INDIAN HISTORY

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Course Description
This course covers the history of south Asia, from early Vedic Ages, and through classical time, and the rise of various empires. It also explores the rise of different religions and convergences of them, and then the transition from colonial control to independence.

About the Professor
This course was prepared by Stuart Blackburn, Ph.D., research associate / research fellow, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Department of Languages and Cultures of South Asia. Professor Blackburn is author of chapters in the *Cambridge Companion to Modern Indian Culture.*

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PART I : PREHISTORY

<u>Overview</u>

The history of India's stone-age is recoverable largely from the archaeological record of its three stages: Palaeolithic (c.1,000,000 BCE- 40,000 BCE), Mesolithic (c. 40,000 BCE-7,000 BCE) and Neolithic (c. 7,000 BCE- 3,00 BCE). It is important to state that these dates, especially the earliest ones, are not conclusive and undergo constant revision in light of new research. Recent excavations near Madras suggests a radical shift in the chronology of the earliest tool-making hominid communities in the subcontinent. Similarly, work at a site in Pakistan has already provided evidence that has changed our understanding of the Neolithic period. In studying stone-age subsistence patterns, it is important to emphasise that they are not mutually exclusive. Hunting and gathering, for instance, did not disappear with the cultivation of animals and plants. Indeed, some groups practiced, and some still do practice, a variety of subsistence patterns.

<u>Palaeolithic</u>

New research   At Attirampakkam, a site near Madras, a team of Indian and French archaeologists have recently (since 2012) found more than 4,000 artefacts, including stone hand-axes and cleavers, which they believe are at least a million years old and possibly as old as 1.5 million years. The team analysed traces embedded in the artefacts and correlated the resulting dates with changes in the earth's magnetic field. Their findings challenge the accepted narrative of pre-history in India. Before this new research, the consensus view among specialists was that hominid presence in India began approximately 500,000 BCE. Now, however, evidence is gathering to push that date back to more than a million years BCE.

Migration from Africa   This new view of hominid history in India suggests that Homo erectus migrated from Africa following what is known as the 'southern route.' Having left Africa and entered west Asia, early humans split, one group going north and the other south, taking them to India, southeast Asia and eventually to Australia. Homo erectus is a now extinct species that dominated the earth for at least a million years during the Pleistocene epoch. Homo sapiens, from whom modern humans descend, appear to have entered South Asia between 75,000 and 50,000 BCE.

Tools   The earliest humans in the subcontinent were primitive hunter-gatherers using stones that they found with a sharp edge or that they made by chipping off parts from a stone. If you break a large stone into two or three parts, the largest part, known as the 'core tool', is characteristic of the Palaeolithic age. Rather than a specialist skill, tool-making was a communal task, in which all adults in a band of hunter-gatherers (approximately 40-80 people) were expected to cooperate. Interestingly, stones appeared to have been quarried at certain 'factory' sites, especially in the Deccan.

Subsistence   Although early stone-age people in India were hunter-gatherers, most of their food was gathered rather than hunted. In fact, the hunting element of the 'hunter-gatherer' image is often exaggerated by both scholars and the general public. As a generalisation, and based on gender divisions among tribals in modern India, men tended to hunt and women to gather. Again contrary to popular belief, hunting was not done with spears or arrows, but rather with clubs and large stones, and meat was often eaten from dead animals. Gathering, likewise, did not involve sophisticated implements, and people mostly used their hands to collect fruit, berries, nuts, small insects and possibly honey. Fishing was also common

Habitation   Recent research has also revised the geographical location of all these early stone-age communities in India. Most sites of human habitation were originally located in the terraces of the Soan River and Potwar plateau in present-day Pakistan, but many more have found in the Deccan and south India. Contrary to the common assumption that stone-age sites must be distant and isolated, many of these sites are close to today's towns and cities, and near a water source. Most of them were rock shelters, although caves were also common, such as those at Sangao in Pakistan and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. These stone shelters are those that have survived over time, while others, presumably made of foliage and branches, would also have been used.

<u>Mesolithic</u>

Transition   The gradual transition from the Old- to the Middle-stone age in India is marked by the slow diminution in the size of stone tools. The unwieldy 'core-tools' (such as hand-axes and cleavers) of the Palaeolithic were gradually replaced by smaller 'flake-tools'. From the widespread presence of stone fragments (about 5 cm), scientists conclude that the larger stones were chipped and shaped by smaller stones. Most of

these new tools were made of flint and quartzite, which were harder and more easily worked than other types of stone.

Subsistence   The new technology of reducing large stones to these smaller, more efficient tools, such as knives and sickles, then enabled hunter-gatherers to forage more effectively. Although hunting in the Mesolithic may have involved spears and arrows, there is no direct evidence for this in India, either from skeletal remains or lithic analyses. Tipped stone weapons were made, but they are neither as numerous nor as complex as those found in other Mesolithic societies. Some groups also domesticated animals, such as cattle and sheep, which were used for meat, fat, milk, hides and bones. Again fishing was a major source of food for some populations.

Habitation   The net result of these changes in subsistence was that hunter-gatherers became less nomadic and formed larger groups.   Another consequence was the spread of settlement sites to new ecological niches. Although rock shelters continued to be the dominant habitation, some hunter-gatherers began to live beyond caves. For example, during this period we find evidence of camps in forest areas, with postholes, hearths, pottery remains and animal bones (wild sheep and cattle). These non-rock habitations also show different degrees of sedentariness, with some settlements being used on a semi-permanent or seasonal basis.

Chopani Mando   The partial transition from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture during the Mesolithic can be traced at Chopani Mando in Madhya Pradesh. A large collection of artefacts from that site demonstrates the shift to smaller, harder and more sophisticated stone tools. Pieces of burnt clay with impressions also indicate that the people of Chopani Mando lived in wattle-and-daub huts. A total of nineteen round and oval huts have been found, grouped close together and with an average diameter of about 4 metres. The final piece of evidence of a transition toward the Neolithic is wild rice dated to the end of the Mesolithic.

Crafts   Pottery is found in only a few, late Mesolithic sites in India, in contrast to other Mesolithic cultures around the world. However, ornament-making was widespread. Animal bones with grooves found at Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh suggest that they may have been worn as ornaments.   Similar suggestions have been made for round, disc-like stones and ostrich egg shells with holes in them, resembling ornaments found in prehistoric Siberia, China and Africa. Beads made from ostrich egg shells have been found in many sites across the subcontinent. In one Bhimbetka cave, a buried man wore a necklace, presumably of various types of beads, although only the egg shell ones remained.

Neolithic

Definition   The defining features of the Neolithic period—food production, settled communities, increased populations, complex political organisation, social stratification and pottery—represent the culmination of a long sequence of developments. This cluster of elements appeared at roughly the same time (8,000-5,000 BCE) in three different regions of the world: the Near East, South and southwest China and northwest India.

Mehrgarh   Located in a valley that connects India with Afghanistan, Mehrgarh (c. 7,000 BCE- 4,000 BCE) is the Neolithic site of great significance for Indian history. Only discovered in the 1970s and excavated more recently, it has now revised our understanding of Indian pre-history. Before the discovery of Mehrgarh, it was thought that the Neolithic period in the subcontinent began in the 4th millennium BCE as the result of diffusion from Mesopotamia. Now, however, we can trace a gradual and more localised evolution from about the 7th millennium BCE. It thus represents a crucial link from pre-history to the well-known Indus Valley civilisation

Subsistence   At its height, Mehrgarh covered about half a square mile and served as a hub for trade with other villages in the Quetta valley. The people of Mehrgarh cultivated barley, rice and wheat in large amounts. Harvesting was probably accomplished by using crude stone sickles, while the stone mortar and pestle were used to grind grains and vegetation. Although sheep, cattle and goats were domesticated, wild animals continued to be hunted.   Animal bones and seed remains found at burial sites suggest that Mesolithic people in India had a varied diet. Swamp deer and hog deer were the stable, supplemented by the tortoise and fish. Trade with the Near East is evidenced by the presence of lapus lazuli and turquoise beads among the grave goods.

Habitation   The residents of Mehrgarh lived in houses of hand-made mud-bricks, with small, rectangular rooms. Other brick buildings were used for storage, perhaps as granaries. These structures can be seen as direct antecedents to those found in the Indus Valley civilisation.

Crafts   The people of Mehrgarh made reed baskets, wove cotton and wool, carved ornaments and manufactured pots. Indeed, by the end of this period, pottery had evolved from crude, handmade vessels to

wheel-made pots with geometric designs, typically with black and red colours. One manufacturing area was found with three ovens and metres of pottery debris.

Art

Rock art   The earliest examples of visual art in the subcontinent are rock paintings and rock inscriptions (petroglyphs). More than 150 sites with this kind of artwork have been located, the earliest dating from approximately 40,000 BCE, with the majority from 15,000 to 5,000 BCE.   Rock inscriptions, especially those found at Edakkal (modern-day Kerala and dated to 6000 BCE), show human and animal figures with a distinct resemblance to those of the later Indus Valley civilisation.

Bhimbetka paintings The rock paintings at Bhimbetka (modern Madhya Pradesh) are one of the largest known collections of stone-age art in the world. The 243 caves there form part of a group of about 750 rock shelters in this part of central India. The remarkable feature of the painting in the Bhimbetka caves is that it extends from roughly 40,000-30,000 BCE up to the first millennium CE. Even more significantly, the paintings depict many elements of culture that can be seen among tribes in the area today.

Technique   Sixteen different colours were used at Bhimbetka, made from minerals and mixed with water, animal fat, animal marrow or egg whites. A pale white, made from limestone, and a dark red, made from iron oxide, are the dominant colours. Archaeologists assume that the brushes (which have not survived) were made of twigs and animal hairs.

Animal images   Twenty-nine different animal species are depicted at Bhimbekta, including bison, tigers, panthers, antelopes, elephants, lions and rhinoceroses (the last three are no longer found in the area). It is noteworthy that no snakes of any kind are painted at Bhimbetka or any other stone-age site in India.

Human images   The human figures (men, women and children) are drawn stick-like, many wearing necklaces, knee bands, wrist bands and bangles. Some carry spears or bow and arrows (although the extent of the use of these weapons is a matter of debate). There are also several scenes of humans dancing in a circle with linked hands. The men wear loin cloths, the women wear their hair braided. Some dancers wear masks and may be ritual specialists.

Religion

General   The archaeological record provides scant evidence of the religious practices and still less the beliefs of stone-age communities in India. We can only sketch an outline, relying mainly on the remains at burial sites, supplemented by studies of stone-age religion in other part of the world and ethnographies of the religious system of tribal populations still living near many sites.

Shamanism   There can be little doubt, for example, that stone-age communities in India practiced a form of shamanism. Like the shamanism of tribes in modern India, their ancestors probably conceived of a spirit world, with numerous named forces, perhaps associated with other living things (animals, flowers, trees), topographical features (rivers and mountains) and, most important the sun and moon. Stone-age handprints on cave walls in Penna Dt. Madhya Pradesh are identical to those on the house walls of tribal people in nearby villages, where they are 'good luck signs' and provide protection from the capricious spirit world.

Shamans   We can also surmise that rituals and chanting were performed by specialists in order to contact and communicate with these spirits. Several of the paintings in the Bhimbetka caves, for example, show a ritual-like dance with some masked dancers, who may be specialists.

Animals   Large animals, such as tigers and lions, painted on the cave walls may represent objects of worship. Stone-age hunters elsewhere are said to have prayed to an animal spirit, asking it to manifest itself so that it could be hunted and then ritually sacrificed. Tribal populations in modern India believe that many animals have (or are) spirits that can be contacted through chanting by ritual specialists. Killing animals, especially those with whom humans feel a strong bond, is often ritualised with chanting, dancing and singing.

Burial   Burial sites provide us with further hints of stone-age religion in India. Most graves were shallow pits in which the body was aligned east to west, suggesting a possible orientation with the sun. Burnt ash found at the bottom of the pits indicates some kind of funerary ritual. One site contained more than 150 bodies, with slightly more complex graves. A small niche was cut into one side of the pit, and the body and the goods were placed inside. The niche was then sealed with mud-bricks, presumably to keep the ancestor 'safe.' Grave

goods, such as necklaces, bone ornaments and dead animals, indicate a belief that the dead person would make a journey to a spirit world where these possessions would be useful. There is also evidence of 'secondary' burial, a reflection of more complex cosmological ideas.   Another theory is that digging graves and performing funerary rituals was a method of claiming new territory.

Fertility   Female figurines, shaped from stone and bone and found at stone-age sites, have been interpreted as fertility symbols. At one site in Madhya Pradesh, a large, shaped stone (dated to about 20,000 BCE) matches images that are today worshipped by nearby villagers as fertility symbols.

Bhimbetka shrine   One of the Bhimbetka caves contains what appears to be a 'shrine' or ritual centre. A long corridor (about 25 metres long) leads to a large space with three other entrances. In the centre of this space is a tall, vertical rock with several small scooped-out depressions, which may have been used to produce music. In any case, it appears that the space was the site ritual activity.

Baghor shrine   Another possible shrine has been located in a cave at Baghor, Madhya Pradesh. In the centre of a circular platform, 85 cm in diameter, made of sandstone and dated to about 9,000 BCE, archaeologists found a natural stone with a complex design of triangles and colours. More fragments of this central stone were found and were joined together to form a pyramid. Tribal people living nearby also make platforms on which they worship triangular stones.

Discussion/Questions

1.   Compare the rock paintings in India with their more famous counterparts in Spain and France. What differences are apparent, and what might those differences suggest about the societies that painted them?

2.   'Religion is basically the worship of the dead.' Discuss this claim with reference to the burial practices in stone-age India.

3.   Ideas, cultural values and religious beliefs are not easily extrapolated from material remains. What suggestions of this conceptual world can you find in the evidence from stone-age India?

4.   Although research on stone-age communities reveals new facts every year, many of our assumptions about these people and this period remain stubbornly static. A good project would be to study the popular perceptions of the 'stone-age' and then to compare them with the emerging picture from ancient India.

Reading

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        Palaeontology of South Asia (*Michigan, 2000)

Part II : INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

Overview

Comparative The Indus Valley (or Harappan) Civilisation (c. 2800-1500 BCE) is not only the crowning achievement of ancient Indian history. It also belongs to that select group of ancient civilisations that arose at roughly the same time elsewhere in the world. Like its contemporaneous counterparts in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) developed in a riverine plain, used writing and built cities. Unlike the other ancient civilisations, however, the Indus valley writing remains undeciphered, which means that we rely on material remains to reconstruct the foundations of Indian history.

Revisions Recent and ongoing research at the many sites of the IVC are forcing scholars to revise many of their assumptions. The IVC covered more territory than previously thought, but its government was less centralised. Analogies from Egypt and Mesopotamia, with highly centralised theocratic polities, have been dismissed in favour of the idea of regionalism. The social and economic systems of the IVC were more complex, and its culture more mysterious. And even explanations for its demise have been reconsidered.

Extent The IVC includes more than 1000 sites spread over an area of almost 1000 square miles (about the size of modern-day Pakistan). While the core of the civilisation is in the Indus river basin, it extends west to the eastern border of Afghanistan, north to northern Afghanistan, east to Uttar Pradesh and south to Gujarat. Major cities include the well-known settlements of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, as well as Lothal, Rakhighari, Kalibangan, Dholavira and Rupar. At its peak, the total population of the IVC is estimated to have reached beyond five million. According to some estimates, 40,000 people lived in Mohenjo Daro alone, while Harappa covered 150 hectares (5 kilometres in circuit).

Origins

Mehrgarh Before the discovery of Mehrgarh, it was thought that the Neolithic period in the subcontinent began in the 4th millennium BCE and had spread from Mesopotamia. Now, however, we can trace a gradual, more localised evolution from about the 7th millennium BCE. From the date, Neolithic farmers evolved into larger, more settled communities with houses and domesticated animals. This evolution can be seen clearly at Mehrgarh in Baluchistan, at the foothills of the mountains separating Pakistan from Afghanistan. By the middle of the third millennium BCE, the long evolution that led to the Neolithic phase of Indian history at Mehrgarh reached its final stage in a swift transition to full-blown urbanisation in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Decline

Debate The decline and disappearance of the Indus cities is poorly understood and hotly debated. Starting about 1900 BCE, sites were eventually abandoned, the seals were no longer manufactured, drainage systems broke down and flooding increased.   At the same time, smaller settlements displaying Indus features arose farther east in the Gangetic plain, and some scholars now call this 'Late Harappan' or 'Late Indus' civilisation. This was more or less simultaneous with the arrival of the Indo-Aryans in the Indus region.

Invasion Until the late 20th century, many scholars believed that the Indus cities had been destroyed, or conquered by 'invading' Indo-Aryans with their superior weapons, warfare techniques and horse-riding skill. Fractured skulls and mutilated skeletons found in a street and in houses seemed to be evidence of an assault if not slaughter. However, it has recently been shown that the fractures and mutilations were caused by erosion and not by violence.

Climate change A more plausible explanation for decline focuses on climate change, both extensive flooding and the drying up of river beds, which would have stimulated population shifts. Scientists have also found evidence of considerable deforestation, probably caused by the massive consumption of wood needed to feed the kilns that manufactured bricks and other products.

Overcrowding Another, more recent theory claims that the Indus cities were occupied long after the 1900 BCE date and possibly as late as 1300 BCE. The same evidence used to demonstrate decline—breakdown of the drainage system, cessation of seal manufacturing and disuse of weights—can be interpreted as proof that the cities were overcrowded and ungovernable. In other words, the very success of the IVC, its spread further east into the Gangetic plain, caused an unsustainable extension of political and economic systems that led to decline. Lacking an army, elites could not prevent people from abandoning old cities and moving on to new opportunities.

Legacy

Despite its mysterious disappearance, the IVC exerted a powerful influence over subsequent periods of Indian history. For example, although glass production is characteristic of the north Indian Painted Grey Ware culture (c. 1200- 600 BCE) glass beads have been found in the IVC. Similarly, the later phase of IVC saw rudimentary iron working, a technology which would shape the history of the subcontinent for two thousand years. The true legacy of the IVC, however, is its hold on the imagination. Even if we cannot decipher its script and not understand its demise, its antiquity and its sophistication have made it a powerful symbol in the mind of modern India.

Political system

Theocracy theory   Based on a now-discarded analogy from other Bronze Age civilisations, it was once assumed that the IVC was a theocracy, with its centre at Mohenjo-Daro or Harappa. A famous figure of a bearded man was put forward as 'a priest-king', and a large building in Mohenjo-Daro (the 'citadel') was widely accepted as a centre for ritual and state authority. The citadel, we now know, was actually a grain storage facility.

Centralisation   However, some degree of centralised state organisation linking these widely-spaced sites is suggested by the uniformity of houses, mud-bricks, weight measures, seals, grid pattern of streets, street drainage and grain storage. On the other hand, the vast territory and rudimentary transport system would have made centralisation difficult to achieve.

Drainage   Centralisation is clearly evident in the sophisticated drainage system. Houses were equipped with bathing areas, latrines and sewage drains. Linked to larger mains, which eventually emptied outside the city walls, the sewers would have removed wastewater from the habitation areas and deposited fertile sludge on the surrounding agricultural fields.

Regionalism   New evidence has led to the idea that there were six regional administrative centres, each with links to villages in the hinterland. These regional centres, it is claimed, were the major cities (listed above), where political and commercial power was concentrated. Each centre operated like a city-state or a complex chieftaincy. Power was shared among various elite kin-groups rather than a hereditary monarchy. And power was gained through trade rather than warfare.

Economy

Evolution   As a generalisation we can say that the economy of the Indus Valley civilisation was the culmination of a slow evolution from semi-nomadic pastoralism to settled agriculture and then commerce in urban centres. Compared to earlier periods, IVC objects were standardised and mass-produced. Since coinage is not found in India until the subsequent Iron Age, we have to assume that the Indus economy operated by means of barter and trade.

Complexity   Whatever the level of political centralisation in the Indus Valley civilisation, it is clear that it economic system was complex. Sustaining a far-flung network of regional centres for more than ten centuries would have required considerable surplus food production, commercial activities, division of labour and trade networks.

Metallurgy   Copper and bronze (copper alloyed with tin, arsenic or nickel) artefacts are plentiful in the IVC. Sixteen copper workshops existed in Harappa alone. Copper and bronze knives, spears, swords, needles, rings, bangles and mirrors are common. Bronze was also used to make statues, while copper plates were used for writing.

Brick-making   IVC houses, warehouses, fortress walls and its few large buildings required a considerable quantity of unglazed mud-fired bricks. Even the drain pipes were made of terracotta. This, is turn, depended on an extensive timber industry to supply the wood for the many kilns where the bricks were fired. Finally, masons and other builders were required to construct houses.

Crafts   IVC people made pots in a wide variety of standardised styles and shapes. Most are sturdy, wheel-turned and high quality, with geometric designs of either red or black. IVC people also wove cotton and woollen textiles, built houses and made ornaments of stone, terracotta, shell, semi-precious gems, gold and silver..

Food production   IVC farmers cultivated wheat, cotton, millet, rice, sesame, melons, peas, dates, garlic and several varieties of gram. The fertile river basin required (and still requires) little ploughing, irrigation or manuring. Terracotta models of ploughs have been found, but no actual plough has survived because they were made of wood. Bunds and canals were built to contain and divert surface water.

Domesticated animals   The most important domesticated animals were cattle and buffalo, used for meat, milk and labour. Sheep and goats were also raised for similar purposes, as well as for wool. Small figurines of dogs suggest that they too were domesticated. Animal bones that resemble those of a horse are extremely controversial since horses are associated with the Indo-Aryans, who are thought to have migrated to India only after (or at the same time as) the decline of the IVC.

Internal trade   Food, raw materials and manufactured goods were traded within the IVC between villages, regional markets and urban centres. Harappa had an open-plan market for stalls, surrounded by workshops where shell, copper and agate artefacts were produced. Fascinating new analyses of grain deposits (phyloliths) suggest that rural farmers shifted from growing a single crop for local consumption to a variety of crops that were processed for trade with the regional centres. It is thought that this shift occurred because of commercial demands from powerful merchants in the cities.

External trade   External trade was crucial to the IVC economy. Lapis lazuli, tin, gold, silver and fine woollen textiles came from Central Asia, West Asia and Afghanistan. To these regions, the IVC exported mainly cereal grains, livestock and cotton textiles. Trade with Mesopotamia is demonstrated by the fact that shell bangles, carnelian beads and numerous Indus Valley seals have been found in ancient Near Eastern cities.

Transport   The IVC trade networks relied heavily on the bullock cart, and the Indus may have been the first civilisation to use wheeled transport. Boats were also important. These were most likely small, flat-bottomed craft, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today.

Dockyard   One extraordinary discovery is a large dockyard at Lothal, on the west coast of India, which would have facilitated maritime trade to the Near East. Burnt bricks were used to construct a basin with walls over 200 meters long on the east and west side, and about 35 meters long on the north and south. A sluice-gate and a spill channel were used to regulate the water level.

Society

Population   It is estimated that only about 100,000 of the total 5 million people of the IVC lived in towns and cities. This means that the great majority of the people lived in small towns and villages. However, because most of the archaeological material comes from the handful of large urban centres, our picture of IVC society is disproportionately based on the city-dwelling population.

Ethnicity   Genetic studies of skeletons found at major sites across the IVC show considerable uniformity. However, there is also regional diversity. Bodies analysed from a specific site have a strong biological affinity with local hunter-gatherer populations in that area. For example, the bodies excavated at Lothal show an extremely close link with populations in that part of Gujarat.

Egalitarian   The extreme uniformity of the IVC suggests that its society was more egalitarian than hierarchical. All the examples of uniformity— standardised bricks, houses, urban grid pattern, seals and measures—reflect a relatively classless society. In addition, artefacts are distributed throughout various occupational levels and are not concentrated in high-status residences or monuments. Important goods (semi-precious stones, copper and bronze ornaments, inscribed seals) are found in small hamlets as well as urban centres. The absence of a ruling elite is further indicated by the nature of grave goods, in particular the absence of hoards.

Groups   Despite the lack of a ruling elite, such as a hereditary monarchy or clan, differentiation based on wealth and power clearly existed. Indeed, the complex commercial and political organisation of the regional centres required a social structure of groups with different status and skills. From material remains, it has been suggested that the IVC consisted of eight distinct classes: artisans, labourers, land-owners, merchants, administrators (and their assistants), farmers, ritual leaders and political elites. These eight groups might be represented by the eight types of animals inscribed on the seals. Each of these groups probably had sub-groups, such as masons, potters, carpenters and jewellers among the artisans.

Everyday life   Both men and women used two cotton garments: some kind of lower garment and (usually) an upper shawl thrown over the shoulder. Domestic utensils included axes, knives, needles and saws made from

stone, bone, copper and bronze. A detailed toy bullock-cart, an exquisitely shaped dancing girl and several sets of cubical dice (with one to six holes painted on the faces) suggest that people amused themselves much as we might today. A harp-like instrument incised on a stone seal and two shell objects suggest the presence of musical instruments.

Kinship and marriage   Indus valley society would have been structured in part, if not in the main, by kinship. While we have no textual information as to the kinship system, we can assume that marriage was central. And for this we can glean some details from the scenes depicted on the seals and pottery. For example, one famous seal shows a group of people arranged around a central figure standing behind a circle or some pattern drawn on the floor that resembles the floor designs used today for weddings.   Some seals had holes, presumably for a string, enabling them to be worn perhaps as a wedding pendant, as is the custom today.

Social change   Despite the egalitarian and uniform nature of IVC society, it must have changed during its more than ten centuries. Factors stimulating change include climate variation, trade and the influx of new people. We know there was considerable trade between the IVC and the neighbouring regions, particularly Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Near East. The humped bulls and the black-buck shown on painted pots suggest that these animals, which are not native to the Indus valley, may have been brought to the area by migrants from the Near East.

Art

Workmanship   In a civilisation of long duration, vast territory and monumental buildings, we might expect to find art on a monumental scale. In fact, the art of the IVC is characterised by small-scale elegance.   IVC people created visual images by painting and incising them on a variety of surfaces, as well as by shaping them into three-dimensional forms. Most observers comment on the skilled workmanship of these craftsmen, who worked on such a small-scale and displayed such control of their medium.

