

# Indian History – Important Points

- The history of India has been greatly influenced by its geographical features and environmental conditions.
- Different regions are characterized by their distinct topographical features which determine the historical changes in those regions.
- The Himalayas have protected us both from the invaders and harsh cold winds. The mountain passes have provided the ways for political, social, economic and cultural interaction.
- The fertile River Plains of North India have helped in rich agricultural production leading to the emergence of powerful states in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.
- The Plateau region, the Coastal Plains and the hilly terrains of Peninsular India have encouraged the agricultural settlements and foreign contacts since ancient times.
- Different environmental conditions and varying availability of resources have resulted in distinct socioeconomic and cultural formations in different regions.
- Since his appearance in Prehistoric period, the humans have passed through many stages of cultural growth.
- Archaeological sources show his existence and subsistence pattern at various sites in different parts of the subcontinent.
- He was a hunter-gatherer in the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods.
- By the Neolithic period he learnt cultivation of crops and domestication of animals. He could also manufacture pottery by then.
- These developments led to the establishment of village settlements. The stone tools used in different periods also underwent change. The crude and blunt tools of the Paleolithic period were developed into sharper and polished ones in the Neolithic period.
- The Mesolithic period was characterized by very small stone tools called the microliths.
- In other words, the hunter-gatherer of the Paleolithic period evolved into the food producer of the Neolithic period.

- The Harappan civilization was the first urban civilization of the Indian subcontinent.
- Archaeological discoveries show that this culture evolved from the earlier rural communities.
- Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Banawali, Rakhigarhi and Dholavira were some of the important sites of the Harappan civilization.
- Well-planned towns can be observed at some Harappan centres. These towns were characterised by two broad divisions—a citadel on a higher mound and the lower town.
- Burnt bricks were used for building houses. The towns had good drainage system.
- Some major buildings at the Harappan towns were the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro, a granary at Harappa, and a dockyard at Lothal.
- The Harappans practiced agriculture alongwith pastoralism. Though there were skilled craftsmen who worked in copper and other metals, the stone tools were still in common use.
- They produced beads, terracotta figurines, potteries and seals of various kinds.
- The Harappans carried out trade, both internal and external. They had commercial links with Mesopotamian cities through Oman and Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. The merchants traded in various commodities of import and export.
- The Harappan society seems to have been matriarchal in nature. The people followed different professions such as those of priests, physicians, warriors, peasants, traders and artisans.
- Though the Harappans wore simple clothes made of cotton and wool, they were fond of decorating themselves with various kinds of ornaments.
- The Harappans worshipped the mother goddess, Pashupati (ProtoShiva), trees and animals. They also followed different kinds of burial practices and rituals associated with them.
- The Harappans were literate and their script is in the form of ideograms. However, the script has not been deciphered so far. Once it is deciphered, we will be able to know more about the Harappan culture.

- Scholars have suggested various factors such as natural calamities, increased aridity, and the Aryan invasion for the decline of the culture.
- The archaeological evidence suggests that this civilization did not face a sudden collapse but had a gradual decline.
- The archaeological sources reflect that the non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures were characterized by regional variations. The use of stone and copper (Chalcolithic) tools was the distinct feature of these cultures. The distribution pattern of the sites suggests hierarchy of settlements. Some settlements were large in size with elaborate structures, indicating that these were important centres.
- The Chalcolithic cultures outside the orbit of the Harappan culture did not possess Harappan traits of urbanity and prosperity.
- These were non-urban cultures with certain elements of their own such as the housing pattern, pottery types, tool types, religious practices, etc. They still subsisted on agriculture and hunting-gathering economy combined with pastoralism.
- After the decline of the Harappan urbanism, we witness the coming of a new kind of people on the northwestern horizon of India.
- These people were animal herders and spread out in groups from the Southern Russia to different parts of the world. Many such groups reached India through Afghanistan at different periods. Their language, known as Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit became predominant with borrowings from the local languages.
- Their earliest compositions are known as the *Rigveda* and many more compositions followed subsequently. We get to know about the culture of these people from these collections known as the Vedas.
- The Aryans initially lived in the region drained by seven rivers Septa Sindhu roughly covering the modern states of Punjab, and Harayana. Subsequently they also occupied the region drained by Ganga, Yamuna, Sarayu, Ghaghra, and Gandaka roughly covering the modern states of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar.

