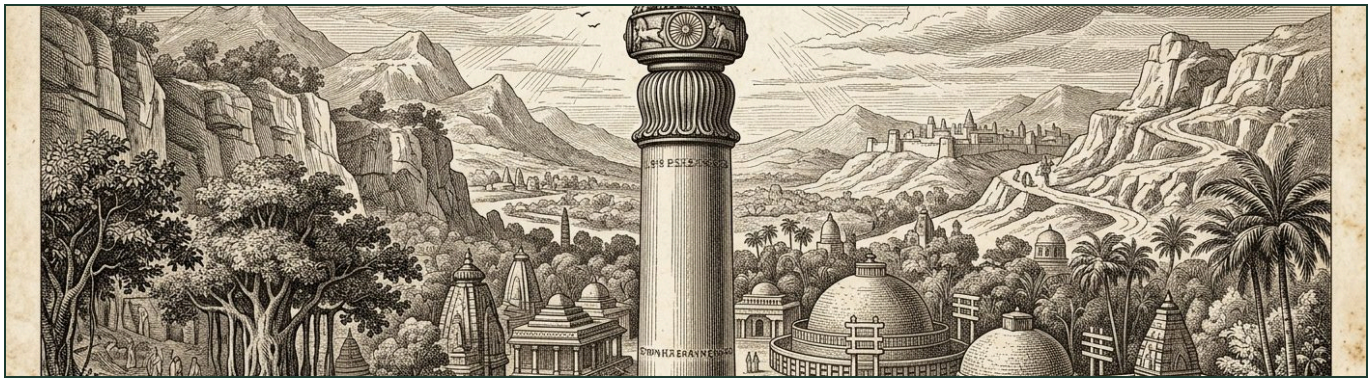


c. 2600 BCE – 550 CE

Ancient India Timeline

Ancient India was home to one of the world's first urban civilizations – the Indus Valley Civilization – and later gave rise to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, the Maurya Empire, one of the largest empires of the ancient world, and the golden age of the Gupta Empire.

c. 2600 BCE

Indus Valley Civilization Flourishes

The cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro — each home to tens of thousands of people — are built with sophisticated grid-planned streets, advanced drainage and sewage systems, and standardized weights and measures used for long-distance trade.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the world's first urban civilizations — its cities rivaled those of Mesopotamia and Egypt in size and were even more advanced in urban planning and sanitation, and its standardized trade systems suggest a highly organized society that remains only partially understood.*

c. 1900 BCE

Indus Valley Decline

The great Indus Valley cities are gradually abandoned — the reasons remain debated, with possible causes including climate change, shifting rivers, and disease; people migrate eastward toward the Ganges plain.

> **Why it mattered:** *The collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization remains one of history's great mysteries — but the eastward migration spread its cultural legacy into the Ganges region, which became the heartland of later Indian civilization.*

Ancient India Timeline *continued*

c. 1500 BCE

Vedic Period Begins

Pastoral peoples enter northwestern India, bringing the Sanskrit language and composing the Vedas — the oldest sacred texts of what would become Hinduism — which are transmitted orally for centuries before being written down.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Vedic Period laid the foundations of Hinduism, established the Sanskrit literary tradition, and shaped the social structures of Indian civilization for thousands of years — its influence reaches over a billion people today.*

c. 600–500 BCE

Birth of Buddhism and Jainism

Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) and Mahavira preach new philosophies of liberation and non-violence in the Ganges plain — teachings that challenge the existing religious hierarchy and spread rapidly across the subcontinent.

> **Why it mattered:** *Buddhism and Jainism offered paths to spiritual liberation outside the existing social hierarchy, winning followers across Asia; Buddhism in particular spread from India to become one of the world's major religions, reaching as far as Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia.*

326 BCE

Alexander the Great Reaches the Indus

Alexander the Great of Macedonia crosses the Hindu Kush and the Indus River and defeats King Porus at the Battle of the Hydaspes, but his exhausted army refuses to march farther east, and he turns back.

> **Why it mattered:** *Alexander's brief invasion opened contact between India and the Greek world and left the northwest divided and weakened, which helped the young Chandragupta Maurya build his empire a few years later.*

321 BCE

Maurya Empire Founded

Chandragupta Maurya, a young general, overthrows the Nanda Dynasty and founds the Maurya Empire — the first to unify most of the Indian subcontinent under a single government.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Maurya Empire was the first major political unification of India — it created a model of centralized administration and diplomacy (including one of history's first treatises on statecraft, the Arthashastra) that influenced Indian rulers for centuries.*

305 BCE

Treaty with Seleucus

Chandragupta defeats the Macedonian Seleucid king who controls much of Persia and Afghanistan, winning the northwestern territories and establishing the Maurya Empire as a major power recognized by the Greek world.

> **Why it mattered:** *The treaty with Seleucus connected India to the Greek world for the first time since Alexander's invasion — establishing trade and diplomatic relations that brought Indian ideas and goods into contact with the Mediterranean world.*

Ancient India Timeline *continued*

269–232 BCE

Ashoka the Great

After winning a brutal war that kills hundreds of thousands, Emperor Ashoka converts to Buddhism, renounces further conquest, sends missionaries across Asia, carves his edicts on pillars and rocks throughout the empire, and promotes welfare, non-violence, and religious tolerance.

> **Why it mattered:** *Ashoka was one of the ancient world's most remarkable rulers — by spreading Buddhism across Asia and establishing principles of non-violence and tolerance as state policy, he shaped the religious landscape of half the continent; his pillars, still standing in India today, are among the ancient world's most extraordinary surviving monuments.*

320 CE

Gupta Empire Founded

Chandragupta I founds the Gupta Empire in the Ganges plain, with its heartland in Magadha, the same region the Mauryas had ruled from. His son Samudragupta and grandson Chandragupta II expand it across most of northern India.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Gupta Empire brought northern India together again after centuries of division and began a period of peace and achievement in science, mathematics, art and literature that is often called India's golden age.*

c. 499 CE

Aryabhata Writes the Aryabhatiya

The mathematician and astronomer Aryabhata completes his book the Aryabhatiya. He uses a place-value number system, gives a very close value for pi, and explains that the Earth spins on its axis, making the stars appear to move.

> **Why it mattered:** *Aryabhata's work shows how advanced Gupta-era science was; Indian place-value numbers with zero, developed in these centuries, later spread through the Arab world to Europe and became the numbers used everywhere today.*

c. 550 CE

The Gupta Empire Breaks Apart

Weakened by invasions of the Huna (Huns) from Central Asia and by governors breaking away, the Gupta Empire shrinks and breaks into smaller kingdoms by the middle of the 500s.

> **Why it mattered:** *The end of the Gupta Empire closed India's classical age, but its achievements in numbers, astronomy, medicine and art lived on and spread across Asia and beyond.*