Seals   The incised steatite seals, for example, range in size from ½ x ½ inch to 2.5 x 2.5 inches. Yet on these tiny surfaces, using a few deft strokes, artists managed to depict anatomically convincing animals, detailed urns and flowering trees.

Figurines   The three-dimensional representations of humans and animals are mostly terracotta (unglazed fired clay), although we also have a few notable statues of stone and bronze. Some of the terracotta pieces are no large than a thumb. Many are goddesses with elaborate headdresses and ornaments, such as belts and bangles, some of which are painted. Others figurines are of animals—water buffalo, deer, ram, rhinoceros, elephant, monkey, bear, rabbit, dog and zebu (humped cattle)—as well as birds and fish.

Toys   Among the many IVC objects seemingly made for play are a number of miniature bullock carts. Several of these are complete with driver, four or two wheels, axel and load of wood or pots. These carts average about 15 cm in length and 7 cm in width. Researchers have found that the proportions of the IVC miniature objects are exactly the same as those for full-scale carts used in modern-day Pakistan.

Dancing girl   One of the standout objects of IVC art is a bronze statuette of a dancing girl. Its fine workmanship, especially in the modelling of the body with its sinewy curves, is impressive. When it was discovered and first shown, in the 1920s, archaeologists doubted that it came from the Indus valley and suggested that it had been mistakenly dated. When the early date was confirmed, scholars then began to wonder if somehow Greek art had been influenced by the Indus artists.

Bearded man   Another impressive art piece from the IVC is the bust of a so-called 'bearded man' or 'priest-king.' Made of soapstone and 18 cm tall, it was found in a wall-niche of a building with ornamental brickwork. His beard and upper lip are closely shaved, he has pierced earlobes and he seems to wear an elaborate hairstyle, though this is partially obscured. He also wears an armband and a cloak or shawl with an elaborate pattern of circles.

Fish bowl   Among the thousands of terracotta works, we can point to a bowl to illustrate the imagination and skill of potters in the IVC. This shallow container (4 cm high, 23 cm in diameter at the top and 10 cm at the base) has been painted grey and black with a dazzling pattern of fish. Three fish swim counter-clockwise in one panel while two others travel in the opposite direction just below them. The black wavy line on the lip gives the impression that what we see is all below water.

Religion

Speculation   While little is known of the religion of the IVC, the archaeological evidence is suggestive. One example is the bust of a 'bearded man', who was conveniently identified as a 'priest,' though this is unsubstantiated. More promising are various scenes on the seals that appear to show religious figures or actions. A man in a yoga pose, with an animal headdress, looks like a Siva, while other scenes resemble animal sacrifice. There are also a number of female terracotta figurines that have been identified as 'mother goddesses' who symbolise fertility. Much of this, it has to be emphasised is speculation and may be erroneous. As an example, worked stone pieces that had been claimed as phallic symbols, associated with Siva, turned out to be domestic pestles.

Structures   In contrast to Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations, the Indus Valley civilisation seems to have lacked any temples or palaces that would give clear evidence of religious rites or specific deities. Although a large building in Mohenjo-Daro is often identified as a 'citadel' (12 metres high), there is no evidence that it had a ritual function. Similarly, the function of the so-called 'great bath' at Mohenjo-Daro (12 x 7 x 2.5 metres, with two sets of stairs) remains a mystery. Many scholars believe it would have had a ritual cleansing function, but this interpretation may be an example of reading back from later Vedic culture.

Burial   Funeral practices included burial and cremation. Unlike in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, however, the people of IVC did not bury the dead with items of wealth. Instead, we find common pots, beads and ornaments. The pots, and frequent animal bones, may have been thought to provide water and meat for the dead person in some kind of an after-life. The body was usually separated from the earth by a shroud, coffin or layer of clay, which it is tempting to interpret as a concern with ritual purity. In any case, the orientation of the body (head to the north and feet to the south) is striking because south is the direction of death in the Vedas and later Indian religions.

Writing   The IVC used a system of writing found incised on soapstone seals and copper plates, and painted on a few terracotta pots. Despite intense and ongoing computerised research and unverified 'discoveries,' the Indus script with 270 characters remains undeciphered. Many scholars believe the underlying language is a form of Proto-Dravidian, others claim it is Sanskrit, while there is a growing consensus that it might represent a form of communicating commercial transactions (invoices and receipts). There is no doubt, however, that the Indus script (not the language) is related to the script in Mesopotamia since cuneiform tablets have been found in the Indus valley and Indus seals have been found in the Near East.

Symbols of power   A new theory regarding the use of the undeciphered stone seals has been proposed by Mark Kenoyer. He suggests that the writing on them might be royal titles and administrative offices. Further, he believes that the various animals inscribed on the seals represent symbolic power and might have been used by elite clans or social groups. The unicorn, for example, which is the most common animal image on the seals, might be associated with merchants

Discussion/questions

1. The evidence for a centralised state in the Indus Valley civilisation is mixed. Analyse the evidence (such as bricks, weights, seals and drainage) to build an argument that uses comparative data from at least one other world civilisation (preferably from the same time period). In conclusion, explain why the issue of state organisation is important not only for an understanding of the Indus Valley civilisation but for later Indian history, as well.

2. The complex economy of the IVC operated by means of barter, rather than coinage or currency. Studies of archaic barter societies (see, for example the classic by M. Mauss 'The Gift') emphasise the role of rules and reciprocity. How, then, does barter differ from modern economic exchange?

3. The overwhelming majority of the IVC population lived in small towns and villages, yet most of the archaeological evidence comes from a handful of large urban centres. Does this discrepancy shape our understanding of the civilisation? Although our first answer might be 'yes,' consider that the villages were connected to the cities by trade networks and possibly political links as well. In addition, most artefacts are found in both urban and rural sites.

4. Writing is generally considered a prerequisite of a civilisation, but the Indus Valley script remains undeciphered, despite decades of dedicated research. Why is writing considered so fundamental to civilisation? What is a 'civilisation' and how does it differ, if at all, from a culture?

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Part III : INDO-ARYAN CIVILIZATION

Overview

Origins The Indo-Aryans (who called themselves 'Arya') came from the Iranian high plateau ('Iran' and 'Aryan' are cognate words) and entered India around 1200 BCE, that is, at about the same time that the Indus Valley civilisation was in decline. For many decades, scholars thought that these two events were casually linked in that the Indo-Aryans had 'invaded' en mass and destroyed the Indus cities. That idea has been discredited by lack of evidence. Instead, it seems likely that the Indo-Aryans migrated to India over two or three centuries, in a series of overlapping movements. This migration may have been concurrent with the end of the Indus Valley civilisation, but it was not a factor in that decline.

Influence The Indo-Aryans brought with them the language of Sanskrit and the religious texts of the Vedas, both of which continue to have enormous cultural authority in India. Another powerful legacy of early Indo-Aryan history is the caste system. It was articulated in the religious texts known as the Vedas and underwent significant change during the classical period as the Indo-Aryans assimilated into local populations and social rules were codified.

Developments   Other major developments occurred as a result of the gradual integration of the early Indo-Aryans with indigenous peoples. The tribe-based political system of the early Indo-Aryans, rooted in their semi-nomadic pastoralism, evolved into chiefdoms. The economy of the early Indo-Aryans also shifted to settled agriculture, a fundamental change made possible by the spread of iron-making and forest clearance.

Government

Tribes Early Indo-Aryans were organised into tribes (*jana*), with a chief (*raja*), who was advised by two different tribal councils (*sabha* and *samiti*). Later, these isolated tribes amalgamated into larger groups, with larger territory and greater formal organisation. Rulers were consecrated with extensive rituals.

Warfare The horse and the chariot gave the early Indo-Aryans superiority in warfare over the people they encountered on their migration, who were mainly settled agriculturists. Judging from the Vedas, the early Indo-Aryans were often engaged in war or raiding. The battle of the 'Ten Kings' (mentioned in the Rig Veda) was decided when one ruler broke the dam of another and conquered his land.

Horse-sacrifice Another method of territorial conquest was ritualised. This elaborate ceremony, described in the religious texts, was called the 'horse-sacrifice' (*ashvamedha*). If a ruler wished to extend his territory, he performed the ritual by releasing a horse to wander for a year.   During that time, anyone could challenge the claim by attacking the warriors accompanying the wandering horse. If no attack took place, the horse was taken back to the ruler and sacrificed as a consecration of the ruler's new territory.

Alliances As Indo-Aryan populations moved ever eastward, from the rivers of the Punjab to the plains of north India, particularly the Gangetic region, these semi-nomadic pastoralists mixed with indigenous peoples, producing settled agricultural communities. Although the tribe remained the basis of Indo-Aryan society, power became dependent less on wealth and more on the ability to forge alliances. The most powerful tribes of the period were the Panchala, formed from five independent tribes, and the Kuru, an amalgam of two separate tribes.

Chiefdoms   These larger, composite tribes that controlled greater territory were called *janapada*s (lit. 'foothold of a tribe'). We have the names of nearly 40 chiefdoms from early Sanskrit texts. By 800 BCE these Neolithic farming and pastoralist communities combined into yet larger political structures called *maha (*'great'*) janapada*s, or complex chiefdoms. Sixteen of these complex chiefdoms dominated north India in this period, stretching from Taxila, in the northwest to Anga, in the far east. These include Kosala, with its capital at Ayodhya, where Rama of the *Ramayana* ruled; Magadha, with its capital at Pataliputra, later the capital of the Mauryan Empire; Kuru, with a capital at Indraprastha, whose two factions fought the war described in the *Mahabharata*.

Early economy

The subsistence pattern of the early Indo-Aryans was predominately semi-nomadic pastoralism, although they also cultivated crops on a limited scale. They kept horses, sheep and goats, but cattle were their preoccupation.

Cattle were a form of currency, cattle raids were frequent and cattle were essential for ritual sacrifice. Goods, especially cattle, were battered, although ritual gift-giving also played a role in exchanges.

<u>Later economy</u>

Assimilation   By 1000 BCE, Indo-Aryans were beginning to assimilate with indigenous farming populations and their distinctive pastoralist economy gave way to other means of subsistence. Most importantly, the new sedentary life entailed a transition from livestock to land as a measure of wealth.

Pottery   Another development that resulted from this intermingling of Indo-Aryans with local populations was the emergence of sophisticated pottery. Pots were wheel-thrown and dried in the sun. Interestingly, there are no animals or humans depicted, only geometric patterns and simples lines painted in black.

Coinage   India's first minted coins (as opposed to shells or beads used as barter) were manufactured in the Gangetic plain around 700 BCE. Made from silver bars, these early coins were punched and stamped with a symbol, such as an animal or the swastika.

Iron-making   Early Indo-Aryans may have possessed iron objects, but they did not introduce this critical technology to India. Instead, as part of their assimilation, they learned to make iron from the indigenous populations. By about 800 BCE, iron was used to make a variety of objects, including needles, nails, hooks, heavy axes, knives, arrow heads, tongs and clamps. Very little research has been done to identify the source of the iron ore, but most scholars believe that the Himalayan foothills are the most likely.

Furnaces   The discovery of clay furnaces at many sites in north India indicates the spread of the ability to make iron objects. Most furnaces are of the open type that used bellows. Some of them are large-scale and capable of making heavy tools, such as axes.

Forest clearance   The emergence of iron technology, especially heavy axes, literally changed the face of India by enabling large-scale forest clearance in the Gangetic plain. This, in turn, facilitated the production of considerable food production, which sustained the large populations that led to a shift from tribe to chiefdom.

<u>Society</u>

Varna   The Vedic literature of the Indo-Aryans provides the template for the Indian caste system by listing its four main categories (*varna*, or 'colour'):

1. Brahmin: priests and scholars
2. Ksatriya: rulers and warriors, including property owners
3. Vaisya: merchants and skilled artisans
4. Sudra: labourers and servants

Twice –born   A critical distinction between these four categories is that the first three were considered 'twice-born' because they underwent an initiation ritual that formalised their role in society. This reinforced the low status of sudras. It is significant, however, that the concept of 'twice-born' is not found in early Vedic texts and appeared about 800-600 BCE.

Untouchables   Untouchables were not part of the original four-fold scheme. However, Vedic literature did mention groups even more despised than the sudras. These included the *dasas* ('slaves'), who are described as having dark skin, broad, flat noses, speaking a strange language and practicing magic. Elsewhere in the literature, the stigma of impurity/untouchability is associated with people who came in contact with death, such as human corpses, dead animals and animal skins. Over time, these despised groups came to be called *a-varna* ('out-castes'). Western writers in the early 20th century coined the term 'Untouchable', Gandhi called them 'Harijan' ('Children of God) and now they call themselves 'Dalit' ('broken').

Jati   When Indians (or anyone else) speaks of 'caste', they usually refer to the dozens of sub-divisions within each of the five overarching categories (the four *varna*s + untouchables). These sub-groups are known as *jati* ('birth'). They are the group into which one is born and is expected to marry. There is great regional variation in the *jati* system. For instance, a specific sudra caste in one region, or even one village, may not exist in the adjoining region or village. The *jati* system has also allowed newcomers to be slotted into the overall social system by allotting them a new name.

Women   Based on the Vedas, it appears that women enjoyed a comparatively high status. Daughters as well as sons were given education and taught the sacred texts. Female ascetics appear as frequently as male ascetics and often receive more praise. Girls moved freely in public, attending meetings and ceremonies, where they also spoke. Women could inherit property, and widows could remarry. At the same time, the role of women was to produce progeny for the blood line, and wives were subordinate to their husband.

Religion

Indo-European   The religion of the early Indo-Aryans was a branch of a wider set of Indo-European beliefs and practices found among the ancient Greek, Norse, Iranian and Germanic peoples. Key features of this reconstructed religion include a sky-father god, a dragon-slaying myth and a myth of two brothers who create the world from a sacrifice. The Vedic sky-father god Dyaus Pitr, is cognate with the Zeus and Ju-piter. A Vedic god, Indra, slays a dragon. And a Vedic myth explains the creation of the world from sacrifice.

Vedas   The religion of the Indo-Aryans is found in a remarkable set of Sanskrit oral texts known collectively as the Vedas (after the Sanskrit word for 'knowledge'). There are four Vedas, composed from about 1500 to 900 BCE and then memorised and transmitted by specialists (Brahmins) to the present day. These ancient texts are filled with optimism and exuberance, a celebration of life and wonder at the magnificence of the world. The gods are benign and protective, especially if men continue to honour them with sacrifice.

Rig Veda   The oldest of these four texts is the *Rig Veda* (c. 1500-1200 BCE), which contains speculation about the cosmos, its origins and order, its guardians and enemies.   Some of its 1,028 verses also provide charms and curses, intended to protect the cattle-keeping Indo-Aryans from disease, accident and misfortune.

Other Vedas   The three other Vedas (Yajur, Sama and Atharva, c. 1200-9000 BCE) also contain imprecations but focus on rituals. These three texts describe and explain the complex techniques necessary for conducting the ceremonies, with an emphasis on the power of breath, spoken words, and the one who speaks them, the Brahmin priest. Specific form of words, or mantras, are said to be imbued with magical power.

Pantheon   Vedic religion is pantheistic. Rather than a single, all-powerful creator god, it encompasses many diverse gods and goddesses, most of whom are associated with natural forces. Chief male deities include Dyaus (sky-father), Varuna (guardian of cosmic order), Agni (fire), Indra (a sky warrior), Yama (lord of the underworld) and Surya (Sun). Vac (goddess of speech) and Ushas (Dawn) are the only prominent female deities. .

Sacrifice   At the heart of Vedic religion is the fire sacrifice. Many hymns invoke Agni (fire) and Soma (an intoxicating libation), the two principal elements of the sacrifice. Brahmins conduct this sacrifice on behalf of others who wish to increase their wealth or progeny, or to ward off disease and misfortune. The fire sacrifice is still performed today, in a much changed form, during Hindu weddings.

Literature

Myth   The Vedas contain the earliest articulation of many stories that would evolve into the corpus of Hindu mythology. For example, Indra, king of the gods, slays the cloud-dragon Vrtra with his thunderbolts.
In another story, Yama, the first human and the first to die, presides over the world of the dead, where others must travel after death. The virtuous are guided on this journey by two dogs, while the others are attacked by demons.

Poetry   Despite the heavy hand of cosmology and ritual, the Vedas also contain subtle poetic descriptions. For instance, the beauty of Dawn (Ushas) is evoked with tenderness.   There is also magnificence in descriptions of the Sun (Surya) riding across the heavens in a chariot drawn by seven horses.

Creation   Vedic religion, and Hinduism more generally, has several creation myths. One story explains that sound (the goddess Vac) created the world. (Cf. 'In the beginning was the word.') Elsewhere, the world emerges from a primeval sacrifice of a man, who is then divided into four parts corresponding to the four major caste groups. The world also comes out of a 'golden womb' as well as from a 'universal egg.' Later, creation becomes the work of a figure, named Prajapati. However, the most haunting creation myth has no definitive answer. 'How,' ask the ancient sages, 'did being evolve from non-being?' There is no certainty, not even among those 'who look down on it, in the highest heaven.'

Orality   The Vedas were not written. Instead, they were composed, performed and transmitted orally, using a complex set of mnemonic techniques, metrical schemes and literary conventions, by a series of poets, over a period of several hundred years. In other words, Vedic literature is speech (indeed, speech is deified as the goddess Vac).

Memorisation   Vedic priests underwent extensive training in memorising the sacred texts to ensure that they were passed down without error, thus ensuring their efficacy. Scholars, working from largely 20th-century field research, have identified eight different 'paths' of memorisation. In one path, for example, every two adjacent words were recited in their original order, then in reverse order and again in their original order. The most complex method involved reciting the entire *Rig Veda* in reverse order.

Metre   The metric system of the Vedas, like that of most early and later Indian poetic traditions (and most Indo-European literatures), is measured by long and short syllables and not (as in English) by stress. A syllable was counted as 'long' if it contained a long vowel or a short vowel and two consonants. Most of the hymns are arranged in quatrains, although divisions of three and five also exist. Similarly, while the standard metre is iambic, there is considerable variation in metre.

Mantra   The power of speech, especially carefully calibrated speech, is central to understanding the Vedas. A 'mantra' (word or formula spoken by a knowledgeable person in the correct way) is potent. Based on the concept of correspondences, through which the visible is linked to the invisible, speech can alter the material conditions of someone's life, whether to increase prosperity through sacrifice or to thwart disease through a spell. The potency of the spoken word connects this ancient layer of Indian literature with later genres and traditions, both popular and sophisticated.

Grammar   Given this sophisticated science of the spoken word among early Sanskrit speakers, it is not surprising that they produced a remarkable grammar of the language. Panini's grammar (c. 400 BCE), with its nearly 4,000 rules, is still regarded by linguists as the finest description of Sanskrit available.

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Discussion/Questions

1.   The oral composition and transmission of the Vedas is one of the most astonishing achievements in world history. Even today, even scholars often write that the Vedas were 'written'. Why does this misconception persist? And how does an oral/aural culture differ from an essentially graphic/visual culture?

2.   Early Indo-Aryans were organised into tribes and later developed chiefdoms. What is a 'chiefdom'? And how does it differ from a 'tribe' and a 'state'?

3.   Although the caste is often considered unique to India, scholars have found very similar social systems (at various historical periods) in South Africa, Japan and the southern United States. These comparative studies are somewhat flawed in that they do not agree a common definition of 'caste.' What is a good definition of 'caste'?

1.   Creation of the World (*Rig Veda* 10.129)

There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?

There was neither death nor immorality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond.

Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning; with no distinguishing sign, all this was water. The life force that was covered with emptiness, that one arose through the power of heat.

Desire came upon that one in the beginning; that was the first seed of mind. Poets seeking in their heart with wisdom found the bond of existence in non-existence.

Their cord was extended across. Was there below? Was there above? There were seed-placers; there were powers. There was impulse beneath; there was giving-forth above.

Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen?

Whence this creation has arisen—perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not—the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows. Or perhaps he does not know.

(translation by Wendy O'Flaherty, 1981)

2.   Purusha, the Creation of Man (*Rig Veda* 10.90)

Thousand-headed is Purusa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. Having covered the earth on all sides, he stood above it the width of ten fingers.

Only Purusa is all this, that which has been and that which is to be. He is the lord of the immortals, who grow by means of [ritual] food.

Such is his greatness, yet more than this is Purusa. One-quarter of him is all beings; three- quarters of him is the immortal in heaven.

Three-quarters of Purusa went upward, one-quarter of him remained here. From this [one-quarter] he spread in all directions into what eats and what does not eat.

From him the shining one was born, from the shining one was born Purusa. When born he extended beyond the earth, behind as well as in front.

When the gods performed a sacrifice with the offering Purusa, spring was its clarified butter, summer the kindling, autumn the oblation.

It was Purusa, born in the beginning, which they sprinkled on the sacred grass as a sacrifice. With him the gods sacrificed, the demi-gods, and the seers.

From that sacrifice completely offered, the clotted butter was brought together. It made the beasts of the air, the forest and the village.

From that sacrifice completely offered, the mantras [Rig Veda] and the songs [Samaveda] were born. The meters were born from it. The sacrificial formulae [Yajurveda] were born from it.

From it the horses were born and all that have cutting teeth in both jaws. The cows were born from it, also. From it were born goats and sheep.

When they divided Purusa, how many ways did they apportion him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What were his thighs, his feet declared to be?

His mouth was the Brahman [caste], his arms were the Rajanaya [Ksatriya caste], his thighs the Vaisya [caste]; from his feet the Sudra [caste] was born.

The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth both Indra and Agni [fire]; from his breath Vayu [wind] was born.

From his navel arose the air; from his head the heaven evolved; from his feet the earth; the [four] directions from his ear. Thus, they fashioned the worlds.

Seven were his altar sticks, three times seven were the kindling bundles, when the gods, performing the sacrifice, bound the beast Purusa.

The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient demi-gods and the gods are.

(translated by Michael Myers, 1989
http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/world_civ/worldcivreader/world_civ_reader_1/rig_veda.html)

3. From the *Isha Upanishad*

   He encircled all, bright, incorporeal, scatheless, sinewless, pure,
   untouched by evil; a seer, wise and omnipresent, self - existent, he
   dispensed all things well for ever and ever.

4. From the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*

   There is one Rudra only, they do not allow a second, who rules all the worlds by his might. He stands behind
   all things, he made all of the worlds, and protects them, and rolls them up at the end of time.
   The Lord lives in the faces of all beings ... He lives in the inmost heart
   of all, the all - pervading, all - present Siva.

Part IV : CLASSICAL PERIOD

<u>Overview</u>

During this period, especially under the patronage of the Gupta Empire, cultural forms that we now recognise as 'classical India' took shape. Hinduism evolved from its Vedic origins into a temple-based devotionalism. Hindu gods and goddesses were popularised through an extensive body of literature, and they were widely celebrated in the visual arts. A system of chiefdoms developed into a centralised empire (the Mauryan), which later fragmented into to a series of smaller states and then consolidated again in a second empire (the Gupta). The use of iron tools changed the face of India by enabling forest clearance, large-scale cultivation, food surplus and concentrated urban populations. Expanding urbanism led in turn to a wealthy mercantile class, improved transport, increasing trade, use of coins and new banking methods. Underlying many of these developments was the invention (or borrowing) of writing in the late 4th c. or early 3rd c. BCE. However, nearly all literary texts in the period were orally composed.

<u>Events and People</u>

Mahabharata War The war and battle described in the epic of the *Mahabharata* (c. 400 BCE-200 CE) is thought to have taken place about 900 BCE. (Thus, like the *Iliad*, the Indian epic chronicles an event that occurred centuries earlier.) Although many scholars point out that there is no evidence to prove that such a battle did take place, several references to places and people in the epic are corroborated by other texts. In addition, recent excavations at Hastinapura, the capital of the clashing factions in the epic, have revealed artefacts consistent with the dating and narrative of the epic.

Gautama Buddha Tradition holds that the 'historical' Buddha, a prince named Gautama, was born at Lumbini, on the Indian-Nepalese border, in the mid-6th century BCE. However, there had been no material evidence to support this claim until 2013, when archaeologists digging at Lumbini uncovered the remains of a timber structure (called a 'shrine') dated to the 6th century BCE. Whether the founder of Buddhism was born in that century or later, there is little doubt that there was an historical figure in the middle of the first millennium BCE who changed the course of Indian and world history.

Persian invasion In the early 6th c. BCE, the northwest corner of India was conquered by the Achaemenid kings of Persia, who considered that region to be their eastern province. At the time, the region was ruled by King Bimbisara of the Magadha kingdom. Persians controlled this corner of India for more than a century, leaving a legacy of learning and administration that would later produce two of ancient India's greatest thinkers: the grammarian Panini and the political philosopher Kautilya, both 4th c. BCE. Significantly, it was through the Persians that the ancient Greeks, such as Herodotus, gained knowledge of India, which eventually led to Alexander's invasion.

Alexander Alexander the Great's invasion of northwest India led to the end of a political system of chieftaincy (*mahajanapada*) that had existed for at least 500 years. Marching from Macedonia, Alexander conquered Persia and then advanced across the Punjab in 326 BCE before a mutiny forced him to return. He died three years later in Baghdad. The last Greek province in India was held until 316 BCE. However, Greek provinces in Bactria (northern Afghanistan) survived until the end of the pre-Christian era and produced a distinct school of Greco-Buddhist art. Greek influence can also be detected in Indian architecture, theatre and religion (Mahayana Buddhism). More generally, Alexander's adventure initiated a cultural exchange between India and the West that would remain a factor in shaping India history to the present day.

Chandragupta The chief beneficiary of Alexander's invasion was Chandragupta, founder of the Mauryan Empire. Chandragupta, who may have actually faced Alexander on the battlefield, went on to reign from 321 BCE until his death in 297 BCE. During his rule, Chandragupta defeated a second Greek invasion in 305 BCE, expanded his territory west to the border of the Persian Empire and south to the Deccan. According to tradition, Chandragupta suffered the early death of his father (leader of the then-struggling Mauryas) and was brought up by a cowherd. He later befriended a philosopher who wrote a famous treatise on governance *(Arthasastra)*. It is also said that he became a Jain in later life and went on pilgrimage to a famous Jaina shrine in present-day Karnataka, where he fasted to death.