- The Aryans, who were mainly cattle herders, became agriculturists later, and assisted by the knowledge of iron technology they were able to establish larger settlements in the Ganga- Yamuna *doab* region. This is shown by the PGW archaeology and the contents of the Later Vedic literature.
- This change precipitated a series of changes in the other spheres of life.
- From an egalitarian, tribal socio-political set up during the Early Vedic period it was transformed into a varna divided territorially based set up by the end of the Vedic period.
- The position of the tribal chiefs became hereditary and the emerging officials usurped the role of the popular assemblies.
- The growing number of *yajnas* shows the importance of the king as well as of the brahmanas.
- Similarly, the gods who were important earlier lost their significance and gave way to new deities.
- All these changes ultimately resulted in the rise of *janapadas* and *mahajanapadas* i.e. bigger territorial states in the sixth century BC.
- The use of iron tools and cattle-power in the fertile middle Ganga plain led to the increase of agricultural productivity and the food supply in the sixth century BC. This development of agriculture resulted in growth of towns, trade and money economy.
- That is why the sixth century B.C. is also known as a period of 'second urbanisation'.
- In this period, some non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism responded to the new social realities and argued for a ban on cattle sacrifice, money-lending and urban lifestyle. They advocated better social status for trading communities, who in turn patronised these new religions.
- The main teachings of Jainism are *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*, while Gautam Buddha asked people to follow four noble truths and eight-fold path.
- The *Janapadas* of earlier times consolidated in this period and resulted in the rise of sixteen *mahajanapadas*. Some *janapadas* followed the nonmonarchical system of governance.

- Ultimately, the utilisation of favourable geographical condition by the ambitious rulers of Magadh resulted in its rise as an empire.
- Later on Mauryas uprooted the Nanda dynasty and established their rule. They maintained a highly centralized bureaucracy along with a vast army, and administered a large part of the Indian Subcontinent.
- Chandragupta's ministers kautilya wrote the Arthashastra, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, was and religion ever produced in the East.
- One of the greatest Indian rulers Ashoka adopted the policy of Dhamma, which was aimed at consolidation of the empire and resolving internal conflicts through peaceful means. After the death of Ashoka the Mauryan Empire declined due to inefficiencies of later rulers and unstable relationship between core and peripheries of the empire.
- The greatest empire in the fourth century AD was the Gupta Empire which referred in the golden age of Indian history. The empire lasted more than two centuries.
- The period between AD 750–AD 1200 is no more treated as a 'dark phase' of Indian history. It was marked by various political, social and cultural activities.
- Politically, the period between AD 750–AD 1200 is early Medieval period with the rise of numerous regional states.
- In North India Gurjara- Pratiharas, Palas in east & Rashtrakutas in South India rose to power in early years (750–1000) while in later years (1000–1200) Rajput states in North & Cholas in South fetched power from previous rulers.
- The nature of state is a decentralized political system wherein the king at the top is assisted by small chiefs or *Samanthas*.
- Land grants become very common to religious people & to state officials in lieu of salary. Sabha (Brahman predominant village), Ur (non brahminical settlements) were local administering authorities in South India.
- It is a period of economic decline due to diminishing overseas trade. During this period several tribes gave up hunting, start



tilling lands, and subsequently included into brahmanical society.

