

How India got its name ?

The name 'Bharata' is used as a designation for the country in their constitution referencing the ancient mythological emperor, Bharata, whose story is told, in part, in the Indian epic Mahabharata. According to the writings known as the Puranas (religious/historical texts written down in the 5th century CE), Bharata conquered the whole subcontinent of India and ruled the land in peace and harmony.

The land was, therefore, known as Bharatavarsha ('the subcontinent of Bharata'). Hominid activity in the Indian subcontinent stretches back over 250,000 years, and it is, therefore, one of the oldest inhabited regions on the planet.

Archaeological excavations have discovered artifacts used by early humans, including stone tools, which suggest an extremely early date for human habitation and technology in the area.

While the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt have long been recognized for their celebrated contributions to civilization, India has often been overlooked, especially in the West, though its history and culture is just as rich

The Indus Valley Civilization (c. 7000-c. 600 BCE) was among the greatest of the ancient world, covering more territory than either Egypt or Mesopotamia and producing an equally vibrant and progressive culture.

It is the birthplace of four great world religions - Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism - as well as the philosophical school of Charvaka which influenced the development of scientific thought and inquiry

The inventions and innovations of the people of ancient India include many aspects of modern life taken for granted today including the flush toilet, drainage and sewer systems, public pools, mathematics, veterinary science, plastic surgery, board games, yoga and meditation, as well as many more.

Prehistory Of India

The areas of present-day India, Pakistan, and Nepal have provided archaeologists and scholars with the richest sites of the most ancient pedigree.

The species *Homo heidelbergensis* (a proto-human who was an ancestor of modern *Homo sapiens*) inhabited the subcontinent of India centuries before humans migrated into the region known as Europe

Evidence of the existence of *Homo heidelbergensis* was first discovered in Germany in 1907 and, since, further discoveries have established fairly clear migration patterns of this species out of Africa.

Recognition of the antiquity of their presence in India has been largely due to the fairly late archaeological interest in the area as, unlike work in Mesopotamia and Egypt, western excavations in India did not begin in earnest until the 1920s. Though the ancient city of Harappa was known to exist as early as 1829, its archaeological significance was ignored and the later excavations corresponded to an interest in locating the probable sites referred to in the great Indian epics Mahabharata and Ramayana (both of the 5th or 4th centuries BCE) while ignoring the possibility of a much more ancient past for the region.

The village of Balathal (near Udaipur in Rajasthan), to cite only one example, illustrates the antiquity of India's history as it dates to 4000 BCE. Balathal was not discovered until 1962 and excavations were not begun there until the 1990s CE. Even older is the Neolithic site of Mehrgarh, dated at c. 7000 BCE but showing evidence of even earlier habitation, which was not discovered until 1974.

Archaeological excavations in the past 50 years have dramatically changed the understanding of India's past and, by extension, world history. A 4000-year-old skeleton discovered at Balathal in 2009 provides the oldest evidence of leprosy in India. Prior to this find, leprosy was considered a much younger disease thought to have been carried from Africa to India at some point and then from India to Europe by the army of Alexander the Great following his death in 323 BCE.

It is now understood that significant human activity was underway in India by the Holocene Period (10,000 years ago) and that many historical assumptions, based upon earlier work in Egypt and Mesopotamia, need to be reviewed and revised.



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Prehistory Of India (cont)

The beginnings of the Vedic tradition in India, still practiced today, can now be dated, at least in part, to the indigenous people of ancient sites such as Balathal and their interaction and blending with the culture of Aryan migrants who arrived in the region between c. 2000-c. 1500 BCE, initiating the so-called Vedic Period (c. 1500-c.500 BCE) during which the Hindu scriptures known as the Vedas were committed to written form.

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