Ashoka Chandragupta's grandson, and the greatest of the Mauryan rulers, was Ashoka. Indeed, Ashoka (r. 272-233 ? BCE), whose stone pillar is now the official emblem of the Republic of India, is perhaps the best-remembered ruler in all Indian history. Even stripping away the legendary accounts, he was a remarkable man. He became a lay Buddhist and went on a year-long pilgrimage to the sacred sites of this new religion, which he

later propagated and spread to regions beyond India. He sent messengers to the Greek provinces in the northwest and his own son to Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Ashokan edicts   We know all this because Ashoka issued edicts or proclamations. His 33 edicts, written primarily in the Brahmi script on carved pillars, rocks and cave walls, are the earliest deciphered writing in India. All other Indian scripts derive from the Brahmi script, itself probably derived from a Sumerian or Semitic script. The language of the inscriptions is mostly Prakrit, a spoken form of Sanskrit, with a few examples of Greek and Aramaic. Some edicts announce major government policy, such as the renunciation of all violence (warfare, hunting, animal sacrifice) and an acceptance of all religions.

Kanishka   Kanishka (r. 115-140 CE) was another leader, though less famous than Ashoka, who played a key role in transmitting Buddhism. Kaniskha was ruler of the Kushan (or Kushana) kingdom that pushed down from Bactria and into northwest India in the 1st c. CE. Kaniskha used his patronage to support Buddhist institutions and art in this corridor that led to the Silk Route and east to China and Tibet. He famously convened a council of monks to create a Mahayana Buddhist canon.

Faxian (Fa Hsien)   Faxian (337-442? CE) came to India as a Buddhist pilgrim in 402 CE on a personal mission. He was determined to acquire and study the original texts of Mahayana Buddhism, which had migrated across the Himalayas to China several hundred years earlier. In 399, at the age of 65, Faxian set out on foot. Travelling west from northern China, he crossed large stretches of arid central Asia before negotiating the snow-bound Pamir Mountains and then slipping into the Punjab through the Khyber Pass. In India, he spent time at all the important Buddhist sites in north India, especially at Pataliputra, a major centre for Buddhist learning as well as the capital of the Gupta Empire. After six years in India, he took a sea route home, stopping for two years in Sri Lanka.

Faxian Legacy   Like Alexander the Great many centuries before him, Faxian undertook an arduous journey that set in motion a cultural exchange, this time between India and China. During his six years in India, he made copies of all the major Mahayana texts and then translated them into Chinese when he returned home. An equally significant contribution to Indian history is the personal diary of his journey, which provides insights into pre-Muslim India, especially the royal court of the Gupta Empire.

Hun invasion   The interconnectedness of European and Asian history is illustrated by the fact that a branch of the same people who brought down the Roman Empire also (and at the same time) laid waste to the Gupta Empire. The Huns (or Hunas), the central Asian horsemen ruled by Attila, had been sniping away at the northwest edge of the Gupta Empire for some time before they finally swept south and east in the late 5th and early 6th centuries CE. The Gupta Empire was shattered, its trade links broken and its authority reduced to the capital. The glory of India would not shine again in the north until the Mughal Empire a thousand years later.

Government

Mauryan Empire   The long evolution in north India from tribe to chiefdom to state culminated in the establishment of the Mauryan Empire (321- 185 BCE). Its more immediate cause, however, was Alexander's invasion, which stimulated feuding rulers to join together for protection. Chandragupta, founder of the empire, took advantage of the chaos caused by the Greek incursion in the northwest and the breakdown of smaller kingdoms elsewhere to conquer large swathes of territory, with the exception of the south. The Mauryas defeated a second Greek invasion in the northwest and eventually pushed east, extending their authority to the Bay of Bengal. At its height, the Mauryan state was an efficient bureaucracy with a large civil service. Despite its centralised administration, however, the Mauryan state could not exert control over its extensive territory. Four main provinces were controlled by local princes, while other regions were run by governors and salaried officials. The last Mauryan ruler was assassinated by one of his own generals in 185 BCE

Pataliputra   The capital of the Mauryan Empire was Pataliputra, one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was built in 489 BCE at the confluence of the Ganges and one of its tributaries, where it served as the capital of the Magadha chiefdom and then the Nanda chiefdom, the precursors of the Mauryan state. At the time of the Mauryas, when its population reached nearly 200,000, the city was a thriving commercial centre and a seat of Buddhist learning. Its beauty and opulence, including palaces and Buddhist stupas, are described by Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador who resided in the city.

Arthasastra   The rules of Indian statecraft were codified in the *Arthasastra* ('Science of Power'), a Sanskrit treaties composed by Kautilya in about 400 BCE. It appears to describe an idealised state, based largely on the

composite chiefdoms that preceded the Mauryan Empire. Not too dissimilar to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, it guides would-be rulers through a murky political world of betrayal, deception, spying and assassination.

Post-Mauryan states   Following the break-up of the Mauryan Empire, a series of smaller but still powerful states ruled north India. The first of these was the Shungas, who retained Pataliputra as their capital and reigned from 185-78 BCE. Next came the Shakas (or Indo-Scythians), a central Asian people who migrated and fought their way into India in the first century CE. Although they controlled large tracts of territory in the north and west, they ruled for only a brief time. Another kingdom with its origins in Central Asia was the Kushana (or Kushan), which ruled Bactria and the surrounding regions (modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) before pushing south into India, where they ruled from about 100-250 CE. The Deccan was ruled by the Satavahanas (c. 200 BCE-230 CE), fighting off two invasions by the Shakas along the way. Less centralised than the Mauryan Empire, the Satavahana state was based on alliances with local rulers. They were also the first Indian kingdom to issue coinage with portraits of their rulers.

Gupta Empire   Most of India was once again unified in a single administration under the Gupta Empire (320-c. 550 CE). Like the Satavahanas, the Gupta rulers used alliances, in the form of dynastic marriages, and warfare to gain control over territory. Chandragupta I (r. 320-335 CE) married a princes from the Licchavi clan (in the Himalayan foothills), and his son, Samudragupta (r. 335-385 CE), extended the kingdom to the Deccan by more marriages. The empire was administered by a cadre of officials dispatched to localities to oversee an extensive system of tax-free land-grants to Brahmins and merchants. This system permitted local leaders to exercise considerable authority and yet be responsible to the centre. The result was a state in which regional units and diverse communities prospered and cohered in a political whole. The Gupta state thus instituted two features of government that characterised states throughout the medieval period and into the pre-modern period. First, states and localities existed in a balance of power. The authority of the centre was residual in that judicial and police functions were left in the hands of local rulers, guilds and associations. Second, and as a result of this decentralisation, the centre assumed more and more symbolic power and authority.

Kings as gods   In fact, kings became the objects of worship and were treated almost like gods. The beginnings of this royal cult are seen in early Buddhism, where the Buddha is called *chakravartin* ('Ruler of the World', lit. 'Turner of the Wheel'), an epithet for the Sun-god. The Mauryan ruler Ashoka referred to himself as 'Beloved of the Gods,' while the Kushan kings adopted the title 'Son of God'. Later Gupta rulers portrayed themselves, on coins and in ceremonies, as equal to the gods. In south India, the absence of Brahmins meant that kings were the divine representatives on earth and over time became regarded as gods. For example the Tamil word for 'palace' came to mean 'temple.'

Economy

Cities   The Mauryan Empire (321- 185 BCE) was at the centre of India's second urban-based economy. The expansion of settlements into cities occurred in many parts of India, although primarily in riverine plains. Cities created the conditions for a growing merchant class, skilled craftsmen and entrepreneurial traders. The role of cities is demonstrated by the fact that Pataliputra was the capital of both the Mauryan and the Gupta empires.

Guilds   Another key factor that stimulated the economy in this period was the mercantile guilds. Texts mention 75 different occupations that could form guilds, including potters, metal-workers, goldsmiths, weavers and carpenters. Operating as early banks, these associations of merchants pioneered the use of money (silver and copper coins), some of which they issued themselves, and they established early banking methods, such as investments and endowments.

Trade   The modernising urban economy that flourished under the Mauryas developed even further under the Guptas (320-c. 550 CE). The Mauryan state instituted a single currency across India to facilitate trade, while the Gupta rulers improved roads and extended trade routes so that even interior areas had access to commercial centres and seaports. This sophisticated transport system enabled the Gupta rulers to collect land tax and import duties.

Forests   Despite the centralisation of the economy, certain groups of people remained on the periphery of any ruling state. Prominent among these groups were tribal populations living in the forests of north and central India. Forests were central to the economy as a source of timber, elephants, iron, copper and lead. The *Arthasastra*, a contemporaneous text on statecraft, recommends that rulers build fortresses at the edge of the forests in order to control the 'wild' and 'criminal' people in the forest. Even the humane ruler Ashoka issued

an edict that ordered the forest people 'to repent' and 'not to expect forgiveness' for their part in armed clashes between them and the state.

Society

Consolidation   Over the course of this long period, social interactions were increasingly constrained by caste rules. In part, this is explained by the influx of newcomers, from the northwest and from Central Asia, as well as by trade and by conquest. In order to maintain social cohesion, each new group had to be slotted into place. If they floated free, the entire system might drift into dangerous flexibility. As a result, marriage between castes became rare, and the number of permissible partners within one's caste narrowed, too. The texts further distinguish eight different types of marriage, according to complex rules of exogamy among descent groups.

Kings   An important exception to the hardening of caste rules, was the acknowledgement that kings could be made. Early texts insisted that kings must be *ksatriya* (warrior) by birth, but later texts accepted the reality that many Shaka, Kushan and Shunga rulers were not from the warrior caste. In effect, men could become kings by conquest of territory rather than by ancestry.

Merchants   Another group whose social status shifted in the classical period were merchants (vaisya). Benefitting from urbanism, trade and guilds, merchants grew steadily wealthier and began to exercise power in the political sphere. In the normative texts, however, these are low castes, just one rung above slaves and labourers (*sudra*). Indeed, many texts say they are *sudra* because of mixed ancestry. The important point here is that merchants did not change caste—they remained *vaisya*—but they did gain new social standing. Class, not caste, was decisive.

Women   On the other hand, the status of women declined toward the end of the classical period. Whereas women in the Vedic texts can own and inherit property, including land, this is no longer true by the time of the Gupta Empire. This decline is usually attributed to the consolidation of the caste system, the increase in hierarchical divisions and the formalisation of social rules. Although Buddhism opened up a new social space for women, by the end of the period, the canonical laws of Manu had codified gender inequality.

Heterodox challenge   Buddhism and, to a lesser extent, Jainism were based on a rejection of brahminical authority, which was the lynchpin of the caste system. The Buddha was a prince, not a pauper, but he was not a Brahmin either, and yet he was regarded as the pinnacle of wisdom. Buddhism thus challenged the idea that birth was the determinant of worth, arguing instead that effort and compassion was the path to enlightenment. Buddhism also taught *a-himsa*, or non-violence, including violence against animals, which was a direct criticism of traditional Hindu ritual sacrifice.

Popularity of Buddhism   As a result of these teachings, and the waning of brahmincial authority, Buddhism attracted followers from lower castes. Merchants, in particular, joined in large numbers because although their wealth and power had grown, they remained in a relatively inferior social category. Buddhist values of rationality, discipline and moderation also appealed to these commercial groups, as well as to wealthy landowners. Some women, too, found the Buddhist path a welcome escape from an identity defined by domestic and social conventions.

Buddhist monastic order   Buddhism, in effect, created an alternative society with the establishment of a monastic order (*sangha*, 'association'). This community of monks and nuns and lay followers was governed by a formal set of rules announced in the earliest Buddhist texts. Although at first monks and nuns lived an itinerant life, by the 3rd c. BCE, they were resident in large monasteries, which also served as centres of learning. Fortnightly meetings were convened in the monasteries, democratic rules for discussion were adopted and a treasury was set up to handle financial transactions, especially donations made by wealthy lay followers.

Culture

Hinduism   In the first part of this period, Hinduism underwent a fundamental shift, away from the external, sanguine outlook of the Vedas (c. 1200-900 BCE) and toward the internal, sceptical contemplation of the Upanishads (c. 800-300 BCE). In broad terms, the early emphasis on ritual as action was replaced by an examination of ritual as symbol. Knowledge of the sacrifice became more important than performing the sacrifice. And the greatest knowledge was knowledge of the self or soul (*atman*). This shift was also deeply influenced by the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism.

Buddhism   Buddhism grew out of Hinduism in the 6th c. BCE through a rejection of Brahmins and the Hindu concept of the soul. In proposing a more open yet austere path to enlightenment, the heterodox religion split into two wings: the Hinayana (now found in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia) and the Mahayana (found in Tibet, Nepal and China).   Both schools developed sophisticated philosophical and philological traditions, the first in Pali, the second in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Jainism   Like Buddhism, Jainism is an offshoot of Hinduism and based on a historical figure (Mahavira, 'Great Hero') who lived in the 6th c. BCE. Again like Buddhism, asceticism and non-violence are central to Jainism. However, a key tenet of Jainism is the indestructible and immortal individual soul (*jiva*), which differentiates it from both Hinduism and Buddhism. Jains made a significant contribution to literature and philosophy, especially in south India.

Devotionalism   Devotionalism (*bhakti*) was a pan-Indian religious movement that began toward the end of the classical period. Although it affected Buddhism, its primary imprint was on Hinduism. In this new religiosity, an individual worshipper imagined and nurtured a direct bond with a specific god or goddess. Contemplation of abstract spiritual ends gave way to more active engagement with deities, who were given human-like qualities of generosity and compassion. Although devotionalism was signalled in the late Upanishads, it flourished under the patronage of the Gupta rulers, especially in their state support for the worship of Visnu and Lakshmi.

Architecture   The chief architectural monument of the early period was the stupa. Essentially funeral mounds housing the relics of the Buddha, stupas were first built in the reign of Ashoka (3rd c. BCE). As such, they are the oldest surviving religious structures in India. The earliest and most elaborate stupa is that at Sanchi, which is16 metres high and 37 metres in diameter. Its hemispherical frame is made of brick, but the four gateways, added about 100 CE and decorated with fine sculptures of the Buddha's life, are carved from sandstone.

Ajanta and Ellora   Stupas, prayer-halls and monasteries were also carved out of rock caves at Ajanta and Ellora in western India (c. 200 BCE to 300 CE). Monasteries (*vihara*) were multi-storied structures, containing kitchens, sleeping quarters and niches. The prayer-halls (*caitya*) were large spaces in which worshippers could gather, and most also contained a stupa. Some prayer-halls were built with wood, evidenced by a vault supported by horseshoe-shaped ribs, but only the rock examples survive.

Painting   The ceilings and walls of these religious spaces in caves were painted with murals showing Buddhist divinities and scenes from Buddhist texts, especially the *Jataka* stories. The paintings were done in 'dry [fresco]' style: painted on top of a dry plaster surface rather than onto wet plaster. These paintings—luxurious, sensual and ethereal— are considered by many to be the highpoint of Indian painting.

Sculpture   A school of sculpture emerged that depicted scenes and figures from the life of the Buddha and the Jataka tales. Its characteristic features included the lotus flower, water symbols and the gestures and physical poses of the historical Buddha. Outstanding examples are found in north and western India at Sanchi, Ellora and Ajanta, but perhaps the most spectacular is found in south India at Amaravati. These exquisitely carved figures, often in narrative scenes and in small niches, display a skill, dynamism and imagination unseen in most later Indian sculpture.

Gandhara   At roughly the same time, the Gandhara (or Greco-Buddhist) style of sculpture developed in the northwest. This style is named after the region of Gandhara, where Persian, Greek, Scythian and Chinese cultures intermingled. Artisans here were inspired by Mahayana Buddhism, patronised by the Kushan king Kanishka and influenced by Greek models. They produced large, muscular representations of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas (particularly Maitreya), who resemble Greek figures wearing a Roman toga.

Sanskrit literature   The first examples of narrative prose in Indian literature appear in the Upanishads (c. 800-300 BCE). The first Indian biography, the *Buddhacarita* ('Life of the Buddha') by Ashvagosa (c. 200 CE), is a poetic hagiography of the historical Buddha. The great epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which were composed over many centuries (culminating perhaps about 400 CE), became vehicles for the new devotionalism and provided material for every type of cultural expression. The same is true of the myths, which cycled and recycled in numerous versions, serving as entertainment, ethical instruction and ritual manual. Sanskrit court poetry and drama flourished under the Guptas. Kalidasa (5th c. CE) excelled at both, producing play that are still performed today.

Tamil Literature   A large corpus of Tamil classical poems was composed between c. 100-300 CE. Independent of Sanskrit conventions, Tamil literary tradition divided literature into two overarching genres:

akam ('interior') and *puram* ('exterior'). These terms, which refer to both the topographical and psychological dimensions of a poem, are usually translated as 'love' and 'war' poems. A Tamil epic, 'The Lay of the Anklet' (*Cilappatikaram*), was composed in about 500 CE, probably by a Jain monk. While it bears some similarity to contemporaneous Sanskrit court poetry, especially in its ornate descriptions of place and nature, its deeper message of loss and revenge sets it apart.

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Questions/Discussion

1. The historicity of the Mahabharata war is not just an academic debate in India. It is central to the Hindu nationalist revision of history, which has recently gained more political and scholarly support. Why is it important that this ancient battle be seen as a true event?

2. There is a case for arguing that the historical Buddha is the single most influential person in Indian history. And his influence has been magnified many times over by the 'story' of his life that has now become inseparable from the history of Buddhism. This illustrates the power of what is now called 'life-history.'

3. An excellent research topic would be to compare the influence of Alexander the Great and of Faxian on Indian history. The differences are immediately obvious—a military genius vs a dedicated religious pilgrim—but the similarities in their stories and their legacies are also considerable.

4. Maritime trade is an under-studied topic in the economic history of this period. Because peninsular India (or south India) had seaports on both coasts, sea trade was a powerful force in shaping its history. Archaeologists have excavated a large trading centre at Arikamedu near modern Pondicherry. Along with a hoard of Roman coins, they found residential quarters, warehouses, docks and fortifications. Other sites have been found along the east coast and west coast, suggesting a network of linked trading outposts.

5. What specific role did coinage play in facilitating economic growth in this period? What did coinage replace and why?

6. Over the course of this period, we can trace a widening separation between courtly culture and popular culture. Contributing factors to this division include the increasing use of writing, the spread of urbanism and the expanding authority of the state.

7. The history of the heterodox religions, Buddhism and Jainism, share many elements. They both developed out of early Hinduism in the 6th c. BCE; both were founded by an historical figure; and both challenged the religious beliefs of the time. However, their later histories are radically different. Although Buddhism became a major social and political force in India until about 1000 CE, thereafter it declined and is a negligible presence today. Outside India, however, in Southeast Asia, Buddhism wields the power it once had in India. Jainism, on the other hand, never gained the popularity that Buddhism did, but it also never lost the small status it did gain.

8. Early Buddhist art contains some of the finest examples of visual representation anywhere in the world. The earliest pieces, however, are aniconic, that is, they did not show the figure of the Buddha. This aniconism was consistent with the extreme austerity of the early Buddhist tradition. Within two centuries this changed, and artists created delicate, sensual representations of the Buddha and other figures. What can account for this shift in thinking and practice?

Texts

1. Ashokan rock edict at Kalinga, 262-261 BCE (?)

'Beloved-of-the-Gods [Buddha] says…I wish to see that everything I consider to be proper is carried out in the right way...

All men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men. You do not understand to what extent I desire this, and if some of you do understand, you do not understand the full extent of my desire.

You must attend to this matter. While being completely law-abiding, some people are imprisoned, treated harshly and even killed without cause so that many people suffer. Therefore your aim should be to act with impartiality. It is because of these things -- envy, anger, cruelty, hate, indifference, laziness or tiredness -- that such a thing does not happen. Therefore your aim should be: May these things not be in me. And the root of this is non-anger and patience…Great fruit will result from doing your duty, while failing in it will result in gaining neither heaven nor the king's pleasure….

This edict is to be listened to on Tisa day, between Tisa days, and on other suitable occasions, it should be listened to even by a single person…'

2. South Indian rock inscription (c. 100 CE)

 'Cave-shelter gifted by Atiyan Netuman Anci, the Satyaputra [king's title].'

3. Sanchi inscription of Chandragupta II (c. 412 CE)

'Perfection has been attained! To the community of the faithful in the holy great monastery, in which the organs of sense have been subdued by the virtues of (good) character, religious meditation, and wisdom…which has come together from the four quarters of the world (and) which is the abode of most excellent monks, having prostrated himself in an assembly of five persons, Amrakârdava the son of Undâna, whose means of subsistence have been made comfortable by the favour of the feet of the glorious Chandragupta (II.) …From [the interest of the money] given by him, with half, as long as the moon and the sun (endure), let five monks be fed, and let a lamp burn in the jewel-house, for the perfection of all the virtues of….the glorious Chandragupta (II.)…'

Part V : EARLY POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Overview

The five centuries between the demise of the Gupta Empire and the rise of the Delhi Sultanates are characterised by regionalism. Two fundamental processes seem to have driven regionalism. One was socio-economic: the gradual replacement of pastoral by agrarian economies and the shift from more fluid societies to more hierarchical ones. The other development was religio-cultural: a movement involving localised languages, temples, poets and gods. Royal patronage supported this movement and created large agrarian communities through land grants, but control of social relations and commerce was exercised by local elites. While it is difficult to attribute any causal relations between these social, economic and cultural forces, one can speculate that the increased trade with Tang China, the Arabian peninsula and Hinduised Southeast Asia enabled regions to grow wealthy without dependence on an imperial capital.

Events

Royal authority   Regionalism is illustrated by the fact that between 500 and 1000 CE, over forty different lineages strove to achieve royal status. Each one of them issued inscriptions on temple walls and copper-plates that proclaimed their royal ancestry and/or promised protection to the people. Several lineages commissioned manuscripts that established their right to rule through genealogy. Some lineages succeeded in building small but efficient states, others were restricted to areas no larger than an English county, and most were frequently at war with their neighbours.

Harsha   King Harsha (590-647 CE) was the exception. He controlled most of north India; he is the only major ruler to have converted from Hinduism to Buddhism; he wrote Sanskrit plays; and he is himself the subject of the first proper biography in Indian literature (*Harschacarita*, 'Story of Harsha'). We know about this remarkable man from both this biography by Bana and an account written by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (Hsuan Tsang), who visited Harsha's court. Both Bana and Xuanzang describe Harsha as a model ruler. He was benevolent as well as ambitious, and grew more interested in the ideals of Mahayana Buddhism as his life progressed. He sponsored institutions to care for the poor in every region of his empire, and every four years held a conclave at which he distributed his wealth.

Hsuan Tsang   Hsuan Tsang (Xuanzang)**,** who was born in China in 602 and died there in 664 CE, was an exact contemporary of Harsha. And like the Indian king, this Chinese pilgrim left a considerable mark on India through his Buddhist scholarship. Following in the footsteps of his countryman Faxian, almost 400 years earlier, Hsuan Tsang travelled along the Silk Route to India to study the original Buddhist texts in the land where it originated. He reached India in 631 and spent twelve years there, visiting the places associated with the life of the Buddha. At the monastery in Nalanda, he spent more than a year learning Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. In the end, he brought back copies of about 600 texts, which he then translated into Chinese. His description of his long journey (*Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*) is an unparalleled source of information on the history of north India at this time.

Shankaracharya   Shankaracharya was a religious philosopher who lived in South India, probably in Kerala and probably in the first half of the 8th c. CE. He is arguably the most influential theologian in all Indian history. Tradition holds that he became a wandering ascetic at an early age, travelled north to Benares and debated with religious thinkers all over India. It was a time of fierce rivalry, and even violence, between Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. In this maelstrom Shankaracharya wrote commentaries on major Hindu texts to explicate the *advaita* or 'non-dualism' school of Hinduism, which claimed that beneath the flux of our impressions there is an unchanging reality. This is the *brahman*. All else is *maya* or illusion. Although he did not agree with the emotive devotionalism that was sweeping south India at the time, he did provide Hinduism with an uncompromising foundation in its battle against its rivals.

Muslims   It would be difficult to name an event more influential in Indian history than the arrival of the Muslims in the early 8th century CE. India had been familiar with Arabs and Persians as a result of the maritime trade between West Asia and the west coast of India in the early centuries of the Common Era. In 712, however, another kind of Arab presence came in the form of armies. By 725, Iraqi-Arabs had conquered much of western India, though not the Ganges heartland. For the time being, the conquest was halted, and the new arrivals ruled peacefully, until other Muslim populations from Central Asia entered the subcontinent about 1000 CE.

Chalukyas   In the Deccan, several dynasties appeared after the Guptas, among whom the Vatakas, Kadambas, Gangas (also in Orissa) and Rastrakutas were prominent. The most influential, however, were the Chalukyas, a dynasty founded by Pulakeshin in 543 CE, the ruler who checked Harsha's advance to the south. The Chalukyas, who ruled most of central and western India and part of the south until well into the medieval period, were worthy successors to the imperial Guptas. Their achievements include a new style of South Indian temple architecture, literature in the Dravidian languages of Kannada and Telugu and an efficient administration of large territory.

South India   South India was ruled by four separate kingdoms, each of whom controlled distinct territory centred on a riverine city and with access to a seaport. The Pandyas, in the far south, ruled from Madurai. The Cheras controlled the west coast. The Pallavas, in the northern Tamil territory, fought several wars with the Chalukyas in the Deccan, but neither kingdom was able to hold on to conquered territory for very long. In the end, all of these small states (except the Cheras) were defeated by the Cholas.

Cholas   Of the dozen or so major kingdoms that arose in South India between about 500 and 900 CE, the Cholas were the most influential. We can view the Cholas (9th-13th c. CE) as the south Indian equivalent of the north Indian Guptas (3rd-6th c. CE). Through extensive maritime trade, the wealthy Cholas were great patrons of the arts, especially temple-based traditions of music, dance, song and recitation of myths. Again similar to their predecessors, the Cholas used religion and conspicuous rituals, this time the cult of Siva, to legitimise political power. Having conquered the outlying lands of neighbouring kingdoms, the Cholas established themselves at Tanjore in the fertile Kaveri River basin in the early 9th century CE.   Under Raja Raja Chola I (r. 985-1014 CE) and his son, Rajendra Chola I (r. 1014-1044 CE) thisTamil kingdom extended its influence up the east coast to Bengal, through the interior to the Ganges valley, across the Palk Strait to Sri Lanka and over the seas to Southeast Asia.

