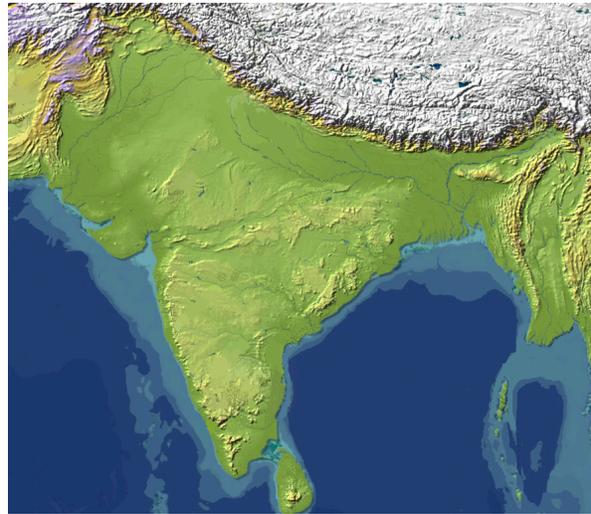


## V. India and the World We Live In

### A. Post-Colonial India and South Asia

1. India is part of a larger area called “South Asia.”
2. South Asia is a geographical area “under” the Himalayas.
3. Given its size, it is sometimes referred to as the “Indian Subcontinent.” (The region on the maps below is comparable in size to Europe.)
4. The history of the region led to the creation of 1) India, 2) Pakistan and Bangladesh, and 3) a set of smaller countries, starting in **1947**.
5. Prior to **1947** the entire region, except for Afghanistan, was ruled by the British Empire. Then following **World War II<sup>‡</sup> (1939-45)**, the British abandoned their worldwide empire, and granted independence to South Asia.
6. Because of the history we will now explore, the region fractured into three main pieces—India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—along religious lines.
7. The culture of South Asia has one main priority: to define a new way of life after being in someone else’s empire. The term for this kind of culture is “*post-colonial*.”
8. *Post-colonial* cultures like India (it is not the only one) share a few key traits:
  - a) They are newly independent. The fact that India became independent in 1947 makes it feel like it’s a stretch to still call it “*newly independent*,” but the key is that you also have:
  - b) They have not yet managed to define a specific identity. Even though India has been independent for over 70 years, it still hasn’t been able to build a national culture. Ever since independence there has been a desire to create an identity called “Hindu nationalism,” based on the most ancient culture of the region.
  - c) Political instability is another common problem, including wars and civil wars, because the people do not feel bound together as a people, which makes it more difficult for them to resolve political differences.
  - d) Insularity is another common trait, because cultures that are struggle to define an identity are wary of outside influences and control.



A terrain (elevation) map with false colors dramatically illustrates how “South Asia” is framed by mountains on all sides. Two major river basins, also frame the geography of the Indian Subcontinent. The arrangement of countries that most people would take for granted on the map only emerged in 1947.

## B. Hindu Culture

1. Indian culture is distinguished by an exotic religion that has many gods.

2. In the west, this religion is often described as “Hinduism.” Hinduism is not an integrated set of beliefs, however. The essence of Hindu belief is that it is *not* integrated. It is a mixture of many different beliefs and practices.)

3. Hindus may worship any number of different deities, and engage in a wide variety of religious rituals, in a probably unlimited number of combinations. There is no single organized church; and no single religious text.

4. There are two historically significant outcomes to the rise and continuation of such a culture in South Asia. Hindu culture has always been **a-historical** and politically **un-integrated**.

a) **“A-historical”** means that Hindu Culture never developed an attachment to history.

No one studied it. *So there is no history* in Hindu Culture, which produces a very unusual outcome. We have no idea what really happened in its ancient past.

b) The lack of interest in history is matched with a general lack of interest in politics as well. Organizing governments and studying their history go hand in hand. In India, neither happened. Consequently, South Asia was never politically integrated (it never become one country or lasting empire).

5. Archeological evidence demonstrates that there were two ancient civilizations, the “Indus River Valley Civilization” and “Vedic Civilization.” Neither one wrote history, so this makes it impossible to date the origin of Hindu Culture, and thus the method that will be used for our purposes will be to denote its origin point as ???? BC.



Vishnu (left) and Ganesh (right) are among the surprising representations of the supernatural, as envisioned in Hindu Culture.