- This period is of robust cultural development. Regional languages & Regional literature developed around this time. Nagara, Dravida & Vesara style of temple architecture evolved during this period. Cultural contacts with South east Asia (Java, Sumatra, Malay, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia), though developed on settling of Indian traders on these regions.
- Islam rose in Arabia and spread quickly in different parts of the world under the caliphs. The Arabian armies captured the large parts of central Asia and even attacked India in 712 AD.
- The next important invasion into India was when Mahmud Ghazni attacked India. His main intention was to carry the wealth of India to Ghazni.
- In the 12<sup>th</sup> century India was divided into small kingdoms mostly ruled by Rajput chiefs. During this time the political condition of central Asia was not good because of which Muhammad Ghorī was to look towards India for expansion.
- In AD 1191 (First battle of Tarain) Muhammad Ghorī was defeated by Prithviraj Chauhan. In 1192 (second battle of Tarain) Muhammad Ghorī returned and this time Rajput forces were defeated.
- Thus Delhi passed into the hands of Turks. Muhammad Ghorī left his Indian possessions in the hands of his trusted slave – general Qutbuddin Aibak which led to the establishment of Delhi Sultanate.
- Iltutmish further consolidated the Sultanate by putting down internal rebellions and conciliating the nobility by forming of ‘Group of Forty’.
- The last powerful Sultan of slave dynasty was Balban who became the Sultan in 1266 AD. He ruled in an autocratic manner and worked hard to elevate the position of sultan.
- After the death of Balban in AD 1287, the Khaljis came to the power in AD 1290.
- The coming of Khaljis marked a break in the monopoly of Turkish rule. Jalaluddin Khalji laid the foundation of Khalji dynasty. In AD 1296, Alauddin Khalji murdered his uncle and

father-in-law Jalaluddin Khalji and crowned himself as Sultan. He restored the prestige of the crown. He suppressed the nobility and ruled as an autocrat. His able general Alp Khan, Nusrat Khan, Zafar Khan, Ulugh Khan, Malik Kafur won him many victories.

- Another important measure taken by Alauddin was the establishment of markets where goods were sold at fixed prices and did not allow any trader to earn more profit. He set up different markets for different commodities in Delhi.
- The Khalji dynasty was followed by the Tughlaqs. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq ascended the throne in AD 1320. He was succeeded by Muhammad Tughlaq in AD 1325.
- Muhammad Tughlaq is famous for his innovative projects. These projects included the transfer of his capital from Delhi to Daultabad, and introduction of token currency. Following the death of Muhammad Tughlaq, the amirs and ulemas placed Firuz Tughlaq on the throne.
- During his reign the forces of disintegration were active. In AD 1398 Timur invaded the Delhi Sultanate in order to plunder it. The invasion of Timur gave an opportunity to the provincial Kingdoms to declare their independence from the Sultanate.
- Malik Sarwar began to rule as a defacto ruler of Jaunpur. Another province Malwa also threw its allegiance to Delhi Sultanate and its ruler Mahmud Khalji expanded the boundaries of Malwa. Gujarat broke away from the Sultanate when its governor Zafar Khan began ruling as an independent ruler.
- The most famous ruler of Gujarat was Ahmad Shah who founded Ahmedabad.
- The most remarkable ruler of the provincial Kingdoms was Zainal Abidin the ruler of Kashmir. Under him Kashmir became a strong and prosperous state.
- Bengal the Eastern most province of the Sultanate was annexed many times to Delhi Sultanate but repeatedly gained its independence. Haji Ilyas united Bengal which was divided into three administrative divisions by Delhi Sultanate.
- Timur appointed Khizr Khan as the ruler of Multan, who laid the foundation of Sayyid dynasty. This dynasty was replaced

by Afghans as the Lodi dynasty founded by Bahlol Lodi in AD 1451.