Government

Harsha   Although Harsha's kingdom was exceptional in terms of the extent of territory, its administration illustrates the political regionalism of the time. As with the other kingdoms in the south and on the edges of the Gangetic heartland, territory was defined less by administration than by language and sectarian affiliations. Boundaries were fluid. Although texts continued to use the old rhetoric of a central power, new political, linguistic, religious and literary boundaries were emerging. Indeed, the formal control of the state did not extend much beyond the Gangetic plain. Instead the state was held together by using land-grants to create alliances with local elites (called *mahasamanta*), leaving conquered rulers on their thrones, and contenting itself with tribute and homage. Contemporaneous texts list six different levels of vassals in Harsha's administration. One inscribed copper-plate dated 632 CE records a gift of land to two Brahmins and lists several vassals as guarantors of the gift.

Feudalism?   Were these local elites similar to the feudal vassals of medieval European kings? As with their European counterparts, these Indian elites were permitted nearly total autonomy in their locality and probably provide their overlords with military service. But it would be wrong to assume that, like European vassals, these Indian elites held their land-grants in lieu of salaries. In fact, the Indian elites were territorial rulers in their own right, though on a limited scale. They held land, either by inheritance or conquest, independently of the grant from the centre. It seems likely that the land-grants were actually a method by which the king extended his circle of subordinates, as a display of his power.

Chola   The Chola kingdom is an even clearer example of local autonomy co-existing with imperial authority. The small unit of government was the *nadu,* or locality, usually comprising several villages. The Chola kingdom contained several hundred *nadu*s, of varying size, suggesting that they were not artificially created by the state but were pre-existing units of local government. Each *nadu* had its own council, who were responsible for land assessment and tax collection. Although not appointed by the king, the local council passed on a portion of these taxes to the king's representative at the *nadu*-level. Each *nadu* incorporated one or more *nagaram*s, which were market towns and commercial centres. The *nagaram* was managed by a committee of merchants, who collectively owned land and collected taxes from peasants working that land. On top of this local, indigenous government, the Chola rulers created an administrative supra-unit of the *valanadu* (or 'mega-nadu'), controlled by officers appointed by the court. Inscriptions mention four different officers, who were involved in revenue collection, land surveying and military operations. There were two grades of administrators, and the offices tended to be hereditary. The legal system was administered through a system of royal courts acting in liaison with village courts and caste panchayats. In addition to land tax, with four

different categories depending on the fertility of the land, there were taxes on goods in transit, houses and professions.

Military   Chola conquests on land and on sea were enabled by a large and well-organised sanding army. The king was the commander-in-chief, followed by three ranks of officers and dozens of regiments. Soldiers wore metal armour and used spears, bows and arrows and shields. The army also had hundreds of horses and elephants. The famous victories in the Bay of Bengal and the Java Sea were possible because the Chola navy had hundreds of ships at its disposable, many equipped with weapons.

Economy

Agriculture   Cultivation displaced pastoralism and rivalled urban-based commerce for economic power. The spread of agriculture was made possible not only by forest clearance but also by improved irrigation, which, in turn, enabled a wider variety of crops. In South India, where intensive wet-rice agriculture dominated, rulers built large tanks (or reservoirs), dug deep wells and created a system of canals to bring water from the major rivers to fields. The Persian wheel was instrumental in all these projects.

Land   The system of land grants, at the heart of regionalism, meant a loss of revenue for the state. But this loss could be offset against the gain in the allegiance of local elites, either landowners or temples. From inscriptions, scholars have detected a strengthening of individual property rights and a resultant juxtaposition of large-scale landholding with small-scale peasant production. Peasant cultivators had no rights to the land and were transferred with the land when it was sold or transferred to a new owner. Peasants were obliged to pay taxes to the state or to the landowner, and sometimes to both. The state typically claimed one-sixth of the produce, but sometimes raised this to one-quarter.

Money   Some scholars have argued, and others have disagreed, that there was a steep decline in the use of metallic coins in the post-Gupta era in north India. It does appear that there was a shift from gold to silver, and from these two metals to a debased coin using copper to add weight. We do have evidence of an increasing use of cowrie shells, especially in long-distance maritime trade. Overall, it seems that whatever the decrease in metal coinage, it occurred mainly in the interior areas of north India.

Temples   Temples, especially in South India, became much more than places of worship. With kings, landowners and merchant as patrons, and artisans, ritual specialists and accountants as employees, temples became major centres of economic activity. Kings legitimised their authority by building and patronising temple complexes, such as the great structures at Kanchipuram and Tanjore. Landowners and merchants asserted their status by making donations of land to the temple, the revenue from which was earmarked for the performance of a ritual or maintenance of a shrine. A copper-plate from about 850 CE records the gift of 90 sheep by a merchant to a temple. Another copper-plate mentions a donation of 30 copper coins by a merchant's wife for the maintenance of a temple lamp. Buddhist monasteries played a similar economic role, though less conspicuously.

Production   New technologies improved production in various sectors. For example, the earlier hand mill for pressing oil from seeds was replaced by a bullock-driven mill, which was far more efficient. Larger and more easily worked looms were built, which produced goods for the increasing domestic and foreign markets in woven silk, linen, calico, wool and cotton. The same is true for pearls, ivory, sandalwood gold and semi-precious stones. The now-famous spice trade, primarily in pepper, developed as well.

Maritime Trade   Chola rulers set up a string of fortified trading towns along the east coast to facilitate growing maritime trade. Much of the Indian influence in Southeast Asia, evident in the Buddhist and Hindu temples in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia (especially Bali and Java), and in the names of kings, can be attributed to South India and largely to the Cholas. The Chola maritime campaigns to Sri Lanka and Indonesia were probably intended to control trade routes as much as to conquer territory. Maritime merchants became wealthy on the back of this trade and formed powerful associations that rivalled kingdoms. One guild based in the Deccan (The Five Hundred Lords of Ayyavole) spread over the whole of South India and left inscriptions in their name in Southeast Asia.

Society

Local bodies   A significant trend during this period was the growth in numbers and power of local corporate bodies. These groups included rural councils (*nadu*), town councils (*nagaram*), landowning associations,

merchants' guilds and Brahmin assemblies (*sabha*). Some of these groups forged alliances with each other, making them in effect rulers of a region. In South India, there was a unique alliance between these unofficial rulers and Brahmins. Land grants from the time record donations of large tracts of land from these powerful groups to Brahmins. Such gifts were often given to persuade Brahmins to settle in an interior area, where the newly-powerful group had built a temple. These settlements, with a hundred or more Brahmin families, were called *brahmadeyas*. They were usually located near a temple and were governed by an assembly, which oversaw revenues from temple-owned land, management of that land and conduct of the Brahmin community.

Stratification   Throughout this period, the ancient four-fold Vedic caste system held firm and in some cases became more rigid. Social space and movement, for instance, became more restricted. In south Indian towns and villages, caste-specific quarters appeared. A detailed study of inscriptions found seven different quarters: for landowners, cultivators, people who control the canal irrigation system, artisans, temple servants, toddy tappers and untouchables. Some people who had no caste designation were brought into the system when their forest or hilly territory was cleared and cultivated. Now, these relatively egalitarian tribal and forest populations were designated as a new sub-caste of untouchables.

Transformation   At the same time, the social system was not entirely rigid and transformations did occur. Within the sudra category, for example, landowning sub-castes (*jati*s) gained in status, while some cultivator sub-castes became landless labourers. In South India, the groups who seemed to have risen in status were traders in ghee and seafaring merchants and weavers. By the end of the period, silk weavers began to invest in and own land.

Sanskritisation   In both north and south India, social change occurred through a process known as 'Sanskritisation.' Low castes, mainly *sudra* landowners who had grown wealthy, assumed the trappings of royalty, took on royal titles, commissioned scribes to invent genealogies with ancient pedigrees and hired Brahmins to conduct rituals in their temples. In the north, low castes followed this route to become recognised as 'Rajputs' ('Son of a Raja'), the warrior or *ksatriya* caste. In the south, it was arriveste peasant groups (*sudra*s) who propelled themselves up the ladder into *ksatriya* status.

Culture

Architecture   The rock-cut temples, stupas and prayer-halls at Ellora (c. 600-1000 CE) represent a continuation of those same Hindu and Buddhist structures carved earlier at Ajanta, in the same region of western India. In particular, the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora dedicated to Siva is impressive. It was carved out a single rock face, starting from the top and working down. It has a courtyard, a tower, a central shrine, five minor shrines and a columned arcade three stories high, with alcoves and sculpted panels. Soon these rock-cave structures gave way to free-standing ones, although both rock-cut and free-standing temples are seen at Mahabalipuram (c. 700 CE). Free-standing temples were built according to conventions laid down in canonical texts (*sastra*s), the most important being that the overall design was a symbolic representation of the universe. Temples were largely built with stone, although brick and mortar continued to be used in areas where stone was not readily available. The earliest (and still magnificent) temples were built in the 6th century CE at Aihole and Badami in the Deccan. By the end of the period, several other distinct regional styles had developed, in the far south (Tamil Nadu), on the west coast (Kerala), on the east coast (Orissa) and in Bengal. Late Buddhist architecture is represented by the great monastery at Nalanda (9th c. CE) and the hall at Bodh Gaya (6th-7th c. CE).

Sculpture   Outstanding examples of early Hindu sculpture are seen on both the rock-cut and free-standing temples at Mahabalipuram and the caves at Ajanta and Ellora. Further developments in stone sculpting of Hindu gods and goddesses are seen on the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram, the Pallava capital, not far from Madras. The 'lost wax' method of bronze casting had been known in the Indus Valley Civilisation (3rd millennium BCE), but it reached perfection in the figures sculpted in South India at the end of this period. Artisans patronised by Chola kings produced bronze figures of deities and rulers with remarkable plasticity and subtlety.

Painting   Continuity with the earlier tradition of wall painting is seen in the exquisite images depicted on the walls and ceilings of rock-cut temples at Ellora. Some of the most beautiful images are of graceful *apsaras*, female spirits of air and water in Indian mythology. Although the paintings have deteriorated, copies made both by hand and camera in the 19th century provide us with a good idea of their original beauty.

Religion   The second historic shift in Indian religion (after the turn to contemplation in the Upanishads) was the development of a devotionalism known as *bhakti* ('to share in', 'to belong to'). Characterised by an intense and personal attachment to a particular god or goddess, saint or guru, devotionalism illustrates well the regionalism of the period. Until the bhakti movement, religious thought had been expressed only in Sanskrit, the preserve of ritual specialists and court poets. Then, beginning in about 500 CE in the Tamil country, religious poetry, myth and song were composed and sung in the languages of common people. Favoured by royal patronage, the movement spread across the face of the subcontinent and has been the life-blood of Hinduism ever since. Even Buddhism, which the bhakti poets 'sang out of India,' was affected by devotionalism. New Mahayana figures, such as bodhisattvas (Avalokitesvara and Maitreya) and goddesses (Padmini and Tara) were worshipped in shrines and with rituals similar to those in Hinduism.

Sanskrit literature Sanskrit literature did not hit the heights it had achieved in the previous period, but poets and playwrights continued to produce individual pieces of excellence, especially in the *mahakavya* genre. Notable writers include Magha, Bhatti, Bharavi and Bana (all probably 7th c. CE), who wrote poems based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. Bana is also important as the author of the first biography in Indian literature, *Harschacarita* or 'Story of King Harsha.'

Tamil literature   As mentioned above, devotional poetry was first composed in Tamil, the oldest of the regional languages with a literary history that stretches back to about 100 CE. A group of poets called the Nayanmars ('Servants of the Lord Siva') composed and sang thousands of hymns that typically focused on a specific form of Siva or on a specific Siva temple. Some of these poems have a raw, wounded quality, often literally in the description of bodily mortification. Sometimes that poetic ferocity is directed against Jains and Buddhists, who had considerable influence in South India. At roughly the same time, another group of Tamil poets sang in praise of Visnu. They were known as the Alvars (lit. 'Deep Ones') because they immersed themselves in Visnu. Their hymns to Visnu (the preserver) are predictably less fierce in tone than those to Siva (the destroyer), less visceral in imagery and less uncompromising in sectarian loyalty. The Alvar's approach to Visnu is a mixture of contemplation, mythological drama and rapturous love.   Many of these poets, in both groups, became objects of worship themselves. Finally, two Tamil epics (*Cilapattikaram* and *Manimekalai*) were also composed in this period, the first by a Jain and the second by a Buddhist.

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Questions/Discussion

1.   A broad process of regionalism features in political, social and cultural spheres during this period. In general, it involved the gradual strengthening of local autonomy over a centralised state. While this process is widespread in world history, the Indian variant was driven by language. Look at the rise of regional languages (and scripts) in this period, and then compare that with the fragmentation of newly-Independent India into linguistic states in the 1950s and 1960s.

2.   Devotionalism dominates this period of Indian history. Poets, singers, mystics and saints expressed a new kind of relationship between people and gods. Although this personal, emotional and painful bond was articulated first in the Sanskrit text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, it flowered in the regional languages of India from about 500 CE onward. Map the geographical spread of this religious-cultural movement from Tamil to Assamese, by identifying key texts and poets.

3.   The nature of historical research on this period differs from that of preceding periods because between 500 and 1000 CE we have thousands of inscriptions. Prior to 500 CE, we have some inscriptions, but most writing was in the form of literary texts. From 3500 BCE onward, we also have an extensive

collection of material remains. Compare these three main types of evidence—inscriptions, literary texts and material remains—for the role they play in our reconstruction of Indian history.

4. Analyse the advent of Islam in India, both by sea and by land in this period. How did those two arrivals differ and what consequences did those differences have for the local populations they encountered? Describe also how Indian Islam differed from Islam in its Arab and Persian heartlands.

Texts

1. A Tamil poem in praise of Visnu (9th c. CE), trans. A.K. Ramanujan, 1982

We here and that man, this man,
and that other-in-between,
and that woman, this woman,
and that other, whoever,
those people, and these,
and these others-in-between,
this thing, that thing,
and this other-in-between, whichever,
all things dying, these, things,
those things, those others-in-between,
good things, bad things,
things that were, that will be,
being all of them,
he stands there.

[Note: 'He' in the last line refers to Visnu. Each of the Tamil personal pronouns ('he,' 'she,' and 'it') has three forms: 1) for near the speaker, 2) far away and 3) in the middle. There is also a distinction between 'we' (inclusive) and 'we' (exclusive)].

1. From a Chola king's temple inscription (9th c. CE)

Hail! Prosperity! There was engraved on stone, as orally settled, the revenue in paddy, which has to be measured by the measure
(marakkāl) called (after) Adavallan, which is equal to a rājakēsari
measure,and the gold and money, which has to be paid from the land paying taxes; and there was also engraved on stone the non-taxable land, including the village-site, the sacred temples, the ponds(kulam), the channels(vāykkāl) passing through the villages, the quarter for Paraiyas, the quarter for Kammalas, and the burning ground, in the villages, which the lord Sri Rajarajadeva had given in the Chola country (maṇḍalam), and in other countries as divine gifts for the expenses required by the supreme lord of the sacred stone-temple, called Sri Rajarajesvara, which the lord Sri Rajarajadeva has caused to be built at Tanjavur....

2. From an inscription by a merchants' guild (9th c. CE)

Famed throughout the world, adorned with many good qualities, truth, purity, good conduct, policy, condescension, and prudence; protectors of the law of the heroic traders, having 32 *veloma* [?], 18 cities, 64 *yoga –pithas* [sacred places], and ashrams at the four points of the compass; born to be wanderers over many countries, the earth as their sack, ... the serpent race as the cords, the betel pouch as a secret pocket, the horizon as their light; ... by land routes and water routes penetrating into the regions of the six continents, with superior elephants, well-bred horses, large sapphires, moon-stones, pearls, rubies, diamonds... cardamoms, cloves, sandal, camphor musk, saffron and other perfumes and drugs; by selling which wholesale, or hawking about on their shoulders, preventing the loss by customs duties, they fill up the emperor's treasury of gold, his treasury of jewels, and his armoury of weapons; and from the rest they daily bestow gifts on pandits and munis; white umbrellas as their canopy, the mighty ocean as their moat, Indra as the hand-guard [of their swords], Varuna as the standard - bearer, Kubera as the treasurer, the nine planets as a belt ... the sun and moon as the backers, the 33 gods as the spectators; like the elephant they attack and kill, like the cow they stand and kill, like the serpent, they kill with poison; like the lion they spring and kill ... they make fun of the gone Mari [last epidemic] ... clay they set fire to, of sand they make ropes; the thunderbolt they catch and exhibit; the sun and moon they draw down to earth…

Part VI : LATE POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Overview

It would be difficult to exaggerate the depth and longevity of the changes set in motion by the Muslim conquest and rule of India. The horse-riding warrior elite from Central Asia and northern Afghanistan overran most of north India, the Deccan and even a portion of the far south. With Delhi as their capital, but Persia as their background influences, the Sultans introduced a new system of government, of warfare and of taxation. The Sultan's court at Delhi, and those of minor rulers in the Deccan, patronised poets and artisans who brought Persian literary culture and architecture to the subcontinent. Sufism, the mystical and emotional school of Islam, also spread throughout India, often blending in with Hindu devotionalism. However, Muslim rule also brought warfare, destruction and social upheaval to many part of the countryside. The divisions and distrust were only finally resolved by the partition of India in the mid twentieth century.

Events

Mahmud of Ghazni A largely peaceful co-existence had existed between Muslim rulers and local communities in western and northern India since the first arrival of Arab Muslims in 712 CE. This stability was shattered by the incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni carried out between 1000-1025 CE. Mahmud represented a different kind of Muslim. His father was a Turkish slave (*mamluk*), a Central Asian given training for the fight against the Mongols. In 998 CE, Mahmud became Sultan of Ghazni (near Kabul), a province of the Persian Empire which his father had captured. From this northern outpost, Mahmud carried out his annual raids into north India, reaching as far as the Ganges. Notoriously, he plundered Hindu temples, bringing back to Ghazni a vast treasure of gold, which ironically made his capital a target for another group of Turkic Muslims who conquered Ghazni in 1151.

Sultanate Other Muslim invaders led to series of five unrelated Turkic and Afghan rulers known collectively as the Delhi Sultanate (1206 to 1526 CE). The first of these was the so-called 'Slave' or Mamluk dynasty (1206-1290), which defeated the Ghorid rulers, took over northwest India and established their capital at Delhi. The Mamluks were followed by the Khalji dynasty (1290-1320), the Tughluq dynasty (1320-1415), the Sayyid dynasty (1415-1451) and lastly the Lodi dynasty (1451-1526), who were defeated by the Mughals (Mongols). From about 1300 onward, smaller Muslim states that broke away from Delhi were established in the Deccan.

Delhi At the centre of this turmoil, was Delhi, capital of the Sultanate. Once a minor fortified town, it became a sprawling metropolis, which would remain the capital of every (north) Indian ruler until the 19th century, when the British established Calcutta as theirs. With its magnificent tombs, mosques and forts, it commanded the heartland of India and was a target for any would-be usurper. In 1299, Mongols conquered parts of Delhi but failed to destroy its fortifications and were driven out. Another, large assault launched in 1307-08 was repulsed. Timur (Tamerlane) sacked Delhi in 1398, destroying many of its buildings and unleashing a bloodbath on its streets. However, he had no intention of remaining in India and returned to Central Asia. Delhi recovered, though it had been shattered, and regained its confidence.

Conquest The Muslim conquest of India was rapid and relentless. By the early 14th century, the rulers in Delhi had established sultanates in the Deccan and then pushed into the deep south, where they briefly controlled the Pandyan capital of Madurai. In attempting to explain these conquests, historians have rightly pointed to the military superiority, ferocity and audacity of the Central Asian horsemen. In addition, the prospect of looting the riches of the subcontinent, of gaining status and winning a military career, were strong incentives for soldiers who typically came from low status groups. But another factor in the spectacular collapse of the India was the internecine war between Rajputs and their rivals for supremacy in the Gangetic heartland.

Amir Khusrau The life and writings of Amir Khusrau (1253-1325 CE) reflect the major historical developments of this period. It is through him (and others) that Persian literary culture, tinged with Sufism, was brought to India. His father was a Turkic officer from Central Asia, who came to Delhi at the request of the Sultan in 1220s and was granted land. The young Amir Khusrau found favour in the Delhi court, where he became a prolific and popular writer. His *gazal* compositions are still regarded as the finest in this genre. In addition to writing odes, riddles and legends, some of which are still studied toddy, he is credited with developing the influential *qawwali* genre of devotional song by fusing Persian and Indian music traditions.

Muhammad Tughlaq   Muhammad Tughlaq (r. 1324-1351 CE) was one of the most curious figures of the Delhi Sultanate. He was a polymath, accomplished in Persian poetry and Islamic philosophy. He also studied mathematics, medicine and astronomy. An ambitious ruler, he extended the territory of Muslim rule to its greatest extent and instituted bold administrative reforms. But he also made two catastrophic decisions. He suddenly moved the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the Deccan, forcing the entire court, army and their retinues to trek thousands of miles into a barren landscape, where the lack of water forced him to reverse his decision and bring everyone back two years later. Another decision, to glorify his achievements with gold and silver coinage, proved a financial disaster and brought down his government.

Vijayanagar kingdom   The advance of Muslim rule in the south was only checked by the rise of the Vijayanagar kingdom (1336–1565 CE). The capital city (Vijayanagar, 'City of Victory') was a vast complex of temples (and mosques) that displayed wealth and ambition, but the kings gained their control by a skilful network of alliances with adjacent Hindu and minor Muslim rulers. They even improved their army by recruiting Muslim soldiers and borrowing their techniques of warfare. And when the Portuguese arrived on the west coast of India in 1498, they were quick to enter into treaty and trade arrangements with them, too.

Government

Administration   The early Delhi Sultanate adapted a Persian model of government, making it more militaristic and aristocratic. The sultan was nominally the head of all aspects of government, although in practice he had a number of ministers who were responsible. His second-in-command was the Wazir, who headed the finance department and acted as head of the civil service. Next in importance came the Diwan-i-ariz, who was in charge of the military, responsible for recruitment and discipline in the army. The Diwan-i-insha was the chief secretary to the sultan and in charge of all royal correspondence. Three other ministers were responsible for foreign affairs, religious affairs and judicial affairs.   The provinces were ruled by military officers (*muqti*) and noblemen who were given land rent-free (*iqtadar*), both of whom were appointed by the Sultan. Provinces were divided into districts (*shiq*), which were sub-divided into group of villages (*paragana*).

Reforms   This basic structure was reformed by Sultan Alauddin (r. 1296-1316 CE) in order to extend central authority over his expanded territory. Following his successful defence of Delhi against two Mongol campaigns (1299, 1307-08), he conquered new territory in Gujarat and Rajasthan before driving deep into the south and taking the ancient Hindu city of Madurai in 1310. Thereafter, Alauddin undertook a massive land survey on the basis of which a standard tax was levied. Half the crop from arable land and a fixed tax on all herded animals was due to the centre, to be collected by military officers in the provinces and stored in state granaries. The net effect was to raise more revenue and to reduce the authority of local elites, who also faced new taxes on their horses, clothing and houses. Old ruling families, however, were permitted to retain their symbolic power as tributaries to Delhi. In effect, however, Delhi governed the countryside from a few garrisoned cities and plundered whenever the need arose. Most of these reforms were reversed by Alauddin's successor, Muhammad Tughluq (r.1324-1351 CE), who instituted a new department of agriculture dedicated to expanding arable land. He also reorganised the revenue department and demanded reports from provincial officers, showing income and expenditure. And he moved the capital (temporarily) to the Deccan so that the centre, through its officers and its army, had more control over the provinces.

Military   The rapid and near-total conquest of India by the Delhi Sultanate emphasises the sometimes overlooked role of warfare as a factor in shaping Indian history. The military superiority of the Turkic and Afghan armies was considerable. Unlike their Hindu opponents, these soldiers could shoot arrows while riding a horse. It was said that a good horseman could shoot six arrows a minute. Some of them also used a cross bar to launch arrows that could penetrate metal armour. These skills came naturally to the warriors from Central Asia, where (unlike in India) the climate and topography was conducive to horse breeding. Muslim armies also used war-elephants, to batter down fortifications and to scatter soldiers on a battlefield. The Sultans owned thousands of these animals, which also became a symbol of royal power.

Economy

Growth   Under the Delhi Sultanate, the centralisation and standardisation of government, especially in tax collection and land management, contributed to an expanding economy. An efficient state bureaucracy extended the monetised economy into rural areas. Textile production was improved by the introduction of the wooden cotton gin, spinning wheel and treadle loom (all probably from Persia). The discovery (or borrowing) of sericulture techniques led to a growth in luxury textiles, such as silk. Carpet weaving, again from Persia, also

flourish and created new wealth for weavers and traders. Paper manufacturing was introduced, probably in the 13th c. CE, and became so popular that sweet-sellers in Delhi could wrap their goods in paper. Increased trade, especially in gems, horses and fine textiles, led to rising standards of living for artisans and merchants.

Slavery While it is difficult to say what contribution slave labour made to economic growth, there is no doubt that slave labour was extensively used in the construction of major buildings (including the famous mosques and tombs), roads, wells and canals. Contemporary accounts claim that the sultans owned between 50,000 -180,000 slaves. Slave markets are described in Delhi, where a man could be bought for less than the cost of a horse. Everyone seems to have had at least one slave, and many of them worked in the textile and construction industries.

Money-grant system Like virtually all previous rulers of India, the Delhi Sultanate used the land-grant system as a means to create allies in the provinces. However, a problem arose when the state enlarged its territory beyond its ability to assert its authority and local elites became too independent. This is the problem the sultans of Delhi attempted to solve by introducing the money-grant system. As the name indicates, it awarded money, not land, and it reversed the direction of the award. Some of the land tax revenue to the state was awarded to a provincial official, usually the military governor, for their maintenance and that of their subordinates. These money-grants evolved into hereditary emoluments, providing the officers with considerable land and power in the countryside. The result was that the office-holders became financially independent from Delhi, reproducing the very problem the system was intended to solve. At the same time, the officers failed to build alliances with the old, aristocratic Hindu families, thus exacerbating existing tensions between Muslim rulers and the countryside.

