1.2 billion,[9] India is the world's second most populous country. The last 50 years have seen a rapid increase in population due to medical advances and massive increase in agricultural productivity made by the green revolution.[118][119] India's urban population increased 11-fold during the twentieth century and is increasingly concentrated in large cities. By 2001 there were 35 million-plus population cities in India, with the largest cities, with a population of over 10 million each, being Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata. However, as of 2001, more than 70% of India's population continues to reside in rural areas.[120][121]

Population density map of India.

India is the world's most culturally, linguistically and genetically diverse geographical entity after the African continent.[57] India is home to two major linguistic families: Indo-Aryan (spoken by about 74% of the population) and Dravidian (spoken by about 24%). Other languages spoken in India come from the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic families. Hindi, with the largest number of speakers,[122] is the official language of the union.[123] English is used extensively in business and administration and has the status of a 'subsidiary official language;'[124] it is also important in education, especially as a medium of higher education. In addition, every state and union territory has its own official languages, and the constitution also recognises in particular 21 other languages that are either abundantly spoken or have classical status. While Sanskrit and Tamil have been studied as classical languages for many years,[125] the Government of India has also accorded classical language status to Kannada and Telugu using its own criteria.[126] The number of dialects in India is as high as 1,652.[127]

Over 800 million Indians (80.5%) are Hindu. Other religious groups include Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%), Jains (0.4%), Jews, Zoroastrians, Bahá'ís and others.[128] Tribals constitute 8.1% of the population.[129] India has the third-highest Muslim population in the world and has the highest population of Muslims for a non-Muslim majority country.

India's literacy rate is 64.8% (53.7% for females and 75.3% for males).[36] The state of Kerala has the highest literacy rate at 91% while Bihar has the lowest at 47%.[130][131] The national human sex ratio is 944 females per 1,000 males. India's median age is 24.9, and the population growth rate of 1.38% per annum; there are 22.01 births per 1,000 people per year.[36] According to the World Health Organization 900,000 Indians die each year from drinking contaminated water and breathing in polluted air. [132] Malaria is endemic in India.[133] Half of children in India are underweight, one of the highest rates in the world and nearly same as Sub-Saharan Africa.[115] Many women are malnourished, too. There are about 60 physicians per 100,000 people in India. [134]
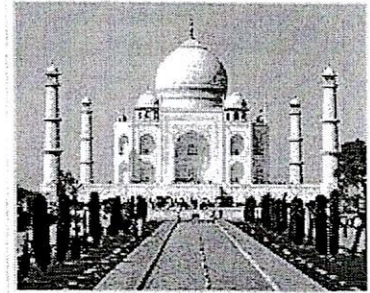
Culture

Main article: Culture of India

India's culture is marked by a high degree of syncretism[136] and cultural pluralism.[137] It has managed to preserve established traditions while absorbing new customs, traditions, and ideas from invaders and immigrants and spreading its cultural influence to other parts of Asia, mainly South East and East Asia. Traditional Indian society is defined by relatively strict social hierarchy. The

Indian caste system describes the social stratification and social restrictions in the Indian subcontinent, in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups, often termed as *jātis* or castes.[138]

Traditional Indian family values are highly respected, and multi-generational patriarchal joint families have been the norm, although nuclear family are becoming common in urban areas.[103] An overwhelming majority of Indians have their marriages arranged by their parents and other respected family members, with the consent of the bride and groom.[139] Marriage is thought to be for life,[139] and the divorce rate is extremely low.[140] Child marriage is still a common practice, with half of women in India marrying before the legal age of 18.[141][142]

The Taj Mahal in Agra was built by Shah Jahan as memorial to wife Mumtaz Mahal. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered to be of "outstanding universal value".[135]

Indian cuisine is characterised by a wide variety of regional styles and sophisticated use of herbs and spices. The staple foods in the region are rice (especially in the south and the east) and wheat (predominantly in the north).[143] Spices like black pepper that are now consumed world wide are originally native to the Indian subcontinent. Chili pepper, which was introduced by the Portuguese is also very much used within Indian Cuisine.[144]

A statue of Shiva, a principal deity of Hinduism, in Bangalore

Traditional Indian dress varies across the regions in its colours and styles and depends on various factors, including climate. Popular styles of dress include draped garments such as sari for women and dhoti or lungi for men; in addition, stitched clothes such as salwar kameez for women and kurta–pyjama and European-style trousers and shirts for men, are also popular.