- Bahlol Lodi was a capable ruler who was able to win the support of his nobles. He was followed by Sikander Lodi.
- The last of the Lodis, Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by Babur in AD 1526 in the battle of Panipat.
- The Delhi Sultanate which had its birth in AD 1192 breathed its last in AD 1526 thus giving way to the establishment of the Mughal Empire.
- After the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate Babur was able to establish the Mughal empire in India in 1526. It was both the circumstances in Central Asia and in India which played a major role in the foundation of the Mughal Empire.
- Before Babur could lay the foundation of the Mughal Empire, he had to fight many wars with local ruling kingdoms. He defeated Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat in 1526. Then he defeated one of the biggest forces in north India, Rana Sanga in 1527.
- After Babur's death in 1530 his son Humayun succeeded him. When Humayun was busy in Gujarat, Sher Shah started consolidating himself in Bihar and Bengal and moved towards Agra.
- Humayun was defeated in the battle of Kannauj in 1540 and Sher Shah was able to establish the second Afghan empire which continued from 1540 to 1555. However, in 1555 Humayun was again successful in capturing Agra, Delhi and other lost territories from the Afghans and re-established the Mughal rule.
- After Humayun's sudden death Akbar became the emperor at a tender age of 13 and Bairam Khan was made the regent.
- Akbar followed a policy of expansion after consolidating his hold on throne. He won over the Rajput kingdoms to his side either through matrimonial alliances or by invading the territories. He brought Gujarat, Bihar, Bengal, Punjab and the whole of northwest under the Mughal control. He also annexed Ahmednagar, Berar, Burhanpur, Asisgarh etc. in the Deccan.
- Jahangir also followed the expansionist policy in the Deccan. But he could not get much success here and lost few of the territories.



- Shahjahan was able to take control of Bijapur and Golconda in 1636.
- Aurangzeb also followed an aggressive policy in the Deccan and remained involved in conflict with the Marathas for most of his rule.
- Under Aurangzeb, the Mughal empire reached its greatest territorial limits. Ironically, the decline of the Mughal Empire also began under Aurangzeb.
- There was a breakup of the association with regional forces like the Rajputs and the Marathas.
- The rise of regional states from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century is due to internal weakness of Delhi Sultanate and decline of Mughal Empire. It should be remembered that though these states fought with each other, but they also borrowed ideas in the field of art, architecture and religion from each other.
- Their relationship with the central authority as well as among themselves kept changing from time to time.
- With the establishment of Delhi Sultanate, new ruling class and some new administrative institutions emerged. The administrative institutions were of mix origin i.e., Arab and Central Asian origin and Indian origin.
- During the Mughal period some of the institution of the Sultanate period underwent some changes and some new were created.
- The administration system and institutions contributed in the consolidation of the Sultanate and Mughal empire. The administrative system was also utilized by the rulers to create social harmony in the society. This was done by including more and more sections of the society in the administrative apparatus.
- Due to the large extent of the empire the administrative system emerged at three levels i.e. central, provincial and local.
- The local level administration was left mainly in the hands of village headmen etc.

- At provincial level, the administration was carried out through the institution of Iqta during the sultanate period and through the institution of mansab and *jagir* during the Mughal period.
- At the central level the sultan or the emperor had his own system of administration and there were many officers to assist him.
- There were also various departments to look after certain functions. The rulers at times were challenged by the nobility and the Ulema who tried to exert pressure on them.
- The administrative system and institutions functioned well under strong and capable ruler but the same were under pressure under weak rulers.
- The Maratha administrative system developed along the lines of the Mughal and Deccani states.
- Agriculture formed the occupation of the bulk of the people. An increase in agricultural production was sought through expansion of agriculture in newer areas as part of state policy.
- The peasants produced a large variety of food crops, cash crops, fruits, vegetables and spices. They practised advanced agricultural techniques such as crop rotation, double cropping, three crop harvesting, fruit grafting etc.
- Various types of artificial water lifting devices were also used for this purpose. The state derived the largest part of its income from land revenue.
- The land revenue administration was streamlined and elaborately developed as a result of some of the pioneering efforts made in this field by rulers like Alauddin Khalji, Sher Shah Suri and Akbar.
- A powerful group of revenue intermediaries existed in between the state and the peasantry. They enjoyed some hereditary or state granted rights (either as religious grants or grants in lieu of their services) over appropriation of land revenue from the designated areas. These intermediaries assisted the state in the process of land revenue collection.
- The medieval Indian peasantry was a hard pressed lot. The repressive nature of land tax, demand of share in revenue by intermediaries, frequent natural calamities rendered the life of