Currency Although bills of exchange were used to transfer debt and make land sales in the countryside, the main currency was coinage.
The amount of coins minted during the Sultanate was considerably greater than during any previous period. Metal coins (mostly silver and silver-alloyed, and some gold) were issued by the various rulers of the Sultanate. The most common coin was the silver-based *tanka*, which had 14 different denominations, determined by the weight of silver. Over the course of the Sultanate, the amount of silver decreased from about 30% in the beginning to only 5% by the end. In effect, the economy became demonetised. Once again, Sultan Muhammad Tughluq's radical reforms contributed to the problem. In order to facilitate remittances from across his newly-enlarged empire, he set up mints in seven different locations. Then he changed the medium of tax collection from grain to coins. However, when he discovered that the available gold and silver was inadequate, he issued coins in copper and brass. These debased coins, with an inscription but no royal seal, were easily copied and the market was flooded with fakes. Soon the revenue system collapsed, and with it the Sultan's rule.

Society

Newcomers People of various ethnicities had entered India before 1000 CE, but they had come in small numbers and were easily assimilated on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. The Muslim newcomers, however, were very different. They were rulers and hardened warriors, low status men who had risen to power through military prowess and ambition. They injected an egalitarian dynamic and social mobility into a society structured by ancient texts and Hindu practices. The populist ideology of Sufi Islam also contributed to this openness; some Sufi poets were low status but gained wide recognition. Disruption was also caused by the Sultan granting land to Muslim officers and noblemen in the countryside, which resulted in the partial replacement of a rural ruling class of landed Hindu families by an urban-linked Muslim ruling class.

Muslim-Hindu relations Relations between the two groups varied by region and circumstance. The usurpation of power by newly-arrived Muslim noblemen and onerous taxation fuelled discontent in many localities. But many other Muslim rulers were tolerated as long as they did not disrupt local customs. On the other hand, Hindus were almost completely shut out of public employment. Some Muslim rulers did raze temples and destroy idols, but this was far from common. What is remarkable is that no incident of armed uprising, or organised opposition of any kind, is known. It would appear, then, that the expansion of Islam was not the result of forced conversion, though isolated examples did occur. Rather, the religion was adopted by many Hindus in towns and cities as a practical step to success. Among those groups who converted in large numbers were artisans, who were in great demand. What is unknown is how many Untouchables were attracted by the egalitarianism of Islam and converted. Certainly the Sufi saints, who wandered in the countryside, spoke a message that would have appealed to low-status groups. The status of women declined, however, as they found their public social space restricted. The practice of *purdah* (from the Persian *parda*, 'veil' or 'curtain'), spread but only partly in imitation of Muslim practice.

Synthesis   Whatever their motives, it is certainly true that Muslims and Hindus did interact and created a synthesis in several key aspects of social life. One telling example is that the betel leaf (*pan*) soon became a favourite of Muslims, who also adopted Indian spices in their cooking. Muslims. Many Muslim men and women began to wear versions of local clothes and ornaments, and their weddings and funerals showed definite Indian influences. Literary genres mixed, as in the popular *qawwali*, and languages comingled, producing a tongue with Sanskrit grammar and Persian vocabulary.   At the level of folk religion, Hinduism and Islam were virtually identical.

Culture

Indo-Islamic architecture   The sultans of Delhi, and the minor Muslim rulers in the Deccan, oversaw the development of an Indo-Islamic style of architecture, characterised by ornate and intricately designed arches and domes. Pillars, mosques and tombs were decorated with floral patterns and calligraphic inscriptions from the Qur'an. The royal tombs of the Lodi sultans are an excellent illustration of this style. The most famous structure, however, is the [Qutub Minar](#), a pillar standing 73 metres high at centre of a large complex of buildings, including tombs and mosques on the outskirts of Delhi. Made of brick but covered with metal and later enlarged by adding six storeys made of sandstone and marble, the Qutub Minar is an architectural metaphor for the Sultanate as a whole. Begun in 1192, it was struck by lightning, damaged by an earthquake, repaired and added to throughout the period, reaching its present condition in the early 16th century.

Hindu architecture   Some of the most magnificent Hindu temples in India were also built in the early centuries of this period. Regional styles evolved in Bengal, Kerala and Orissa, but the most spectacular temples were constructed in the far south. A large open space, often with a pool of water, was enclosed by a square, with high towers on each of four walls. Outstanding examples are the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram and the Brihadishvara temple at Tanjore, both in modern-day Tamil Nadu.

Sculpture   The quality of sculpture in north India declined during the Sultanate and produced a predominance of massive, rigid forms. However, a subtle school of bronze sculpture developed in eastern India, as seen in the images of Buddhist gods and goddesses at Nalanda and Kurkihar. In the south, the tradition of exquisite Chola bronzes (made with the 'lost-wax' method) continued to produce excellent pieces.

Hindu literature   Hindu literature during this period was inspired by the devotionalism that had begun in the Tamil-speaking region of the south a few centuries earlier. The new literary-religious impulse spread to the adjacent Kannada-speaking area, where in the 11th and 12th centuries CE a group of poets invented a new genre of the *vacana* ('speech'), with which to speak to Siva. Known as Virasaivas ('Militant/Heroic Saivas'), they used this simple verse from to propagate their spiritual vision and egalitarian social ideals. In Tamil, the outstanding literary achievement was a devotional retelling of the Ramayana by Kampan (12th c. CE?). Another Ramayana of equal iconic status in the north was written in Hindi by Tulsi Das (15th c. CE). In Sanskrit, the prevailing devotionalism is best illustrated by the *Gita Govinda* by Jayadeva (12th c. CE).

Indo-Persian literature   A new literary culture developed at the court of the Delhi Sultanate and the court of the so-called Deccan sultanates. The wealth and fame of these rulers attracted poets from the eastern reaches of the Persian Empire and stimulated local talent, as well. Writing in Persian, but often incorporating Indian themes and metres, these poets experimented with Indo-Persian genres, such as the *qasida* (panegyric ode) and the *masnavi* (rhymed couplets mixing romantic love and moral instruction). But the pre-eminent genre, in both Persia and India, was the *gazal*, a short lyric of rhymed couplets combining the conventions of a love poem with those of a drinking song. Its imagery is draw almost entirely from the landscape, flora and fauna of Persia, the most famous example being the contrast between the rose (*gul*) and the nightingale (*bulbul*). A subtle poetic language is made even more enigmatic by the Sufi religious themes that supply the content. Many *gazal*s express emotions of longing and loss, in both ordinary human experience and the mystical experience of god. A master of many genres, including the *gazal*, was Amir Khusrau (1253-1325 CE), who is also credited with developing the influential *qawwali* genre by fusing Persian and Indian music traditions.

Story of the Parrot   The 'Story of the Parrot' (*Tuti Nama*), written by Nakhshabi in the 14th century CE, epitomises the cultural interaction of this period. Nakhshabi was a poet and physician born in Persia who migrated to north India and found patronage under a minor Muslim ruler. While still in Persia, he had translated a Sanskrit version of the story (*Sukasaptati*, 'Story of 70 Parrots'), which he later adapted as the *Tuti Nama*. In his text, a single parrot tells 52 tales over as many nights in order to prevent its mistress from having a love

affair while her husband is away (a delaying tactic of storytelling that is familiar to us from the *Thousand and One Nights*).

Religion

Islam   Early Indian Islam was guided by the Koran and the Sunna, which tradition held were the words and principles of the Prophet. Thus, the Islam practiced in Delhi in this period would have differed little from that observed in Baghdad or Damascus. There were minor differences, however, especially in the interpretation of Islamic law (*shariah*), resulting from a recognition that adjustments had to be made when Islam conquered people of different faiths.

Sufism   Islam during the Delhi Sultanate was also tempered by the Sufis, the wandering Muslim mystics who took their name from the coarse wool tunic they wore. Sufis represented the ecstatic impulse supressed in legalistic schools of Islam and expressed in their statement: 'Mystics learn from God; scholars learn from books.' Although Islam held that the only path to Paradise was unwavering faith in God, Sufi saints believed that one could draw closer to God during one's lifetime and thereby experience mystical oneness. As singers and poets, they helped to spread Islam through the countryside, in a way that traditional Islamic teachers could not. The Sufi poet-saints were virtually indistinguishable from the poet-saints of devotional Hinduism. Both groups sang of a direct, personal contact with the divine, a power that they believed transcended petty social categories like caste and religious identity.

Hinduism   Devotionalism, which had begun centuries earlier in the Tamil country, spread like wild fire across the entire subcontinent. Hindu poet-saints composed songs in Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi and Assamese that sang the praises of deities in the language of common people. The Chola kingdom in the far south and the Vijayanagar kingdom in the Deccan provided the patronage to promote the worship of Visnu and Siva in large temple and local shrines. The philosopher Ramanuja (c. 1017–1137 CE) established a theological basis for devotionalism with his school of *Vishistadvaita* ('qualified non-dualism'). He explained that a worshipper need not merge into oneness with god (the goal of the rival *Advaita*, or non-dualism, school). Instead, the worshipper would become immersed in god, but retain a personal identity that could form a bond with god.

Reading

George Michell and Mark Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art of the Deccan   Sultanates* (Cambridge, 1999)
George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India* (Cambridge,

        1995)

Axel Michaels, *Hinduism. Past and Present* (Princeton, 2004)
Barbara Metcalf, *Islam in South Asia in Practice* (Princeton, 2009)
Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India* (Edinburgh, 1969)

Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara* (Cambridge, 2005)
Richard Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761* (Cambridge,
        2006)
Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur:1300-1700* (Princeton, 1978)
Ainsle T. Embree, *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol I* (Columbia,1988)

Discussion/questions

1. The mosque is the best-known Indo-Islamic architectural form, but the tomb garden is perhaps the most unique. Analyse the tomb garden by studying its precedents in Arab, Persian and Central Asian cultures, its counterparts (if any) in pre-Islamic India and its cultural significance during the Delhi Sultanate and later.

2. Identify the factors that explain the spread of Muslim rule across north India and the Deccan. What relationship do you find between military success and cultural assimilation? How can you explain that fact that, in many cases, local Hindu populations under a Muslim ruler did not change their traditional culture?

3. Analyse the Indo-Persian synthesis that emerged in this period, especially in Delhi. What are the elements of this synthesis? Why did Persian come to be the court language? Assess the role of a court language by

comparing Persian in Delhi with a court language elsewhere (such as Arabic in Cairo, Mandarin in Beijing or French in Paris).

4. What role did the Vijayanagar Empire play in this period? Identify its origins, trace its development and explain why it became a powerful symbol of Hindu culture then and in later centuries.

Texts

1. Kannada poem by Basavanna (c. 1105-1167 CE), trans. A.K. Ramunujan, 1973

> The rich will make temples for Siva.
> What shall I, a poor man, do?
> My legs are pillars,
> the body the shrine,
> the head a cupola of gold.
>
> Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
> things standing shall fall
> but the moving ever shall stay.

2. From the autobiography of Firuz Shah Tughluq (1309-1388 CE), trans. Anjana Narayanan, 2015

Among the gifts which God bestowed upon me, His humble servant, was a desire to erect public buildings. So I built many mosques and colleges and monasteries, that the learned and the elders, the devout and the holy, might worship God in these edifices, and aid the kind builder with their prayers.

Through God's mercy the lands and property of his servants have been safe and secure, protected and guarded during my reign; and I have not allowed the smallest particle of any man's property to be wrested from him.

3. A poem by Amir Khusrao (1253-1325 CE)

I wonder what was the place where I was last night,
All around me were half-slaughtered victims of love,
tossing about in agony.
There was a nymph-like beloved with cypress-like form
and tulip-like face,
Ruthlessly playing havoc with the hearts of the lovers.
God himself was the master of ceremonies in that heavenly court,
oh Khusrau, where (the face of) the Prophet too was shedding light
like a candle.

Part VII : EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Overview

 The history of early modern India is dominated by the Mughal Empire, and largely by the individual genius of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605).   From the 17th century onward, however, the story of the Mughals is intertwined with the emergence of two other powers in the subcontinent: the Mahrattas, a Hindu peasant kingdom in the west, and the British, who came by sea. These three, who fought each other in bloody battles to gain economic and political control, were so different that no two of them could form an alliance to crush the third. In the end, the Mahrattas and the British separately defeated the Mughals, and then the British overran the Mahrattas in the early 19th century. The Mughal splendour did not entirely disappear, however, since the new rulers adopted much of their predecessor's administrative structures and tax collection system. As one small example, Persian continued as the official language of British India until the 1830s.

Events

Battle of Panipat   The long struggle by the Muslim rulers of Delhi to prevent other Central Asian groups from claiming India came to end in 1526 CE when the Mughals won a decisive battle against the Lodis and their Rajput allies at Panipat, not far from Delhi. The Mughals' guns and field artillery, plus their military strategy, proved too much for Ibrahmin Lodi, the last of the Delhi sultans, who died on the battle field with thousands of his soldiers.

Babur   The victor at Panipat was Babur (1483-1530), the first Mughal Emperor (r. 1526-1530). The Mughals came from a lineage of Turko-Mongols who claimed descent from both the Timur warrior Tamerlane and the Mongol [>Moghul>Mughal] ruler Chingiz Khan. Babur was born in present-day Uzbekistan. At age 12, he succeeded his father and began a military career by conquering Samarkand, Kabul and Lahore before sweeping down to Delhi. His autobiography, the first written in India, is a remarkable work. His oldest son, Humayun, became emperor upon his death.

Akbar   Babur's grandson Akbar (1542-1605) is justifiably the best-known of the Mughal rulers. During his long reign (1556-1605, which paralleled that of Queen Elizabeth I), he introduced major reforms in administration, taxation and warfare, as well as culture and religion. He also built a new capital at Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra. While he is best known for his patronage of the arts and sciences, he also registered military successes. At the second battle of Panipat in 1556 CE, he defeated an Afghan army, and he was swift to fill the vacuum when the Vijayanagar kingdom collapsed in the Deccan.

Aurangzeb   The last of the grant Mughals was Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), who stands in stark contrast to Akbar. While Akbar was a humanist, Aurangzeb was an iconoclast, a ruthless warrior and a poor administrator. In fact, Aurangzeb's military and fiscal policies are often blamed for the downfall of the empire. Through his brilliant military strategy, however, Aurangzeb did achieve glory for the Mughal Empire, conquering more land in northwest India and in the Deccan.

Mughal decline   By the early 18th century, the Mughal Empire was in terminal decline. The final humiliation came in 1739 CE, when the Persian ruler Nadir Shah sacked Delhi and stripped it of its riches (including the famous Koh-i-noor diamond). Unsurprisingly, the territorial expansion of the Mughal Empire had sown the seeds of its own destruction, which slowly grew to maturity. Stretched thin over most of the subcontinent, the imperial tax collection system no longer worked efficiently, and it was torn apart by internal divisions. The royal family suffered four internecine struggles in the final decades. In the provinces, local allies turned against Delhi, and insurgencies were led by the Jats, Sikhs, Rajputs and, most conclusively, the Marathas. In the end, the Mughals lost their military superiority, as their enemies adopted their own strategy of maintaining large armies and acquiring the latest guns and artillery. By the end of the 18th century, the once mighty Mughals had become vassals of the Mahrattas.

Mahrattas   Beginning as pastoralists and peasants in western India, Mahratta clans joined together in the 17th century to from a nascent state. Their leader, Shivaji Bhonsle (1630-1680), built up a mobile army of capable commanders, often defectors from the periphery of the Mughal Empire. Initially defeated by the Mughals, Shivaji won battles in the Deccan and the Western Ghats, and in 1659 he scored a significant victory by taking the sultanate of Bijapur. The Mahrattas would eventually face their own defeat at the hands of the British in the early 19th century. With the Mughals weakened and the Marathas forced to retreat to their base in the western mountains, the field was left open for the British.

Europeans   Europeans arrived on the subcontinent at the same time as the Mughals, though by a different route and with different motives. When the Portuguese landed at Goa on the west coast in 1498, they came as traders, with no territorial ambitions. The same was true of the British, who came later and built fortified towns at Madras in 1644 and Calcutta in 1696). In 1661, they acquired the Portuguese colony of Bombay through a treaty. Throughout the 18th century, as their profits rose and they shifted from trader to ruler, the British fought wars against the Mughals, the Mahrattas and the French, and won them all. The most decisive battle was that at Plassey, in Bengal, in 1757, after which the English East India Company simply took over the administration of this huge chunk of the Mughal Empire.

Mysore   Although the British won a series of wars against the French and Indian rulers in the 18th century, their most powerful enemy (and an ally of France) was the kingdom of Mysore. This south Indian Muslim kingdom had been part of the Hindu Vijayanagar kingdom until the latter fragmented under pressure from the Muslim states in the Deccan in the 16th century. In this vacuum, Mysore expanded its territory and became the most powerful force in South India. Under Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, Mysore fought four wars against the British and was only defeated in 1799 when the foreigners joined forces with the Nizam of Hyderabad. As a result, by 1800, the British (in the form of the East India Company) controlled most of South India, all of Bengal and parts of the Gangetic plain).

Government

Administration   The Mughal Empire was, by the 17th c. CE, the most centralised and efficient state in Indian history. Its success is attributable not just to military superiority (often exaggerated) but also to political consolidation and the individual genius of Akbar. Although centralisation had been achieved to varying degrees by previous regimes, deeply rooted institutions in the countryside concerning land and loyalty were not easily replaced by new external networks. For example, the money-grants that funded the military officials of the Delhi Sultanate turned into patrimonies that eventually put land revenue beyond state control. However, clever administrative reforms enabled the Mughals to surpass their predecessors in maintaining governmental authority in the regions. First, though, we need to consider how they built on work of their predecessors.

Legacy   The Mughals borrowed many of the administrative reforms of the Delhi Sultanate. For example, they retained the new territorial unit of the *sarkar*, invented by the Lodi Sultans to organise conquered lands. (The British called this unit a 'district', a term that persists in Independent India.) The Mughals also kept the sub-divisions within a district (the *paragana*) and then added a supra-regional unit, the *suba*, which replicated the administrative structure in Delhi, with the full complement of staff and departments. The number of *suba*s varied from 12 under Akbar to 22 under Aurangzeb. The size of each one varied, too; for example, Bengal and Delhi were separate *suba*s.

Akbar's reforms   Akbar (r.1556-1605 CE) wisely retained land revenue as the basis of his government, but he also introduced reforms. First, he initiated an agrarian survey to identify types of land, crop prices and yields in order to calculate taxes. All land was divided into two categories: *khalisa* and *jagir*. Revenue from the first went to the imperial treasury, and that from the second was assigned to Muslim noblemen/landholders (*jagirdar*s) in lieu of a salary. With this *jagir* system Akbar replaced the *iqta* system of the Delhi Sultanate. Second, he required taxes to be paid in cash, and he set about regulating the minting and currency system to enable payment in silver coins. More fundamentally, he created the *mansabdari* system (borrowed from Persia), with 33 different grades of administrative cadre. At the top were the officers (*mansabdars*), who were paid a salary directly from the centre in return for service to the centre. These officers could be posted anywhere in the empire, a practice that discouraged the development of patrimonies that had plagued earlier governments. However, the tax was actually collected by intermediaries, *zamindars,* who became a class of landed gentry. Akbar's treasury was full, but the *zamindar*s enjoyed a large degree of local autonomy. Overall, Akbar's *mansabdari* and cash-salary system—rational, transparent and immune from local loyalties—were the keystones of the Mughal state.

Judiciary   The centralised and efficient nature of the Mughal government is illustrated by its judicial system. It consisted of a set of three courts on each of four levels: the imperial courts in Delhi; the provincial (*suba*) courts; the district (*sarkar*) courts; and the sub-district *(paragana)* courts. All these courts were presided over by judges (Qazi) of differing grades of competence, and each court had its own jurisdiction. At the imperial level, for example, the Emperor's court heard cases on appeal as well as criminal and civil cases of first instance. A second court heard cases concerning revenue, and a third specialised in military cases.

Military   Although the Mughal Empire was born in war and sustained by war, by the end of its rule, the military was the weakest part of its government. When Babur, the first emperor, won his decisive battle in 1526, his matchlock men and mobile field guns were no match for his enemy whose idea of battle etiquette did not include firearms. But when Aurangzeb, the last emperor, went into battle he commanded an inferior force. The problem was not lack of numbers. Historians estimate that the Mughal army consisted of 440,000 infantry, musketeers, and artillery men, and 185,000 cavalry. The main problem was, in fact, the lack of a centralised structure. The Mughal army comprised four different types of soldiers (those paid for and supplied by the *mansabdar*s; those paid for by the state but commanded by *mansabdar*s; those paid for by the state but of a higher grade; and those provided by provincial elites, such as the *zamindar*s). The Mughal artillery was also of poor quality, and Akbar's efforts to procure new guns from the Portuguese failed. In addition, there was a shortage of trained officers, discipline was lacking and the huge number of camp followers (families of soldiers and courtiers, etc.) meant that the army was cumbersome and slow-footed.

Economy

Capitalism   A nascent form of capitalism under the Mughal Empire was stimulated by the cash economy favoured by the Mughals, the modern banking practices of the Mahrattas and the commercial practices of European traders.   Near-constant warfare also required all three groups to raise and sustain large armies, which put pressure on the merchants, farmers and officials from whom revenue was squeezed.

Wealth   All the many foreign observers of the Mughal Empire remark on wealth, not only at the court but also among traders and merchants outside Delhi. The ruling class apparently enjoyed a higher standard of living than that of their counterparts in Europe. A centralised, cash-based revenue system brought considerable revenue to Delhi, which was then distributed to the artisans who constructed the impressive buildings, to the artists (poets, musicians, painters) who created aesthetic forms, to the craftsmen who manufactured ornaments and tools of warfare, and to the weavers who wove the expensive clothes worn by the ruling class. Money exchange was also facilitated by a modernised banking system of credit and investment.

Rural   A centralised state, an efficient revenue system and a large army did not improve the living conditions of the rural peasantry, however. Predatory and sometimes discriminatory tax regulations on Hindus meant that in some places cultivators paid out more than half of the harvest. Although wet-rice agriculture flourished in Bengal, there was low productivity elsewhere, due to poor quality grains, limited irrigation and lack of metal implements. On the other hand, high-value crops such as indigo, opium and sugar showed growth. In the 17th century, some rural communities were quick to take up the cultivation of newly introduced crops, such as tobacco and maize.

Land clearance   The agrarian base of the Mughal economy was enlarged by pushing imperial control eastward into Bengal. Here, in the fertile delta of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers, massive land clearance took place, just as it had centuries earlier in the Gangetic plain. After the felling of virgin forests and clearing of land, the state supported the development of wet-rice agriculture as well as Islamic institutions, such as mosques and rural schools, achieving agricultural expansion and conversion of the peasantry in the same plan.

Foreign trade   The foreign trade stimulated by the arrival of European ships contributed significantly to the wealth of the Mughals and their allies. Spices, indigo, sugar, salt, turmeric, textiles and opium were exported, in return for guns, horses, amber, precious stones, drugs, perfume and certain types of luxury fabric, such as velvet. But the main import was gold and silver, primarily from the Spanish colonies in the New World. Trade increased considerably in the 17th century. For example, in the 1620s, the English East Indian Company was selling a quarter of a million pieces of cotton cloth at auction in London. By the end of the 17th century, the number of pieces has soared to nearly two million. Indian traders, merchants and artisans, especially silk and cotton weavers, benefitted from this lucrative e trade. Once again, Akbar made a vital contribution to this sector of the economy by opening silk weaving workshops in several cities. Most of the profit, however, remained in the hands of foreigners (Portuguese, Dutch and British).

Society

Change   The nascent capitalism, fiscal reorganisation, influx of foreigners and military campaigns opened up space for new social groups. A class of local gentry, including officials, warrior-chiefs and rich landowners, emerged in these volatile conditions. The primary beneficiaries were the Muslim officers (*mansabdar*s) and

landowners (j*agirdar*s), and here again it was Akbar's reforms that stimulated change. He recruited men of various backgrounds into his elite administrative/military cadre, not just Afghans and Persians, but also Rajputs and Indian-born Muslims. The dramatic rise in the textile trade also raised the status of Hindu weaving castes. Most of the traders, merchants and money-lenders who participated in the thriving commercial sphere were also Hindu. Outside the Mughal Empire, the Mahratta kingdom in western India was built by peasant groups who rose to warrior status.

Communal Under Muslim rule, Islamic scholars and religious leaders held social authority. Hindus were tolerated but subject to a special tax on non-believers. They were also disadvantaged in competition for civil and military posts, and Hindu merchants had to pay extra duties and levies. Nevertheless, many Hindus, especially elites and in the cities, adopted some social customs of their Muslim rulers, including dress and cuisine. And, given the challenge of governing a mainly non-Muslim population, Muslim courts showed flexibility and often deferred to Hindu custom. Sufism, with its non-sectarian vision, created a cultural bridge between the two religions. Akbar, a Sufi at heart, abolished the hated tax on Hindus (and all non-Muslims).

Culture

Architecture The Mughals developed the tradition of Indo-Islamic architecture that they inherited from the Delhi Sultanate. The Mughals retained the ornate arches and domes, but their buildings tended to be symmetrical, large enclosed spaces, like Hindu temples. Crucially, they also added a garden, itself laid out in a square grid pattern. The most perfect example of the tomb garden is the Taj Mahal, built for the wife of the Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658). Other typical structures are the Friday mosques (Jami Masquid) of red sandstone and white marble that were constructed in Delhi, Lucknow, Lahore, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra. The Red Fort, also in Delhi and also built by Shah Jahan, is another impressive structure. Although it is slightly asymmetrical, in order to incorporate an older fort on the same site, this massive sandstone complex was the political and symbolic centre of the Mughal Empire. Regional styles of Indo-Islamic architecture also evolved in the smaller Muslim kingdoms in the Deccan. In particular, the domed tombs at Golconda are spectacular. Built by the Qutb Shahi rulers in the 16th and 17th centuries CE, and once furnished with carpets and chandeliers, these now abandoned mausoleums stand as symbols of a past glory. Hindu temples also became more elaborate, adding porches, columns, doorways, ceilings and passageways. The domes, niches and arches of some temples (e.g., the Govindadeva temple in Mathura) show clear Indo-Islamic influence. On the other hand, some of the most spectacular buildings are the temples and palaces constructed in the far south, at Madurai, Trivandrum and Padmanabhapuram (all 16th-18th c. CE).