Many Indian festivals are religious in origin, although several are celebrated irrespective of caste and creed. Some popular festivals are Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, Ugadi, Thai Pongal, Holi, Onam, Vijayadasami, Durga Puja, Eid ul-Fitr, Bakr-Id, Christmas, Buddha Jayanti and Vaisakhi.[145] India has three national holidays. Other sets of holidays, varying between nine and twelve, are officially observed in individual states. Religious practices are an integral part of everyday life and are a very public affair.

Indian architecture is one area that represents the diversity of Indian culture. Much of it, including notable monuments such as the Taj Mahal and other examples of Mughal architecture and South Indian architecture, comprises a blend of ancient and varied local traditions from several parts of the country and abroad. Vernacular architecture also displays notable regional variation.

Indian music covers a wide range of traditions and regional styles. Classical music largely encompasses the two genres – North Indian Hindustani, South Indian Carnatic traditions and their various offshoots in the form of regional folk music. Regionalised forms of popular music include filmi and folk music; the syncretic tradition of the *bauls* is a well-known form of the latter.

Indian dance too has diverse *folk* and *classical* forms. Among the well-known folk dances are the *bhangra* of the Punjab, the *bihu* of Assam, the *chhau* of West Bengal, Jharkhand and *sambalpuri* of Orissa and the *ghoomar* of Rajasthan. Eight dance forms, many with narrative forms and mythological elements, have been accorded classical dance status by India's *National Academy of Music, Dance, and Drama*. These are:

bharatanatyam of the state of Tamil Nadu, *kathak* of Uttar Pradesh, *kathakali* and *mohiniyattam* of Kerala, *kuchipudi* of Andhra Pradesh, *manipuri* of Manipur, *odissi* of Orissa and the *sattriya* of Assam.[146]

Theatre in India often incorporates music, dance, and improvised or written dialogue.[147] Often based on Hindu mythology, but also borrowing from medieval romances, and news of social and political events, Indian theatre includes the *bhavai* of state of Gujarat, the *jatra* of West Bengal, the *nautanki* and *ramlila* of North India, the *tamasha* of Maharashtra, the *burrakatha* of Andhra Pradesh, the *terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu, and the *yakshagana* of Karnataka.[148]

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world.[149] Bollywood, based in Mumbai, makes commercial Hindi films and is the most prolific film industry in the world.[150] Established traditions also exist in Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu language cinemas.[151]

The earliest works of Indian literature were transmitted orally and only later written down.[152] These included works of Sanskrit literature – such as the early Vedas, the epics Mahābhārata and Ramayana, the drama *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (The Recognition of Śakuntalā), and poetry such as the *Mahākāvya*[153] – and the Tamil language *Sangam* literature.[154] Among Indian writers of the modern era active in Indian languages or English, Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in 1913.

Sports

Main article: Sports of India

India's official national sport is field hockey, administered by the Indian Hockey Federation. The Indian field hockey team won the 1975 Men's Hockey World Cup and 8 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze medals at the Olympic games.

A 2008 Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket match being played between the Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders

However, cricket is the most popular sport; the India national cricket team won the 1983 Cricket World Cup and the 2007 ICC World Twenty20, and shared the 2002 ICC Champions Trophy with Sri Lanka. Cricket in India is administered by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, and domestic competitions include the Ranji Trophy, the Duleep Trophy, the Deodhar Trophy, the Irani Trophy and the Challenger Series. In addition Indian cricket league and Indian premier league organise Twenty20 competitions.

Hockey Team of India

Tennis has become increasingly popular, owing to the victories of the India Davis Cup team. Association football is also a popular sport in northeast India, West Bengal, Goa and Kerala.[155] The Indian national football team has won the South Asian Football Federation Cup several times. Chess, commonly held to have originated in India, is also gaining popularity with the rise in

the number of Indian Grandmasters.[156] Traditional sports include kabaddi, kho kho, and gilli-danda, which are played nationwide. India is also home to the ancient martial arts, Kalarippayattu and Varma Kalai.

The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and the Arjuna Award are India's highest awards for achievements in sports, while the Dronacharya Award is awarded for excellence in coaching. India hosted or co-hosted the 1951 and the 1982 Asian Games, the 1987 and 1996 Cricket World Cup. It is also scheduled to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games and the 2011 Cricket World Cup.

See also

- Outline of India
- Index of India-related articles

Notes

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