an average peasant dismal and deplorable. Peasant revolts, therefore, were not altogether unknown during this period.

- The medieval Indian culture represents the synthesis of Indian and Persian philosophy, literature art and architecture. In religious sphere Sufism and Bhakti tradition influenced each other.
- They provided an opportunity for understanding religious traditions of Hindus and Muslims at people's level.
- The emergence of Urdu as a new language is a best example of interaction and synthesis. The same is visible in the area of Music and Painting. In the field of architecture, the form, style and decoration take a lot from each other.
- The medieval period thus represents an important era of dramatic change in the world of religion and art in South Asia.
- The growing popularity of Sufism played an important role in the popular acceptability of Islam and in the course establishing unique Islamic tradition in the sub-continent.
- The Bhakti movement played a similar role in the development of Hinduism. On one hand it challenged existing religious and social hierarchies and on the other it revived concepts like monotheism in mainstream Hindu tradition.
- Both the Sufi and Bhakti movements questioned the authority of the established clergy and the relevance of established religious rituals.
- Importantly while both emerged questioning established religious traditions they eventually found themselves being integrated into established religious systems.
- Another important development during the medieval period was the growth in vernacular literature. Growing regional identities helped create new literary and art forms.
- The growth in regional languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Telugu was a very significant development. The popularity of translations further widened readership and helped in the exchange of ideas.
- The exchange of ideas also ushered new development in music. The use of the Sitar and new styles of music further enriched the medieval period.

- In the realm of art one witnesses the development of new styles of painting associated with the patronage of the Mughal and the Rajput style.
- There was a change in the character and stylistic representation seen in earlier periods. The synthesis of the medieval period is best seen in the development of new architectural styles.
- The large number of forts, palaces, temples and Mosques that can be dated to this period are examples of the new styles. The use of decorative motifs and the adaptation of the dome are examples of the architectural traditions of this period.
- 18<sup>th</sup> century saw important developments. Rise of Mysore state under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan is worth mentioning. Coming of the East India Company and the conflict between Mysore and the company marks the beginning of a new phase of Indian political scene.
- 18<sup>th</sup> Century India also witnessed various new trends in economic and cultural fields.
- British rule commenced in 1757, after the Battle of Plassey, when the Nawab of Bengal surrendered his dominions to the Company, in 1765, when the Company was granted the *diwani*, or the right to collect revenue, in Bengal and Bihar, or in 1772, when the Company established a capital in Calcutta, appointed its first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and became directly involved in governance. This process continued in the other parts of India as well.
- The establishment and expansion of British Power used the mechanism of the Subsidiary Alliance system, and the expansion policy of Dalhousie through the doctrine of lapse.
- The East India Company's rule lasted until 1858, when, consequent to the Government of India Act 1858, the British government assumed the task of directly administering India.
- British rulers looked at India quite differently. Policies made by them were also influenced by their ideological inclinations. During 19<sup>th</sup> century, a series of reform movements swept across India.
- These movements tried to address issues related to condition of women, caste rigidities, evils that had crept in religious

beliefs of people, modernization of communities, educational backwardness etc. British policy makers also tried to popularize English education in India. This could be the medium for the import of European culture and morality.