Painting The Mughal rulers brought significant changes to Indian painting. From the 16th century onward, book-painting superseded wall-painting as the favoured form and then developed into a visual art altogether separate from manuscripts and books. In another departure from tradition, the names of individual artists were recorded. Once again, Emperor Akbar was instrumental in these developments. He assembled a large contingent of artists from all over his empire and put them under the instruction of a Persian master-painter, who he supervised. Later Mughal emperors continued to patronise 'miniature' painting, as did local rulers in the Deccan and Rajasthan. The Hindu tradition of illustrated manuscripts flourished as part of the *bhakti* movement that developed in north India. Krishna and Radha are wonderfully rendered on manuscripts of the *Bhagavata Purana*, and a new genre of painting (*ragamala*) appeared, in which a series of images symbolised musical modes.

Music The two schools of 'classical' Indian music both emerged at the end of the early modern era. Although most Hindustani (north Indian) musicians today trace their lineage from Tansen, the great vocalist and instrumentalist at Akbar's court, the style of singing known as *khyal* and the modern style of playing the *sitar* developed in the 18th century. The south Indian tradition of Carnatic music derives from the Maratha court at Tanjore, where three men composed the repertoire that defines the tradition today: Syama Sastry (1762-1827), Tyagaraja (1767-1847) and Muttuswami Dikshitar (1775-1835).

Literature The *Baburnama* ('Book of Babur'), the autobiography of Babur (1483-1530 CE), the first Mughal emperor, is a remarkable work of psychological insight and ethnographic observation. Although written in Babur's native Chagatai (or Turki), a language of central Asia, it is highly Persianised in vocabulary and morphology. During Babur's lifetime, it was translated into Persian and reproduced in illustrated manuscripts. An equally impressive book is the autobiography of a Jain merchant named Banarasidas (1585-1643 CE), whose *Ardhakathanak* ('Half a Story') by is the first autobiography in an Indian language.   Among the best-loved Muslim poets was Abul Faizl (Shaikh Abu-al-Fazal-ibn Mubarak, 1547-1595 CE), who wrote in several Persian

genres (*qasida*, *ghazal* and *rubai*). An example of narrative fiction is the ever-popular *Hamzanama* (or *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, 'Adventures of Amir Hamza'). This picaresque text draws on the Indo-Persian genre of oral storytelling (*dastan/qissa*) to narrate the story of Amir Hamza, the legendary uncle of the prophet Muhammad. Many versions of the work circulated orally and in manuscript, but the canonical text is an illustrated Persian manuscript commissioned by Akbar. Hindu devotional poetry also flourished, providing the stimulus that transformed several regional tongues into literary languages. Even the minor languages (or possibly Hindi dialects) of Braj, Awadhi, Maithili produced poems that are still sung and studied today.

Urdu Not all Muslim poets favoured Persian and many turned to Urdu, with its greater mix of Sanskrit-derived words. Both languages, it should be said, were written in the Arabic script (slightly modified for the new sounds in Urdu), and calligraphy was itself a highly develop art form. Urdu was the choice, not surprisingly, of several writers living outside Delhi in the smaller but still sophisticated Muslim courts in the Deccan. Two representative figures, who mainly wrote *ghazal*s, are Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627), a ruler of Bijapur, and Allah-wirdi Khan (early 18th c.), a military officer in the Muslim court at Hyderabad. By the 18th century, Urdu had become the literary language of Indian Muslims.

European Europeans also made a significant contribution to Indian literature during this period. Missionaries printed the first book in an Indian language, they brought the first printing press to India and they wrote grammars and dictionaries for many regional languages. Perhaps the most remarkable European was C.J. Beschi (1680-1742 CE), an Italian-born missionary who spent four decades in South India. He wrote a Tamil grammar that is still used today and an epic poem that scholars refused to believe could have been written by a non-Tamil Although the poem (*Tempavani*) tells the story of Joseph, Beschi's patron saint, the biblical story is Indianised so that Joseph is made a prince who chooses the life of an ascetic (like the Buddha) until a sage convinces him to take up his duty (*dharma*) as a householder.

Religion

Islam During the Mughal Empire, Sunni and Shia Muslims generally practiced Islam in accordance with scripture and followed the guidance of traditional Islamic scholars in the interpretation of *sharia* law. However, Sufism (which had come to India in the 14th c. CE) was also extremely popular. Sufi mysticism, which dismissed institutions in favour of a personal bond between each believer and god, engaged people through ecstatic singing. Nevertheless, and predictably, Sufis formed their own organisations, called orders *(silsilah)*, with spiritual leaders and large shrines. The most successful orders were the Suhravardi and the Chisthi, which cultivated sophisticated Persian poetry. With its shrines, singing and egalitarianism, Sufism played a major role in the accommodation of Islam with Indian traditions, as illustrated by the synthesis created by Akbar. At court he gathered around him a wide spectrum of theologians—Sunni, Shia, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Jain, Jewish and Catholic. Akbar led a pious life, and could be seen sweeping the floor of the mosque he had built at Fatehpur Sikri (near Agra), where he had relocated his capital. He openly opposed Islamic legal scholars by citing Sufi principles, which traditionalists regarded as heresy.

Hinduism Hindu devotionalism continued to spread during this period, especially to the eastern corners of the subcontinent. Chaitanya in Bengal and Sankaradeva in Assam led popular movements promoting the worship of Visnu. In south India, partly in reaction to the Islamic threat from the north, kings built large temples that employed thousands of Brahmins. However, at the local level, the theologies of Hindu devotionalism and Sufi mysticism were very similar, the Hindu cults of deified heroes were little different to the Muslim cults of saints.

Christianity At first, Christianity was practiced mainly on the southwest and southeast coasts, where Europeans had established trading centres. Although the number of converts was low, church spires soon dotted the shorelines, and the new faith slowly worked its way into the lives of low-castes, particularly the fishermen (who may have felt an affinity with Christ). In fact, by the end of the 18th century, when Christian churches and congregations appeared in Madras and Calcutta, the Indianisation of Christianity, with its doctrinal concessions to local cultural practices, led to the Jesuits being withdrawn from India (and other parts of Asia).

Reading

John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993)
Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600–1818* (Cambridge, 1993)
P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge, 1988)
Ainsle T. Embree, *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol I* (2nd ed.) (Columbia,

David Ludden, *An Agrarian History of South Asia* (Cambridge, 1999)

Discussion/questions

1. The Mughal Empire has been called the greatest empire in Indian history. Looking back to the other major states (Maurya, Gupta, Chola, Vijayanagar, Delhi Sultanate), what specific features of the Mughals distinguishes them from their predecessors? Consider also any policies or methods that the Mughals borrowed and/or adapted from those earlier states. Finally, to what extent were the seeds of destruction sown by the success of the Mughal Empire?

2. Akbar is called 'The Great Mughal.' He did rule for a longer time than the other emperors, but he did not conquer the most territory. What, then, accounts for his special status? You will need to describe not only his various reforms but also his intellectual pursuits, including theology. Finally, analyse Akbar's reign as an example of the 'great man' theory of history and consider also how he was influenced by his context.

3. The Portuguese and the Mughals arrived in India at about the same time, yet they represent very different kinds of newcomers. The interaction between the emperors in Delhi and the foreigners on the west coast was more extensive that one might imagine. They traded, they fought battles, they exchanged art forms and they borrowed warfare techniques. Make a study of this interaction as an early indication of how colonialism would develop in India.

Texts

1.   In praise of Akbar, from *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* by Muhsin-i-Fani (b. 1615):
Know for certain that the perfect prophet and learned apostle, the possessor of Fame, Akbar, this, the lord of wisdom, directs us to acknowledge that the self-existent being is the wisest teacher and ordains the creatures with absolute power, so that the intelligent among them may be able to understand his precepts; and as reason renders it evident that the world has a Creator, all-mighty and all-wise, who has diffused upon the field of events among the servants, subject to vicissitudes, numerous and various benefits that are worthy of praise an thanksgiving, therefore, according to the lights of our reason, let us investigate the mysteries of his creations, and, according to our knowledge, pour out the praises of his benefits.

2.   Description of Akbar's religion by Abd ul-Qadir Baudani

Samanas [Hindu or Buddhist ascetics] and Brahmans ... gained the advantage over every one in attaining the honor of interviews with His Majesty ... And he made his courtiers listen to those revilings and attacks against our pure and easy, bright and holy faith ... And at one time a Brahman, named Debi, who was one of the interpreters of the Mahabharata, was pulled up the wall of the castle sitting on a bedstead till he arrived near a balcony, which the emperor had made his bedchamber. Whilst thus suspended he instructed His Majesty in the secrets and legends of Hinduism, in the manner of worshipping idols, the fi re, the sun and stars, and of revering the chief gods of these unbelievers ... His Majesty, on hearing further how much the people of the country prized their institutions, began to look upon them with affection.

3. Charles II extends the Charter of English East India Company, 1661

'Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. To all to whom these Present shall come, Greeting. Whereas Our Well-beloved Subjects, *The Governor and Company of Merchants, Trading into the East-Indies*, have been of time to time a Corporation to the Honour and Profit of this Nation, and have enjoyed and do enjoy divers Liberties, Privileges and Immunities, by Force of several Letters, Patents and Charters heretofore granted to them by our late Royal Progenitors, Queen Elizabeth and King James, of blessed Memory….Whereupon they have humbly besought Us to grant and confirm their said Charters, with some alterations and additions, tending to the benefit and Advance of their Trade and Traffick…We do give, grant, ratify and confirm, unto our said Trusty and well-beloved Subjects, the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading in the East-Indies, that they from henceforth for ever be and shall be One Body Corporate and Politick, in Deed and in Name…'

Part VIII : 19th CENTURY

Overview

The nineteenth century was the colonial century in Indian history. And it was a century of war. It began with Britain having gained ascendancy over their Mughal, Mahratta and European rivals and ended with the high-water mark of imperial power. At the century's mid-point, in 1857-58, British rule was convulsed by a revolt sparked by mutiny among Muslim soldiers in the British army. The revolt was crushed, but a lot of blood was spilt, leading to the formal deposition of the Mughal emperor (then a mere puppet on his hollow throne in Delhi) and the transfer of the rule of India from the East India Company to the British Crown. Queen Victoria became 'Empress of India', and India was the 'jewel in the crown of Empire.' However, the very institutions and ideas that the British embedded in Indian society in order to stamp their civilizational imprint on a 'heathen' nation generated the nationalism that would expel the foreigners in the next century. Provincial legislatures debated equal rights, courts considered justice, universities taught history and newspapers created a sense of the nation. This new public sphere encouraged debate and disseminated ideas that led to social reforms and a re-evaluation of Hindu and Muslim traditions. Indians also borrowed and adapted Western models, such as the novel and modern drama. While Indian and British investment edged India toward industrialisation, the economy remained agrarian, rural poverty was widespread and famine struck more than once.

Events

Vellore   The revolt of 1857-58 was not the only mutiny in the British Indian army. It was preceded and, to some extent, foreshadowed by a smaller but still violent event in the South Indian town of Vellore in 1809. At the end of a day of fighting at Vellore Fort, about 200 British soldiers had been killed or wounded, and about 100 Indian soldiers executed for treason. The overt cause was resentment at the new regulations regarding dress and appearance. Hindus were prohibited from wearing caste marks, Muslims were forced to shave facial hair and both groups took offence at the leather part of their headgear. A deeper cause of the rebellion was resentment caused by British expansion. After the British defeated Tipu Sultan (the Muslim ruler of Mysore) in 1799, they confined him, his son and their families in Vellore Fort. The plotters planned to free him and reinstate him on the throne of the Mysore kingdom. When the plot failed, it marked the end of organised resistance to British rule in South India.

Mahratta wars   Western India, however, was still controlled by the powerful Mahrattas, who had defeated the Mughals and stymied British expansion. They had fought wars with the British in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, ceding territory to them but remaining undefeated.
But a final war in 1817-1818, they were crushed and their territory (with one small exception) came under direct British rule.

Burmese wars   Having taken administrative control of Bengal in the east in the mid-18th century, the British pushed northeast, toward the emerging market of China, on the other side of the Himalayas. This meant confronting the Burmese kings who controlled modern-day Assam. In the process, the British and the Burmese fought three wars, at the end of which the British had annexed not only the northeast corner of the subcontinent, but also modern-day Burma.

Sikh wars   At the other corner of the empire, in the far northwest, the British fought two more wars, this time against the Sikhs in the 1840s. A Sikh kingdom began to form in the eighteenth century, when the Mughal Empire disintegrated, and by the early nineteenth century, they were a formidable force. However, they were defeated when they sought to extend their rule into British-held territory. And they were defeated a second time when they joined a revolt against the British by the governor of Multan. In the end, the Punjab and most of modern-day Pakistan were annexed and came under direct British rule.

Afghan wars   Further to the northwest, in modern-day Afghanistan, the British became involved in the 'Great Game.' Aware that the Russians were pushing down from the north and keen to protect their borders, the British sought to gain influence in Afghanistan. Their attempts resulted in two less-than successful wars (1839-1842, 1878-1879). Although the British suffered a humiliating retreat from Kabul in 1842, they achieved their political objective of a neutral Afghanistan

Revolt/Mutiny   In 1857/58 Indian soldiers in the British Bengal army mutinied and others joined the revolt against colonial rulers. As with the earlier revolt at Vellore, the immediate problem lay with military equipment. Soldiers believed that new cartridges (which they had to bite off) were greased with pig-fat, which

was abhorrent to orthodox Muslims and many Hindus. There was also resentment because military ranks did not always match caste hierarchy and because the government appeared to support Christianity within the army. The revolt began in Meerut, but spread to several garrison cities, including Delhi which the rebels held for several months. The revolt was crushed (with the help of Indian soldiers in other regiments), but approximately 1,000 British had been killed and perhaps as many as 20,000 Indians. The slaughter shook the foundations of British colonialism and led to a series of reforms. The uprising, which caught the British by surprise, persuaded London to abolish the East India Company and place India under the British Crown. Indians were also now subject to new penal, criminal and civil codes. Government bureaucracy expanded, and colonialism began to touch life in towns and villages.

Ilbert Bill   In 1883, proposed legislation called the Ilbert Bill sought to amend existing legislation that had exempted Europeans from the jurisdiction of Indian judges. This proposal sparked furious opposition from the British, mainly from planters who feared that Indian judges would not, as British judges had, take a lenient view of their treatment of workers. The British response prompted an Indian backlash that gave impetus to growing anti-colonial sentiment and convinced some that colonialism meant racial discrimination.

Indian National Congress   In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed by a small group of educated elites who were loyal to British rule and merely wanted political reforms within the Empire. Its founders included a British civil servant in India, a Hindu industrialist who served as MP in Parliament in London and a Parsi cotton merchant. During its early years, the Indian National Congress made few headlines, passing only tepid resolutions, but it did provide a national forum for political debate, and events soon catapulted it into a fierce struggle to liberate India from foreign rule.

Dadabhai Naoroji   One founder of the Indian National Congress was Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917). A Parsi businessman, Naoroji spent fifty years living in England, during which time he served in Parliament as the first Indian MP, wrote essays and summited petitions, all with one purpose: to persuade the British government and people that Indians should be granted the same rights as other British subjects. A good example of his argumentative prose is found in *Admission of educated natives into the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1868).

Ramohun Roy   Ramohun Roy (1774-1833) was perhaps the most influential thinker of the early 19th century. A Bengali Brahman, and founder of the Brahmo Samaj movement, he wrote crusading essays in Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali and English. In 1803 he published an essay in Persian, *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin*, arguing the truth of monotheism. From 1823, he edited a Bengali-language newspaper (*Sambad Kaumudi*). In 1829, he published a Sanskrit tract condemning idolatry. In 1823, when the British government passed regulations restricting the press in India, he used his fluent English to write a 'letter' to King George IV in protest.

Swami Vivekananda   Roy's intellectual influence carried straight through the century, touching almost every major figure and culminating in Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), another Bengali Brahman. Times change, however, and if Roy was an enlightenment thinker, Vivekananda was a reforming saint. He was inspired by Sri Ramakrishna and took his vows as a sadhu (wandering monk), but became the spokesperson for international Hinduism after a speech at a conference of world religions in Chicago in 1893. Through speaking tours and published essays, he explained Indian independence as a recovery of its spiritual essence. He advocated abolition of the caste system, worked in famine relief efforts and yet supported industrialisation.

Government

Administration   British India was divided into provinces (earlier known as presidencies) and independent (or princely) states. Provinces, such as Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Northwest and Central, covered about 60% of India and were under direct British Rule. The princely states, which numbered in the hundreds, were under indirect rule, which meant that the Indian ruler remained on his throne, with his retinue and symbols of power, and retained control over internal affairs. The external affairs of the princely states were in the hands of the British government in Calcutta. And in practice, even domestic matters were subject to (often substantial) British influence in the figure of the British Resident. The provinces were run by a Governor (Lt. Governor or Chief Commissioner) advised by a council. Within each province, a district was governed by a Collector (or Commissioner), who usually held executive, legislative and judicial powers. Each province was then sub-divided into *taluk*s (a unit borrowed from the Mughals) for purposes of revenue collection.

Reforms   Major reforms followed in the wake of the revolt in 1857-58. The British Crown in London became a third tier of government, with a Secretary of State for India and a council of advisors. In Calcutta, the Governor-General (later Viceroy) was now answerable to the Secretary of State, although he and his executive

council still held primary responsibility for legislation. In the 1860s, the council became a cabinet and was enlarged to include 12 members serving two-year terms. Half of these members were British officers who oversaw a department, such as revenue, military and finance. The other members of the executive council were British nationals living in India and Indians. In the provinces, legislative powers (which had been taken away in the 1830s) were restored. And in the 1890s, rules for provincial legislatures were changed to include Indian representation.

Indian Civil Service (ICS)   After 1857-58, the administrative officers in India came from the ICS, a newly-created branch of the civil service in Britain. The ICS recruited and trained officers, who were then sent to govern British India. Some were engineers, some were doctors and some were judges, but the most important were the political officers. For their first posting they were sent to a district as an assistant to the Collector and then spent their whole lives in India, climbing up an administrative hierarchy with many rungs. At first, this elite cadre was recruited almost entirely from an 'old-boy' network among the upper-class in Britain. After examinations were introduced in the 1870s, the social base widened. In the 1880s were Indians permitted to join this club and assist in the governance of their own country.

Military   The English East India Company recruited armies to protect its trading stations along the coasts and later its revenue collection inland. Each of the three presidencies (Bengal, Madras and Bombay) had its own army and its own Commander-in-Chief.   All three armies contained British units, with British soldiers and officers, and Indian units, with British officers and Indian soldiers recruited from the so-called 'martial races' (for example, the Sikhs and Gurkhas). After 1857-58, the three separate armies retained their independent status and their own command structure, although they were increasingly under the command of the Commander-in-Chief in Calcutta, who was now a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council. 1895, the three separate armies were amalgamated into the British Indian Army.

Collaboration   Although British rule rested on economic power and military strength, British India was built on local collaboration. Rajas ceded sovereignty in return for a pension; landed groups turned over tax revenues while the District Collector protected their rights; peasants and marginalised groups became soldiers in the British army; merchants and traders sold goods to foreign entrepreneurs. Without local cooperation, the British Raj would not have been possible. Consider the fact that by the end of the century, a country of about 230 million people was governed by about 1,000 officers (95% of whom were British). It was not uncommon for a rural district the size of three English counties to be run by a 25-year-old British officer, a younger fellow countryman and three Indian clerks.

Economy

East India Company   From the beginning of its rule in Bengal in the mid-18th century until is abolition in the mid-19th century, the economic policies of the East India Company were a continuation of its rivals in India. The 'Company' (as it was known) furthered the mercantilist and proto-capitalist institutions and practices of the Mughals and Mahrattas. However, with its increasing penetration of the countryside, it enjoyed an even greater degree of control and command of resources. Even more important, as an international trading power, the Company itself had resources and expertise beyond those of its predecessors.

Deindustrialisation   One of the major effects of British colonialism on the Indian economy was a steady decline in its industrial base. Up until the 1840s, India produced a range of high-quality goods, from textiles to metal-ware. Backed up with modern technology, these and other sectors were exporting goods to Europe via Britain. By the turn of the century, however, the balance of trade shifted from India exporting finished goods to supplying raw materials, mainly raw cotton and jute, to be finished by the steam-driven mills in the north of England. The production of artillery and other tools of war, which had been produced in India, was similarly lost to British-based manufacturers. Indian investors opened up coal mines and iron fields, but these minerals were sent to Britain for processing. In effect, India became a 'colony' supplying the imperial power with raw materials, which were then sold back at high prices.

Agriculture   Although India was on the road to industrialisation, the economy remained fundamentally agrarian. The domestic and foreign demand for rice, indigo, cotton and sugar raised prices in the first half of the century, and yields were boosted by a substantial increase in the acreage under irrigation. However, price fluctuations on the world market and avaricious money lenders badly affected Indian farmers, prompting peasant riots in many regions. Famines were common.

Moreover, in South India, the British introduced a new system of tax collection known as *ryotwari*. In contrast to the old *zamindari* system (in which an official collected tax from a number of villages or landowners), in this new system, thousands of small cultivators (*ryots*) were issued with a title to the land and expected to remit tax on their own. The idea was to create a modern peasantry, modelled on the free yeoman of England, without middlemen and moneylenders. In practice, it led to the impoverishment of many cultivators. First, the tax was not levied on actual crops but on an estimate of the potential yield. Second, it had to be paid in cash. But estimates were often too high, due to unpredictable weather, and the need for ready-cash threw the peasants back into the hands of the money-lenders. As an illustration of the capricious nature of global markets, the demand for Indian cotton shot up suddenly in the 1860s during the American Civil War. When the north blockaded the south's ports and prevented the south's raw cotton from reaching England, the gap was filled by expanding cotton production in South India. Suddenly, by the 1870s, farmers from low-status castes had become middle-class in terms of income.

Railways The modernising economy of 19th-century India relied heavily on an extensive rail network, which by the end of the century was the fourth largest in the world. Intending the railways to facilitate troop movements (in the wake of the 1857-59 revolt) and to stimulate the economy, the government in London invested heavily in this project, although the railways were at first owned by private individuals. Several lines were up and running by the1860s, and by 1900 the total network covered more than 18,000 miles. By then, Indian industrialists and princely states had also invested in rail lines, although on terms less favourable than to British investors. Although Indians gained employment on this massive infrastructure, they benefitted little overall. The locomotives and rolling stock were manufactured in England, and Indians rarely held senior posts in the railway system. In 1900, the railways were nationalised and run by the British government in India.

Society

Colonial penetration Indian society had adjusted to political change before, but most of those changes had been administrative (who is in charge) and fiscal (how is tax collected). British colonialism, however, penetrated to very fabric of local society, disrupting relations between patron and client groups. The increasing power of the District Collector and the courts, for example, meant a different kind of authority and new rules. Whereas previously local struggles were won on the basis of prerogatives and obligations, now they were decided according to the somewhat fuzzy notion of the 'rule of law.'

Social change During the19th century, some of the old rural elites, both Hindu and Muslim, were side-lined by a modern and foreign cadre of administrators. At the same time, a growing professional class of English-educated Indian doctors, engineers, lawyers, bankers, industrialists and scientists claimed more social authority in the towns and cities. Among this new elite, caste barriers eased and mobility increased. A similar phenomenon occurred at the bottom of the social hierarchy, among Untouchables and others who converted to Christianity in large numbers, especially in South India. This, in turn, prompted some Hindus to form associations in order to promote their religion. The volatile interface between Christian converts and their Hindu neighbours is illustrated by a controversy in the first half of the century in South India. When low-caste women, recently converted to Christianity, attempted to wear a breast-cloth or a jacket in imitation of higher-caste women, they met with violence and Christian schools were burned. Eventually, in 1859, the government of Travancore ruled in favour of the low-caste women's right to dress as they chose. Christianity had become a vehicle for social mobility, just as Buddhism had in the classical age and would do so again in the 20th century.

Relation between Indians and the State In the 1830s, social relations between Indians and their British rulers underwent a fundamental shift. Until that decade, the policy of the East India Company had been laissez-faire. Although the British fiercely protected their commercial interests, often by military means, they did not interfere with 'native' institutions or social conventions. Indeed, the relaxed attitude toward social interaction led to many British men assimilating into local life and living as 'white Mughals.' By the 1830s, however, British rule became part of 'civilising' project, with the ambition to educate and reform Indians. This shift to interventionism was signalled by lifting restrictions on missionary work in 1813, by abolishing *sati* (widow self-immolation) in 1829 and by replacing Persian with English as the official language of British India in 1832. The new colonial mission was also advanced by the English Education Act of 1835, which abandoned previous support for traditional Indian education and languages in favour of a British education through the English language.

Public Sphere Another piece of legislation in the same year, the Press Act of 1835, contributed to the emergence of a new social space in British India. The 'public sphere' refers to communication and debate

among citizens outside official governmental forums, especially through the medium of newspapers, journals and books. The largely English-language press had been tightly controlled (to prevent sedition) until the new thinking of the 1830s lifted restrictions and allowed anyone, including Indians, to publish. This opportunity was seized with both hands. Soon Indian publishers were printing books in Tamil, Hindi, Urdu and Bengali, as well as in English. Indian-owned newspapers began somewhat later, but by 1900 there were over 100 dailies or weeklies in print, mostly in Indian languages. British-owned English-language newspapers and publishing houses also contributed to public discourse since after mid-century, the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras produced an English-educated elite who demanded a greater say in social and political affairs. Along with intellectuals in regional languages, they set up civic associations and libraries, published journals and newspapers, and wrote essays and novels that advocated reform.

Culture

Bengal Renaissance From the early 19th century, Bengalis were exposed to colonial institutions, such as the Asiatic Society, the College at Fort William and Christianity, which led to a reassessment of Hindu tradition known as the Bengal Renaissance. Based in Calcutta, it began with the reformer Ramohun Roy (1772-1833) and ended with writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). It was a broad-based movement, encompassing radical social practices (dowry-free marriages), religious reform organisations (the Brahmo Samaj), scientific discoveries (radiology) and literary experimentation (modern novels). The Bengal Renaissance exemplifies the peculiar dynamic of nineteenth-century India: confronted by colonial modernity, India responded by reshaping pre-existing beliefs and practices into something called 'tradition.'

Literature Urdu writers in the first half of the century continued writing in Indo-Persian genres (*qissa/dastan*, *masnavi*, *ghazal*). The decline of Muslim power meant a loss of prestige for Urdu (and Persian), which became the literature of lament. The greatest Urdu poet (and arguably the greatest Indian poet) of the century was Ghalib (1797-1869), who was an aristocrat and a defender of the crumbling Muslim aristocracy. But it was the novel that most expressed the historical shifts in the second half of the century. By 1900, most regional languages had produced a modern novel, but, predictably, those by Bengalis in Calcutta are the most memorable. These writers include Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who later won the Nobel Prize, and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), who captured the spirt of the age with one novel that a song ('Bande Mataram, 'Hail to thee, Mother') that became the rallying cry for Indian independence. Mention should also be made of the first modern Tamil novel written by Rajam Aiyer (1872-1898) in the 1890s. *Kamalampal Carittiram* ('The Fatal Rumour' or 'The Story of Kamalampal', 1893-1895) is a classic story of social reform focusing on the life of a married woman.

Religion Hinduism was reformed both by urban and rural elites, who pulled it in different directions. The Brahmo Samaj, formed in 1828 by English-educated intellectuals in Calcutta, encouraged a monotheistic and rational Hinduism that opposed the worship of idols, child marriage, dowry, *sati* (widow self-immolation) and caste inequality. The opposite trend, to recover old practices, was spearheaded by the Arya Samaj movement in the Gangetic heartland. This reform movement was led by the firebrand Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), who promoted cow protection and denounced both Christianity and Islam. Muslim reform movements centred on two institutions, close to Delhi. The Aligarh movement, led by Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) and based at the Anglo-Oriental College, believed that Islam and modernity were not incompatible. Khan argued that one could be a good Muslim and still have an English education and enlightenment ideas. An alternative approach, centred on the Deoband seminary, taught a version of pure Islam in confrontation with infidels, both Hindu and British. Christianity grew into a major cultural presence in India, especially through the Protestant missions that spread all over the country. They established schools, translated the bible into dozens of languages and eventually developed a distinctive literature, that Indianised Christian story material.

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Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 1999)

David Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India*
    (Cambridge, 2000)
C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*
    (Cambridge, 1990)
Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*
    (Cambridge, 1990)

Discussion questions

1. The Revolt/Mutiny in 1857-58 shook the confidence of the colonial
    rulers and prompted a reconsideration of their policies and goals. Analyse the causes and
    consequences of this crucial event. Include careful descriptions of who actually did revolt, where and
    when. Similarly, pay attention to the reactions among different groups within the colonial state—
    military, government, public opinion in India and in the UK.

2. The Bengal Renaissance was one of the major cultural developments during the 19th century. In some
    respects it was a reaction to colonialism, while from another perspective its causes lay much deeper in
    the past. Write an essay, arguing for one position or the other. First describe the events of the
    'renaissance', the key actors, texts and institutions. Then explain the causes of each in order to support
    your argument.

3. One of the less-well researched aspects of the 19th century is the rise of print. In his book *Imagined
    Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that nationalism in Europe and Asia was only possible when
    the population was united by the new medium of print—books, journals, newspapers—and the public
    sphere it created. In other words, print enabled people to imagine a nation before it actually existed.
    Analyse the role of print in the rise of Indian nationalism.

4. Assess the factors that led to the success of British colonialism in the 19th century. Military victories
    played a part, as did economic collaboration with local merchants and elites, and alliances with rajas.
    Select three key events to illustrate these three factors and analyse the significance of each. Finally,
    compare your conclusion with the scholarly consensus of another brand of European colonialism
    (French, Dutch or Portuguese).

5. Colonialism in India was a complex set of economic, political and cultural encounters between
    Europeans and Indians. Both groups were heterogeneous, with different kinds of actors and
    populations, possessing diverse motivations and resources. Looking at the rise of British colonial rule,
    describe this multiplicity by analysing three or four key events.

<u>Texts</u>

1.   Rammohun Roy (1774-1833) from *English Works*:

'The advocates of idolatry and their misguided followers, over whose opinions prejudice and obstinacy prevail more than good sense and judgment, prefer custom and fashion to the authorities of their scriptures, and therefore continue, under the form of religious devotion, to practise a system which destroys, to the utmost degree, the natural texture of society, and prescribes crimes of the most heinous nature, which even the most savage nations would blush to commit…'

2. Rammohun Roy (1774-1833), from *English Works*:

'I feel persuaded that by separating from the others matters contained in the New Testament, the moral precepts found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and mind of men of different persuasions….This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of one GOD, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of cast, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain, and death...'

3.Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), from *Advice to the People:*

'A man should think about those events which happen in the world and strive to instruct himself from such a study of their consequences. The turmoil of violence which happened was only a punishment for the ungratefulness on the Hindustanis [inhabitants of India]…In Hindustan, people are not at all accustomed to learn about former times from the facts of history, nor from reading books. It is for this reason that people are not acquainted with the injustices and oppression that used to take place in the days of past rulers. Whether rich or poor, a person in those times could never be at ease. If you had been acquainted with the injustices and excesses of those past days, you have appreciated the value of English rules and given thanks to God…'

4. B.G. Tilak (1856-1920), from *Writings and Speeches:*

'We have perceived one fact, that the whole of this administration, which is carried on by a handful of Englishmen, is carried on with our assistance. We are all in Subordinate service. This whole government is carried on with our assistance and they try to keep us in ignorance of our power…The point is to have the entire control in our hands. I want to have the key of my house…Self-government is our goal. We want a control over our administrative machinery. We don't want to become clerks and remain clerks…'

Part IX : EARLY 20th CENTURY

Overview

The first half of the twentieth century was dominated by the rising tide of nationalism that culminated in Indian Independence in 1947. In 1900 few people in India had even heard of M.K. Gandhi, who honed his philosophy while studying in London and practicing law in South Africa. 50 years later, his non-violent, mass-movement, village-based politics had transformed a colony into the world's biggest democracy. However, although he was undoubtedly the most influential figure, Gandhi was only one of many people who shaped this extraordinary story. And all of them, in turn, were influenced by events beyond their control.

Events

Partition of Bengal   One of those events was the partition of Bengal Province in 1905 into a Hindu west and a Muslim east. The stated reason for this division was administrative—such a large territory, about the size of France, was ungovernable—but the consequences were political. Bengali Hindus in the west feared that they would lose power once they were bundled into a province that included other Hindus from Bihar. On the other hand, Muslims in the east generally welcomed the idea of governing themselves free from the domination of Hindu Calcutta. This ill-considered partition led to a greater political awareness among Muslims and to a widening of the communal divide when Muslims and Hindus voted in separate elections in 1909. The error was recognised, and in 1911 Bengal was reunited, only to be divided again after Independence in 1947.

Muslim League   The Muslim League was formed in 1906 but at first failed to gain a foothold among Muslims. Instead, most Muslim elites stayed within Congress and worked to achieve moderate aims. That changed during WWI when Britain joined the fight against the Ottoman Empire, considered the Caliphate by India's Sunni majority. Soon the Muslim League began to call for Indian independence, but only in 1940, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, did the League announce its plan for an independent nation of Pakistan.

Delhi becomes capital   In December 1911, King George V came to Delhi to be enthroned as Emperor of India at a durbar, or royal ceremony, redolent of the Mughals. At this royal conclave of rulers, he announced that the capital would be moved from Calcutta to Delhi and that a magnificent 'new' Delhi would be built. The Durbar was a grand celebration of imperialism, with maharajas in sumptuous dress, bedecked elephants and opulent carriages processing by the Emperor and Empress. But the decision to move the capital was motivated by a desire to punish Calcutta as a centre of nationalist agitation and to locate government in a more neutral city.

WWI   When Britain entered the war in 1914, it sent more than a million Indian soldiers to Mesopotamia and Europe. About 75,000 died, and many more were wounded, fighting for an empire in which, it was pointed out, they were second-class subjects. Many Muslims opposed the war because it was fought, in part, against the Ottoman Empire and the Caliph, regarded by India's majority Sunnis as the successor to the prophet Muhammad. At home, farmers suffered higher land tax, which was necessary in order to finance the expanded Indian army, now almost two million strong. These experiences, on the front and at home, politicised many Indians and gave them a clearer perspective of India's place in the world.

Gandhi arrives   In 1915, a young lawyer named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, where he had worked for two decades on behalf of Indians seeking greater civil rights. In Africa, he devised his method of non-violent resistance to oppression, which he called *satyagraha* ('truth-force'). Returning to India, he participated in local movements by farmers and textile workers. Slowly he worked his way into Congress circles and, although he held no office, was soon leading a mass movement all across India. His gifts were many. He knew how to pick his battles and how to project an image. The salt march, the spinning wheel, the loin-cloth, shawl and cap—all these symbolised humility in contrast with the greed of the West. He was truly the 'father of the nation', but he was not without his critics or faults. The most damning criticism was his acceptance of discrimination within the caste system, specifically his failure to condemn practices that excluded Untouchables from entering temples and required them to eat separately.

Amritsar massacre   Among the many events that contributed to anti-colonialism, none was more decisive than the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, when at least 400 unarmed Indians were shot dead during a peaceful protest. Anger was simmering all over India when that same year the British extended the Rowlatt Act, introduced during the war to crack down on seditious activities but also used to curb lawful protest. Protestors in Amritsar joined a crowd of about 15,000 gathered in an enclosed space to celebrate a religious festival. Few people knew that martial law had been declared, and when General Dwyer ordered his men to fire, hundreds

were killed—we will never know the exact number—an act of barbarity that recruited many thousands to the nationalist cause. The massacre, which came to symbolise the injustice and brutality of colonial rule, was not forgotten. In London, in 1940, an Indian nationalist shot and killed the man believed to have approved General Dwyer's action.

Non-cooperation   As a response to the Amritsar massacre, Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement in 1920, which created a disciplined and non-violent army of protestors. Non-cooperation meant picketing liquor shops, boycotting British goods and shops, and wearing handspun cotton (*khadi*) instead of clothing manufactured in Britain and sent back to India for sale. The idea was to liberate India by refusing to participate in an unjust and immoral economic system, without raising a hand in anger. It was a masterstroke of political strategy, captivating the imagination of the country, catching the British off guard and hurting them where it mattered most. The movement lasted two years and was only halted by Gandhi when a confrontation between police and protestors left two protestors and 22 police dead.

Salt march   Gandhi launched his second major campaign in 1930 with the famous salt march. He was responding to the British failure to grant India dominion status (like Canada and New Zealand), despite repeated calls from the Indian National Congress. There was also widespread anger at the Simon Commission appointed in 1928 to study government practices and recommend reforms. The fact that the commission included no Indians led to anti-British demonstrations wherever the commission travelled on its fact-finding tour. Sensing the mood, Gandhi announced a campaign of civil disobedience, an escalation of tactics from the non-cooperation campaign. He chose the unpopular tax on salt making and marched 240 miles from his ashram to the west coast, where he made salt and broke the law by not paying tax. Gandhi's arrest, along with thousands of others, had a profound effect on the general public, and civil disobedience broke out all over India.

Quit India movement   Following inconclusive negotiations between Gandhi and the British throughout the 1930s, the Second World War brought things to a head. At first, however, there was confusion. Gandhi seemed to support the war effort, while most Congress leaders (including Nehru) did not. Why, they asked, should we fight for freedom elsewhere when we are not given freedom at home? Then Jinnah and the Muslim League issued their proclamation of a separate nation of Pakistan. Meanwhile, another man, Subhas Chandra Bose had organised an army to fight alongside the Japanese against British imperialism in Asia. The British rejected an offer from Congress to support the war in return for a guarantee of independence after it was over. A high-profile mission was sent from London to find common ground but it failed. The deadlock ended in 1942 when Gandhi reversed his decision and declared that he would not support a war while India remained a colony. He launched his third major campaign, the 'Quit India' movement. Within hours of his speech calling for mass protest, Congress leaders were arrested and put in prison, where they remained until the end of the war. The Quit India movement, however, did not command mass support. The Muslim League, the princely states and many businessmen continued to support the war.

Post-war   During the war, if not before, London realised that India was ungovernable by a foreign power and made plans for a hasty retreat. In 1945, the British cobbled together a Delhi government of Congress and Muslim League ministers, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. The Muslim League won overwhelming support in elections of 1946, but Congress refused to accept their demand for a state of Pakistan. Communal violence erupted across the country, leaving an estimated 12,000-15,000 people dead.

Independence and partition   Finally, after decades of protest and debate, thousands of deaths and prolonged upheaval, India became independent on 15 August 1947. The celebrations were marred by the fact that British India had been partitioned, and Pakistan was born on 14 August the same year. The large provinces of Punjab and Bengal had to be cut in two and parcelled out between the two countries. Moreover, Pakistan itself was a nation divided, into east and west. The line dividing India and Pakistan (east and west), drawn on a map by politicians, cut through the social fabric of British India, instigating communal violence on an unseen scale. Some 180,000 people (mostly Muslims) died in Punjab. 6 million Muslims and 4.5 million Hindus became refugees. In 1948, Gandhi was murdered by a right wing Hindu for being 'too soft' on Muslims.

People

Tilak   Among the many people who played a major part in India's independence was Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920). Indeed, in some ways he paved the way for Gandhi's movement. In the late 19th century, Tilak began to publish fierce criticisms of British colonialism in two Marathi-language newspapers. He also organised a populist movement focused on Sivaji, the 17th-century Mahratta leader, and the god Ganesh. In

1905, following the partition of Bengal, Tilak experimented with the tactics of boycotting British goods and non-violent protest. In 1914, believing that the Indian National Congress was too moderate, Tilak founded the Home Rule League which campaigned for *swaraj*, or self-rule.

Sri Aurobindo   Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghose, 1872-1950) contributed another dimension to the nationalist cause. If Tilak was a political pragmatist, Aurobindo was a mystical patriot. Until 1910, Aurobindo participated in the nationalist movement at the highest level before retreating to the French colony of Pondicherry on the southeast coast to escape another term in a British jail. Even his early political essays reveal a spiritualism not dissimilar to Gandhi's. Indeed, he wrote a series of essays as early as 1907 outlining the philosophical foundations of passive resistance to aggression. In other early prose writings, he argued passionately for the revival of Hinduism in the service of nationalism. Later essays moved away from temporal problems and urged his followers to act for world peace as 'instruments of the Divine Will.'

Jinnah   If Gandhi had an alter-ego, it was Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876?-1948), the founder and first Governor-General of Pakistan. Jinnah was born in Karachi, the eldest of seven children of a prosperous merchant. He was educated at a Christian school and Bombay University and was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn, London, at age 19. Back in Bombay he built a highly successful practice as a barrister and entered politics in alignment with moderate Congress leaders. When the Muslim League was established in 1906, Jinnah's conservative views kept him within Congress. Only in 1913, when he was convinced that Muslim League was dedicated to Indian independence, did he join that organisation. From that point on, he was the protector Muslim rights in the nationalist cause, gaining the important but divisive concession of separate Muslim constituencies in elections. Although he disagreed with Gandhi's tactics, Jinnah worked hard to main communal unity. At the Muslim League conference in 1940, he supported the resolution to form a separate nation of Pakistan. That vision was realised in 1947, and he died a year later.

B.R. Ambedkar   Gandhi spoke for Hindus, Jinnah for Muslims, but what of the low-castes and Untouchables? Their champion was B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) one of the most extraordinary men in this period of remarkable people. Born into an untouchable caste, he went on to gain a PhD from Columbia University, studied law and science in London and returned to India in 1923. He made his mark on the nationalist movement in the 1930s, when he broke ranks with Gandhi and argued the case for the millions of Harijans in India. While others saw Hinduism as the antidote to colonialism, Ambedkar argued that Hinduism was itself as oppressive as foreign rule. He led a neo-Buddhist movement, encouraging low-castes to convert to a religion without caste. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism and died in the same year.

E.V. Ramaswami Naicker   Another remarkable figure of this half-century was the firebrand E.V. Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1973), known to Tamils as Periyar ('The Great One'). Although born a high-caste Hindu, he, like Ambedkar, opposed Gandhi on the question of caste. But Naicker's protest was on behalf of all non-BrahminTamils, not just Untouchables. He protested endlessly against what he saw as the historical domination of Sanskrit/Hindi and Brahmins over the language and people of South India. His 'rationalist' movement attacked superstition and idolatry, while his 'self-respect' movement aimed to restore dignity. He also championed women's rights in the form of 'self-respect marriages', which were conducted without a Brahmin priest. He is still the guiding spirit behind every political party that has held power in Tamil Nadu.

Government

Starting point   At the beginning of the twentieth century, the government of British India, based in Calcutta, consisted of a Governor-General and his Executive Council of 10-16 members, a few of whom were Indian. In the provinces, a governor held considerable authority, subject to an advisory council. However, none of these office-holders was elected, and real power lay with the government in London, who appointed and recalled the governor-general and governors. In the course of the next fifty years, this structure would be amended again and again, until Indians elected by Indians gained control of their government.

Morley-Minto Reforms   Under pressure from growing nationalist sentiment, the government in London passed the Indian Councils Act 1909, which recommended the changes known as the Morley-Minto reforms. These reforms increased 'native' participation in the advisory councils in Calcutta and the provinces. More radical was the fact that some Indians would be elected, rather than appointed as before. Indians were also permitted to discuss budgetary matters for the first time, and other Indian institutions (universities, district committees and landlord groups) were empowered to suggest laws. A controversial element of these reforms was the concession to Muslims for a certain number of seats in provincial legislatures to be reserved for them. This created 'communal' representation, which would bedevil the politics of India until Independence in 1947.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms   The growing clamour for independence and the blow to the empire delivered by WWI softened British resistance to self-government and resulted in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. These reforms, which were announced in the Government of India Act 1919, promised that Britain would promote the 'the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to ultimate self-government.' In order to achieve this, greater powers were conceded to legislative councils at both the central and provincial levels. The changes for the province were the more fundamental and initiated a system called 'dyarchy,' or 'dual rule.' Each provincial legislative council had two sections. One section consisted of councillors, or ministers, appointed as before by London, who were responsible for 'hard-core' departments, such as finance, army, home affairs and law. The other section consisted of Indian ministers chosen by the Governor from the elected members of the council, and these Indian ministers oversaw the 'nation-building' departments, such as agriculture, education and public works.

Government of India Act 1935   The political change initiated by these reforms culminated in the Government of India Act 1935, which laid down the basis for Indian independence. Now the provincial legislatures were given real autonomy, more seats would be elected and dyarchy was abolished—all ministers would now be chosen from the Indian members who had been elected to the legislature. Provincial governors would still be appointed, but they were to accept recommendations from Indian ministers, except in cases where legislation would threaten civil disturbance or the rights of minorities. At the level of central government, the act called for a 'Federation of India', comprised of British provinces and princely states. It also introduced dyarchy at the federal level, with some departments given to Indian ministers and others to British ministers. The central legislature was given more seats (including some reserved for women, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians), and the franchise was extended. In addition, Burma was separated from India and given its own colonial government. As a half-way house between colonialism and nationalism, the 1935 act was unwieldy and satisfied neither party. However, this complex machinery was put in place for the provincial elections in 1937, a sort of dress rehearsal for democracy, which resulted in a resounding and unpredicted victory for Congress.

Election of 1945   The 1935 act served as framework for governing India until Independence in 1947. Although that legislation had foreseen a 'federation of India' governed by an expanded central legislature of 372 elected members, the princely states refused to agree to this plan. As a result, the general election in December 1945 (the last before Independence) covered only 102 seats. Congress again won a majority, and Nehru was installed as leader of an interim government in New Delhi. However, the Muslim League won in all the reserved Muslim constituencies and consolidated its political power. Partition became a certainty.

Economy

The Indian economy grew at a rate of about 1% each year during the period, but so did the population, with the result that per capita income remained static. War brought windfall profits to India's emerging capitalist class both in 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. Textile factories supplied uniforms, jute mills provided tents and sandbags, while mechanised workshops won handsome contracts for rifles and field artillery. Many of these companies were British-owned, but Parsi, Gujarati and Marwari, businessmen, such as the Tata Iron and Steel Company, also took a hefty slice of the economic pie. Indian capitalists reaped further profits from the increased demand for locally-produced goods as part of the boycott of foreign goods. This trend was enhanced by the Great Depression, during which Indian-based textile production overtook imports from England, and the same was true for sugar, cement and paper. Employment in many of these industries rose steadily, creating a new managerial middle-class. Among the losers were the artisans, from weavers to carpenters, whose handicrafts could not compete with factory-produced items. The wages of factory workers remained stagnant, and the feeble unions had little success with strikes and boycotts. In the countryside, agricultural prices slid sharply during this period, and poverty, exacerbated by the depression, led to famines. The worst famine struck in 1943 in Bengal, when war-time hoarding and an influx of refugees from Japan-occupied Burma led to foot shortages, while cyclones and tidal waves destroyed crops. In the end, it is estimated that three million people perished.

Society

Change and stasis   The political upheaval of the period created opportunities that were seized by some sections of Indian society. First, the increased participation by Indians in central and provincial government led to the emergence of a political elite, mainly comprised of high-caste Hindus and high-status Muslims. In South India, Brahmins filled the new administrative jobs from top to bottom. At the same time, the establishment of separate Hindu and Muslim constituencies contributed to the already widening gap between the two groups. Economic opportunities during the two wars produced a class of capitalist captains of industry, again among

high-status groups in both Hindu and Muslim communities. Despite mass movements on their behalf, the rural poor, urban labourers and Untouchables drifted further from the prosperity at the top. The mass movements that shook the country galvanised caste identities at all levels, as politics mobilised people on the basis of perceived shared interests. All in all, the reformist agenda of enlightened colonialism, with its aim of producing 'brown Englishmen,' floundered on the hard reality of casteism.

Vaikom temple   A telling illustration of this reality is provided by what is known as the Vaikom temple controversy. In a small town of that name in the state of Kerala, a temple continued the old practice of barring Untouchables not only from entering the temple but also from walking on nearby streets. In 1924, the temple became a target for social reformers, including Gandhi and Ramaswami Naicker. After months of fasting, public protests and speeches, the ban was lifted on the streets but not for entering the temple. It was a compromise that compromised Gandhi's commitment to caste equality.

Culture

Religion   The hardening of the communal divide between Hindus and Muslims, enacted in legislation, practiced in separated constituencies and cemented in the creation of Pakistan, fed the politicisation of religious identities. Islam, which had suffered the ignominy of Mughal decline, now felt like a beleaguered minority in India, and it suffered further when many Islamic scholars chose to live in Pakistan.
Hinduism was given a makeover by Gandhi's non-violence, even though that principle was actually developed within Buddhism. Buddhism itself, more or less irrelevant for many centuries, experienced a minor recovery as low-caste political movements (led by Ambedkar and Naicker) drew inspiration from Buddhism's historical critique of the caste system. Christianity, energised by Protestant evangelism, spread rapidly in the northeast, while maintaining a major presence in costal South India.

Film   Amid the political turmoil, Indian cinema blossomed. After it began in Bombay in 1896, money poured in to finance studios, build cinemas and support companies that toured films all across the country. British-owned and run, these touring companies showed mainly sports, news, travel and topical documentaries. The first Indian feature was 'Raja Harischandra' in 1913. Based on a well-known mythological story, it started a genre that has never lost its appeal. By the 1920s, only 15% of the hundred or so films made each year were produced by Indians. The advent of sound in the 1930s brought not just the 'talkies' but also the songs that are central to the success of Indian films. Regional cinema also developed in this decade, especially Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bengali films. By 1950, Indians owned most of the industry and were producing the films that would later become classics.

Literature   Fiction in Urdu was raised to a new level by the storytelling art of Sadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955). Unusual among fiction writers in India at this time, he specialised in the short story, and like Chekhov and Maupassant, he told stories with a fine eye for detail and character motivation. Some critics condemned his apparent fascination with violence and sex, but others praised his stories featuring prostitutes and pimps for their unsentimental humanity. Other major writers were heavily influenced by the nationalist cause, although they looked beyond ideologies and slogans and focused on everyday lives of ordinary people. The social realism and reformist agenda of the period are forcefully portrayed in the Hindi fiction of Premchand (1880-1936), who published a dozen novels and more than 300 short stories. His output was uneven, sometimes falling prey to sentimentalism, but he created characters with depth and emotional complexity. His masterpiece was *Godan* ('The Gift of a Cow'*)*, in which the main character is a villager whose purchase of a cow leads to debt, deception and his own death.
Bengali novelists of the period include the Nobel Prize winner Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterji (1876-1938) and Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (or Banerjee,1894-1950). All three wrote complex, psychological novels, often exploring the world of middle-class women, which was a new trend. Perhaps the most famous is Bandyopadhyay's 1936 novel *Pather Panchali* (the first part of *The Apu Trilogy)*, which was later adapted into an internationally-acclaimed film by Satyajit Ray. Tamil fiction during this period produced the Manikkodi writers (named after an eponymous literary magazine in the 1930s), including B.S. Ramiah, Chellappa, Mauni and Putumaipittan.

Discussion/questions

1. Analyse three specific events that played a key role in the growth of nationalism. Consider, for instance, the Partition of Bengal in 1905, , the Amritsar Massacre in 1919, the Simon Commission of 1928, the Salt March of 1930, the Government of India Act 1935 and the Second World War. After analysing three

events, identify their common elements and make an argument for those elements as the fundamental elements of nationalism in India.

2. Although Gandhi is justifiably called the 'Father of the nation,' other figures played a key role in achieving independence. These include Tilak, Ambedkar and Naicker. Assess the contribution of each of these men, who often clashed with Gandhi over principles and tactics.

3. The Great War (1914-1918) had a profound effect on India and its soldiers serving abroad. The soldiers wrote thousands of letters home, and some soldiers later wrote memoirs of their experiences. Some of these writings are archived in the British Library and available online. Those documents, plus photographs and books (see Basu below, for example), offer us a chance to understand this forgotten story.