- This would eventually help them strengthen their control over this country.
- During this period, both the English as well as the Indian language press flourished.
- However, restrictions were imposed at different times to curtail the freedom of press. Social changes that occurred during the modern period helped to prepare the country ultimately for a national liberation movement against the British rule.
- The establishment of the British rule in India resulted in transformation of India into a colony of the British empire. Rural society was greatly affected by this transformation. Being evicted from their lands, peasants became labourers on their own lands.
- Different form of taxes made their life more miserable. Whereas those who were engaged in small industries had to close their factories as a result of the import of British manufactured goods.
- All these changes and unresponsive attitude of the British administration compelled the peasantry to vent their grievances through rebellions. Rebellions were not successful before the organized British armed forces.
- However, these struggles paved the way for future challenge to the British Raj in India.
- In this regard, the Revolt of 1857 is unique in a sense that cutting across the caste, community and class barriers, Indian people for the first time put up a unified challenge to the British rule. Though the efforts of the rebels failed, the British government was pressurized to change their policy towards India.
- The idea of nationalism first took roots in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was the result of rapid industrialization and the onset of modern industrial economy.



- Indian nationalism was distinctly different from its European counterpart. In India the idea of nationalism emerged only around the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The idea of Indian nationalism was based on the twin idea of opposition to the British colonial rule and a unity of the Indian people.
- The impact of the British rule was felt first in the realm of culture. It was argued by the Indian leaders that an intrusion of colonial culture into Indian culture was harmful and should be resisted.
- The early nationalist leaders pointed out the economically exploitative nature of the British colonial rule and thus created what came to be known as 'economic nationalism'
- Simultaneously, many other leaders preached Indian nationalism which was based on religion and which was motivated by religious considerations.
- This development of Indian nationalism with many branches resulted, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the building of a powerful Indian national movement. This Indian national Movement was based on the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas of Indian nationalism and was backed up by massive mass participation.
- The active participation by the masses transformed Indian nationalism into a powerful irresistible force which ultimately forced the British colonial rule to withdraw from India.
- Indian National Movement was not the name of one single event, but a whole series of political events, spread over many decades.
- Anti-imperialism and national unity were two themes that were common to all the events and connected them with one another.
- The early phase of the national movement was dominated by moderate leaders. These leaders put forward a series of demands before the colonial rules. But much more importantly, they started the idea that the British rule was not leading to Indian's economic development, but rather the decline of Indian economy.
- The moderate leaders followed by the were extremist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lajpat Rai

who introduced the idea of the Participation of masses in the national movement. The extremists led the swadeshi movement which was launched against the British decision to partition Bengal.

- The end of the swadeshi movement brought the entry of revolutionary activities into the national movement. These revolutionary leaders, such as Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, wanted to fight the British government by violent means. They also wanted to target individual British offices.
- Mahatma Gandhi's entry into the national movement was the next major step.
- Mahatma Gandhi initially experimented with his political methods through local struggles at Champaran, Kheda and Ahmadabad. Soon he took the lead in launching a country wide struggle.
- Gandhi based his struggle on a non-violent non-cooperation with the British rule.
- Through these methods he led three major struggles- non-cooperation movement (1920–22), civil-disobedience Movement (1930–34) and Quit India Movement (1942).
- A result of these struggles was that the national movement gained tremendous popularity among Indian people. It reached out to various sections of the population like peasants, women, workers and students. National movement gradually spread to most parts of the country.
- As the popularity of the national movement increased, that of the British government decreased. The British had ruled India with the help of many Indians.
- These Indians constituted the support system of the British rule in India. The national movement succeeded in damaging and dismantling this support system.
- As the support system of the British began to be gradually eroded, they found it impossible to rule India. The British therefore decided to initiate a process of negotiations with the Indian leaders for a gradual transfer of power from the British to Indian hands.
- The British finally left India in 1947. Indians become free from foreign rule on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

- However, before leaving the British decided to partition India on the basis of religion. Along with the freedom of India, came the partition of India. Thus the freedom and partition should be seen as two very important events in the history of Modern India.

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