Reading

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jaylal (eds.), *Modern South Asia: History,*
          Culture, Political Economy (Routledge, 2011)
Judith M Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*
          (Oxford, 1994)
Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge, 1996)
Ainsle T. Embree, *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol II* (2nd ed.) (Columbia,
          1988)
 B. R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India* 2nd ed. (Cambridge,
          2013)
M.K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*
          (ed. by Mahadev Desai) (Dover, 1990)
Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Yale, 1991)
Shrasbasni Basu, *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the*
          Western Front 1914-18 (Bloomsbury 2015)

Texts

1.   Gandhi (1869-1948), on himself, from *Collected Works*:

'I am but a poor struggling soul yearning to be wholly good—wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed, but ever failing to reach this ideal which I know to be true…It is a painful limb, but the pain of it is a positive pleasure to me. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next…'

2. Gandhi, on self-reliance, from *Collected Works*:

'Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world…Ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit…'

3. From the writings of B.R. Ambedkar

'In the Hindu religion, one can[not] have freedom of speech. A Hindu must surrender his freedom of speech. He must act according to the Vedas. If the Vedas do not support the actions, instructions must be sought from the Smritis, and if the Smritis fail to provide any such instructions, he must follow in the footsteps of the great men. He is not supposed to reason. Hence, so long as you are in the Hindu religion, you cannot expect to have freedom of thought.'

4. From the speeches of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker

'Decide for yourselves as to what you should think of those who say there is God, that he is the preserver of justice and that he is the protector of all, even after seeing the practice of untouchability in the form of man being banned from human sight and contact, from walking in the streets, from entering the temples and drawing water from a tank, is rampant in the land.'

Part X : LATE 20th CENTURY

Overview

Modern India is a nation of contrasts. Once plagued by rural poverty and dependent on foreign aid, it is now an economic powerhouse and a leader in high-tech industrial innovation. Gandhi's vision of a rural republic was bulldozed by Nehru's policy of state-planned industrialisation, a 'green revolution' redressed an imbalance in grain trade, and recent economic reforms have stimulated free-market capitalism. Despite these and other achievements in literacy and health, India's enormous population outstrips its ability to provide basic services. Every year programmes, policies and political parties arise to combat social deprivation, yet poverty remains a dispiriting reality. While a strong central government is enshrined in Constitution, regional political parties hold the trump card, and peripheral regions, such as Kashmir and the northeast, are still not fully integrated into the nation. An increasing proportion of the country is urban, educated and English-speaking, yet caste and religion continue to play a major role in politics and society. The Constitution of 1950 announced that India was a secular nation, but the political landscape is now dominated by Hindu nationalism and Islamic rhetoric. Despite these problems, statistics tell a story of greater prosperity and well-being.   Over the period 1950 to 2016, the population grew from 360 million to 1.3 billion, per capita income increased from about $600 to $1500 and life expectancy rose from 39 to 67 years.

Events

Kashmir   The princely state of Jammu-Kashmir, with a Muslim majority population ruled by a Hindu maharaja, was always going to be a problem in an Independent India. At Independence in August1947, the Maharaja had not agreed to join India. In October, Pakistani troops and local Muslim militia began military action to secure Kashmir for Pakistan, initiating the first of four wars between Pakistan and India. Facing occupation by Pakistan, the Maharaja called on India, who only responded when the Maharaja committed Kashmir to the Union. The war rumbled on until 1 January 1949, when both sides accepted a UN ceasefire and a disputed Line of Control, which gave India two-thirds of Kashmir and Pakistan one-third. The UN resolution also called for a plebiscite to determine the future of Kashmir, but that has never taken place. A second war was fought in 1965, and the issue remains unresolved, with sporadic military action and fatalities almost every year.

1962 war with China   The fledging Indian state also faced a threat on its northern and northeast frontiers with China. This Himalayan border (the McMahon Line) between India and China had been proposed in 1913 by Henry McMahon at a conference in Simla between British, Tibetan and Chinese officials. The Tibetans accepted the line drawn on a map, but the Chinese did not. The unratified border, lying in distant, unpopulated terrain, did not cause problems until the Tibetan uprising in 1959, when India gave the Dalai Lama refuge and began to extend its military presence up to the Himalayas. China responded to this 'cartographic' aggression by sending troops over the Himalayas and down into what is now Ladakh in the west and Arunachal in the east. Armed conflict was minimal, however, and China unilaterally withdrew after one month. Nevertheless, the border remains unresolved, and although both countries have agreed to a peaceful settlement, there is now 'water war.' North India's major rivers have their source in China, and Beijing is planning a series of dams that would restrict their flow into India.

1971 war with Pakistan   India fought another war with Pakistan as part of the Bangladesh war of liberation. When East Pakistan decided to break away from West Pakistan in March 1971, the Pakistani army (from the west) began to attack East Pakistan. As the civilian casualties and reported atrocities mounted, millions of people, including many Hindus, fled East Pakistan and crossed the border into India. India finally entered the war in December, with air, ground and naval attacks in both east and west Pakistan. A short 13 days later, Pakistan surrendered, and Bangladesh became an independent nation. This was a major diplomatic victory for India, and perhaps the high point of Indira Gandhi's premiership.

1975 Emergency   Four years later, though, she had sunk to new low with allegations of corruption and politically-motivated repression.
In 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been found guilty of electoral malpractice, and her 1971 victory had been declared unconstitutional. Facing a wave of popular protests and attacks in the media, she persuaded the President to declare a state of emergency under the appropriate clause in the Constitution. 'The Emergency' then allowed her to declare Presidents Rule in various states and use repressive laws to stop her opponents.

Nehru dynasty Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), his daughter Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) and her son Rajiv Gandhi (1944-1991) held the position of prime minister from 1947 to 1989 (excluding 1977-1980). This family-led domination of the Congress Party was a direct legacy of the Independence movement, in which Nehru had been a leading figure and for which he served a long prison sentence. Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India and led the Congress Party to four electoral victories. However, he broke decisively with Gandhi's vision of 'handicraft India' and supported heavy industry, manufacturing and infrastructure, including India's nuclear weapons programme. He guided India through the wars with Pakistan, the Chinese invasion of 1962 and the Cold War. Although India leaned toward the Soviet Union (in part because China supported Pakistan), Nehru himself was more pro-western, and in any case became the leader of the non-alignment movement. He was succeeded by his daughter, Indira Gandhi, who continued her father's policies of non-alignment and technological advance. She also led the 'Green revolution' that turned India from an importer into an exporter of food. Her heavy-handed policies, especially during the Emergency and in a programme of population control, earned her enemies. She was assassinated in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguard, in retaliation for the military assault on Sikh separatists taking refuge in a Sikh temple. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, was then appointed Prime Minister and served for five years until the Congress Party was defeated in the general election of 1989. His term of office was marred by financial scandal and political in-fighting, although he did initiate liberalisation reforms and support the high-tech industry. His most controversial act was to send Indian troops into the Sri Lankan civil war fought between the government and a Tamil separatist organisation. Although the Indian troops were technically 'peace-keeping,' they were perceived by the Tamils as supporting the status quo. As a consequence, in 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a Tamil woman suicide bomber.

Government

1950 Constitution The Constitution of 1950, based largely on the Government of India Act 1935, established a British-style parliamentary system with a strong centre. Nehru's wish that the constitution be drawn up by a popularly elected assembly was thwarted by Vallabhbhai Patel, who argued for a far less representative body chosen by a limited electorate. This explains why major proposed changes to the 1935 scheme were not passed, such as having provincial (later state) governors elected rather than appointed by the centre. Indeed, the constitution reaffirmed that the government in New Delhi was empowered to replace state governments whenever it wished. The 1947-48 war with Pakistan over Kashmir, concurrent with the drafting of the Constitution, undoubtedly influenced these provisions. The 270-page document also guaranteed freedom of speech, religion and association, plus rights to property, education and the preservation of minority cultures. In this civil rights agenda, Nehru was opposed by Patel but supported by B. R. Ambedkar, the champion of Untouchables/Dalits . But even the combined support of Nehru and Ambedkar was unable to prevent Patel and his conservative allies from retaining colonial-era Hindu and Muslim law codes, instead of more generic human rights. Those rights, it was feared, would lead to demands from low castes and women, which would destabilise the country. Ambedkar resigned from the constitutional assembly in protest, while Nehru decided to achieve reforms through legislation rather than the Constitution.

Administration The government of India is divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches. In reality, however, power lies in the legislative branch with parliament and its ministers. The legislative branch has two houses: the Lok Sabha (People's Assembly) and the Rajya Sabha (Royal Assembly). Members of the Lok Sabha, commonly called MPs, are popularly elected from 552 constituencies in the 29 states, plus 20 MPs from Union Territories and 2 MPs from the Anglo-Indian community. As in the UK, the Lok Sabha makes laws, which the Rajya Sabha can amend. The Prime Minister is elected from the Lok Sabha and choses his or her cabinet of ministers. The President, increasingly a ceremonial role, appoints justices to the Supreme Court and the high courts, as well as state governors. The 245 members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the state and territorial legislatures, although the President can appoint 12 members, drawn broadly from the arts and business. The Supreme Court in New Delhi has appellate and advisory jurisdictions, as well as original jurisdiction in any case between states or between a state and the central government. Each state has a high court, and each district within a state has a district court. The administrative structure of each state government resembles that of the central government.

Accession The strong central government built into the Constitution was a mechanism intended to neutralise the threat of fragmentation latent within an independent India. The day after Independence, the government of India only controlled less than half of the territory and about two-thirds of its population; the princely states had the rest. Most of these 562 princely states acceded to the union immediately, but some of the most powerful needed persuasion. Two of these were Kashmir (Muslim-majority population ruled by a Hindu) and Hyderabad (Hindu-majority population ruled by a Muslim). Military threats in 1948 persuaded Hyderabad, while Kashmir

joined the same year after Delhi agreed to send troops to repel an invasion from Pakistan. Travancore and Cochin, a large state in the south, acceded in 1949, followed in the same year by the equally important Rajputana princely states. In the end, all the princely states were integrated into the fourteen provinces that comprised the Union. Goa, once a Portuguese colony and then a Union territory, was annexed in 1961.

Regionalism   Despite the relative success of accession, the authority of the central government has been undercut by the political regionalism that has fragmented the country. In particular, the 15 or so major language communities (each more than 5 million strong) became the basis for powerful regional parties, who demanded more autonomy and in some cases threatened to secede from the Union. This was the 'balkanisation' the Nehru and his allies had tried to overt with a strong centralised state. Nehru did, however, accept the validity of language defining an administrative unit, and he oversaw a process of dividing the large provinces into small states. In 1956, the province of Madras was cut up into four states: Madras (later Tamil Nadu) for Tamil, Mysore (later Karnataka) for Kannada, Andhra Pradesh (later split into Telangana and Andhra) for Telugu, and Kerala for Malayalam. In 1960, the province of Bombay was split into Maharashtra for Marathi and Gujarat for Gujarati.   More recently, several more new states have been carved out of existing ones, this time based more on ethnicity than language. In the northeast, however, several separatist movements and armed insurgencies remain active.

Bharatiya Janata Party   The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party ('The People of India Party'), or the BJP, is revelatory of the recent political history of India. Congress, with Gandhi's charisma and Nehru's skill, held the country together during the crucial decades that followed Independence. The post-war consensus, however, broke down in the 1980s (coincidental with the end of the Cold War). The command economy with its Soviet-style five-year plans and state-owned utilities, as well as the colonial-era political system with its opaque bureaucracy and patrician elite, were not fit for purpose. Congress lost its spell, and a new populism filled the vacuum. Rejecting the secularism of the westernised Nehru dynasty, the BJP and its allied organisations tapped into the Hindu nationalism that had been there all along. India was now a 'Hindu nation' that celebrated its ancient history and religion. L.K. Advani, leader of the BJP in 1989 elections, toured the country dressed as the mythic hero Rama riding in a (jeep decorated as a) chariot. It is not coincidental that in the previous year tens of millions of Indians watched 78 hour-long episodes of theTV adaptation of the Ramayana. Nor is it surprising that a few years later, in 1992, BJP supporters destroyed a 16th century mosque that had been built over a Hindu temple. Anti-Muslim riots ensued all over India, leaving thousands dead.

Economy

Industrialisation   The economic boost supplied by the Second World War helped Nehru's post-Independence strategy of industrialisation to be a moderate success. With the Gandhian legacy of excluding foreign-made goods, the imposition of high import duties and licensing intended to restrict foreign-owned companies, plus a little aid from the Soviet Union, India's industrial output in iron and steel, mining, chemicals and electricity were impressive. By the 1960s, industrial output was growing by 7% a year and per capita income by 4%, although a population growth of 2% cut into those gains. These trends have continued up until 2016.

Agriculture   Agricultural production grew by 25% under the first five - year plan of 1951– 6, and by 20% under second (1956– 61). But in the 1960s, after failed monsoons, droughts and flooding, India turned hat in hand to the United States for grain imports. At the same time, new high-yield varieties of wheat were planted in north India, followed by similar experiments with rice in south India. The results of this 'Green Revolution' were remarkable, and grain production doubled in two decades. But the gains were unevenly distributed regionally, with the Punjab and Tamil Nadu the big winners, and socially, with landlords benefitting more than cultivators. In the 21st century, grain production has continued to rise, and most economists are now confident that India will remain self-sufficient.

Liberalisation   Although protectionist policies and the lack of foreign competition had a beneficial effect on growth in the first decades after Independence, by the 1980s, the lack of innovation and creeping stagnation were all too evident. In the early 1990s, after 50 years of isolation, India accepted an IMF loan of $1.4 billion, which required it to embrace global capitalism. In return, India enacted a slew of radical reforms, selling off nationalised industries and utilities, removing currency and banking regulations, abolishing import tariffs, encouraging foreign investment and launching an Indian stock market. Almost immediately the annual growth rate rose from around 2% to 7%, a level it has maintained ever since. A redistribution of economic growth also occurred, shifting away from the old centres in north India, such as Calcutta, Bombay and Ahmedabad, to southern cities, such as Bangalore, Hyderabad and Madras, especially in software and other high-tech industries.

Prosperity and poverty   The creation of wealth in late 20th-century and early 21st-century India has been truly remarkable. Billionaires are a dime a dozen, and the urban professional class enjoys a standard of living comparable to that in other major world capitals. As ever, though, wealth distribution remains uneven, and today one in six Indians lives in poverty (less than $2 a day). More than 100 million Indians own a television, but nearly a third of the adult population remain illiterate. Poverty eradication has been a government objective ever since the 1970s, when Indira Gandhi limited the amount of land a person could own and attempted to halt population growth. More recently, various governments have implemented programmes targeting primary education, health, food supply and rural electrification. Whether these measures will overcome endemic patterns of uneven income distribution is not a question anyone can yet answer. Certainly the 'black' economy, payments in cash to avoid taxes, is rampant, and in late 2016 the government withdrew high-denomination notes in order to curb it.

Society

Caste and class   Upheavals in the political, economic and technological spheres appear only to have strengthened traditional social relations. Although the link between caste and occupation is not as ironclad as it once was, the fragmentation into language-states and the rise of powerful regional parties has contributed to the consolidation of caste identities. In a rapidly globalising nation, the localised community of a caste offers security and stability. At the same time, caste is a vehicle for mobilising political support and economic cooperation. In the 1950s and 1960s, regionally dominate lower caste groupings succeeded in lobbying the government to grant them entitlements similar to those given to the Untouchables/Dalits. The 'backward classes', as they are known, who are one-third of the population, now enjoy positive discrimination in education and employment. Even among urban, westernised Indians, endogamous, arranged marriages remain the norm, and education and careers are still influenced by caste. In addition to these blood-based loyalties of caste and kin, traditional patron-client relationships also play a major role in social transactions. These reciprocal relations—between landowner and cultivator, householder and washerman, housewife and fruit-seller, businessman and driver, shopkeeper and servant—are the threads that knit together the billion-plus people of India.

Women   The status of women also presents a mixed picture. Through the socialist era of the 1950s and 1960s, new legislation granted women the right to divorce and to inherit property, while declaring dowry illegal. It is undeniable that many Indian women today enjoy more freedom and occupy more powerful positions than they would have 50 years ago, but most women still struggle to achieve a good life. While the ratio of 945 females to every 1000 males is an improvement, it underlines the ongoing reality of female infanticide and poor health conditions. Child marriage and dowry, despite legislation outlawing them, are still common, and female illiteracy (35%) is widespread.

Culture

Literature   Indian literature, like its economy, became global toward the end of this period. The international audience for Indian novels written in English is now enormous, a trend begun by the novels of R. K. Narayan (1906-2001). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Narayan was never a political writer, and his fiction is often criticised for its apolitical stance and neglect of colonialism. However, he was too keen an observer of human nature to be indifferent to injustice and most of his novels explore some kind of social problem, though not the spectacular ones favoured by others. A woman writer of equal distinction is Anita Desai (b.1937), who was shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. In recent years, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Amit Chaudhuri have all won considerable international reputations. Popular novelists such as Shoba De and Chetan Bhagat write stories that reflect the aspirations of the growing lower-middle class. A noteworthy feature of regional literature is the success of Dalit (untouchable) novelists. The landmark publication in 1978 of Daya Pawar's Marathi-language *Balute* ('Share') was followed by several more novels in Marathi in the 1980s. In Tamil, novels by the Dalit Catholic writer Bama (*Karuku,* 'Blades', and *Sangati* , 'Events') in the 1990s are noteworthy, in part because they use the idiom of the author's community rather than standard Tamil.

Religion   The harnessing of religion by political movements, a trend that began during the nationalist era, shows no sign of abating. A   revealing example is the Shiv Sena ('Siva's Army'), which grew out of an agitation in the 1950s for a separate Marathi-speaking state to be carved out of Bombay Province. After Maharashtra was duly created in 1960, protests against non-Marathas began: Gujaratis controlled much of the commerce in Bombay, and South Indians held many white-collar professional positions. Soon, a political cartoonist formed a new political party, which he named Shiv Sena. Since the 1990s, the Shiv Sena has allied itself with the Bharatiya Janata Party and stoked anti-Muslim feelings. More broadly, the psychological divide

between Hindus and Muslims has been deepened by the ongoing dispute over Kashmir and the threat of jihadism, especially following the attacks in Bombay in 2008. In 2002, Hindu activists clashed with Muslims in rural Gujarat, leaving two thousand Muslims dead and many tortured, with the apparent complicity of Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat and later Prime Minister of India. New wealth has also enabled families and sub-castes to display their prosperity by building temples. However, the great majority of people say their prayers and celebrate their festivals without incident.

Cinema   The 1950s saw the beginning of the 'Golden Age' for Indian cinema, when Indian-made films, including many classics, were produced. Bengali art cinema (directed by Ray, Sen, Roy and Ghatak) emerged and (especially Ray's films) gained an international audience. At the same time, domestic demand rose, and Hindi films were subtitled in three or four regional languages. Fan magazines flourished, and stars, such as Raj Kapoor, Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore, became celebrities. Almost as popular were the play-back singers, who sang the songs, mainly the Urdu-language *qawwali* and *gazal* from Muslim court culture. During the 1970s, Hindi cinema began to draw heavily on Hollywood, hence the term 'Bollywood,' and it continues to borrow techniques from American films. As a populist medium, Indian cinema always told stories of romance, of good over evil and of rags to riches. Rickshaw drivers have a heart of gold, corrupt politicians are denounced and poor village girls marry nice doctors. Film has also always been political. Before 1947, the colonial government banned
films with a nationalist message, and after Independence the moral character of the nation was visualised in 'Mother India' (1957). The heroine of this classic faces hardships, but she is ideal of the self-sacrificing mother. The path from screen to politics was laid down when the female star of 'Mother India' was elected as a member of parliament in New Delhi. More recently, stars of Tamil cinema (MGR) and Telugu cinema (T.N. Rama Rao) have been elected chief ministers of their states. Today India produces about 1,300 films per year, mostly in Hindi but with substantial numbers in Telugu and Tamil, followed by Kannada and Bengali. Video, TV, DVD and other technologies have changed viewing habits, and in recent years the industry has been dogged by financial and crime scandals, but the magic of the cinema is undiminished.
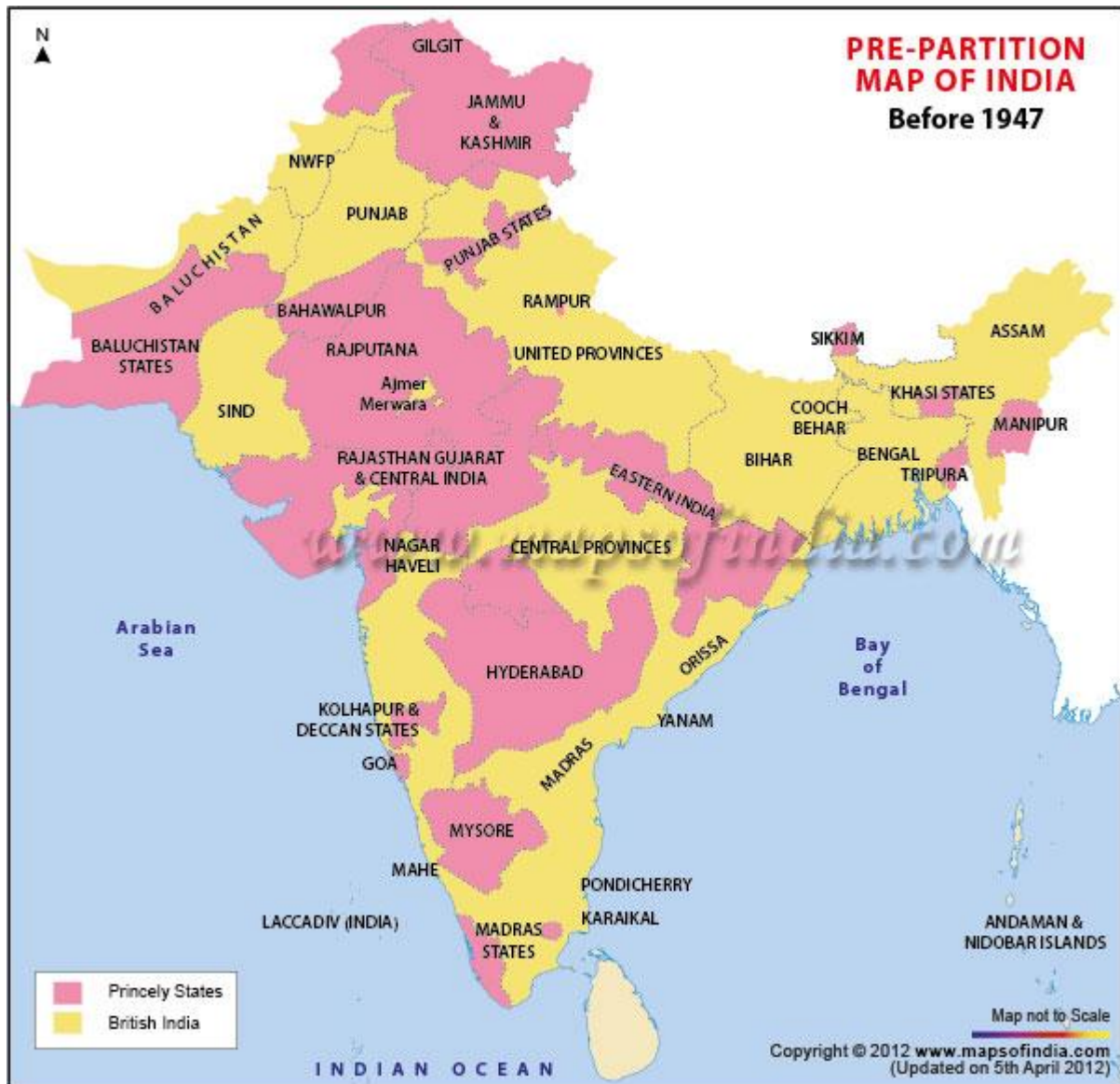
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Discussion/Questions

4.   Independence was only the first step in a still-unfinished process of nation-making. Other steps that followed immediately afterward include Partition, the Constitution of 1950, the accession of the princely states, the creation of new states and the annexation of Goa. The border with Pakistan (Kashmir) and the border with China (Arunachal Pradesh) are a source of ongoing instability. Three new states were created (from existing ones) in 2000, and the latest was created in 2014. At least seven more new states have been proposed. [See the maps below]

5.   Analyse the Nehru dynasty both in the context of modern Indian history and world history. First describe its significance for India. Did it provide stability or create undemocratic domination? What precedents exist for this dynasty? Was it a repetition of the father-son succession in the Mughal Empire? Then assess the Nehru dynasty in comparison with family dynasties elsewhere in 20th century world history.

6. Since the 1990s, India has rejected the socialism and state planning of Nehru. A series of regulations and legislation has opened up the economy to foreign investment, eliminated state monopolies and reduced bureaucratic red-tape. Assess the impact of this liberalisation on the lives of ordinary Indians. Be sure to consider urban and rural populations in your assessment, and to place your analysis in the context of global economic developments.

PRE-PARTITION MAP OF INDIA
Before 1947

States and Union Territories of India

Texts

1. Indian Constitution of 1950:

'We, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic, and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY   of status and of opportunity…'

2. Nehru, on the good life, from *Speeches, 1963-1964*:

'…essentially a good life means certain basic material things that everyone should have, like enough food and clothing, a house to live in, education, health services and work. These are the natural things that everyone should have. How do we do that? We can only do that by producing the wherewithal to provide these good things. We do not go about giving them loans or doles, but by the wealth we produce. We can produce them only by applying modern methods of science, technology, etc. There is no other way of doing it.'

3. From a speech by Uma Bharati, BJP MP and cabinet member, 2000:

'Declare without hesitation that this is a Hindu *rashtra* [nation], a nation of Hindus. We have come to strengthen the immense Hindu *shakti* [power] into a fist. Do not display any love for your enemies …The Quran teaches them to lie in wait for idol worshippers, to skin them alive, to stuff them in animal skins and torture them until they ask for forgiveness. [We] could not teach them with words, now let us teach them with kicks … Tie up your religiosity and kindness in a bundle and throw them in the Jamuna. Any non-Hindu who lives here does so at our mercy.'