

India

India's civilization is one of the oldest in the world. During the nineteenth century, Great Britain took control of virtually all of India. The United States played an important role in India's independence in 1947, and India adopted a constitution strongly influenced by the U.S. model, particularly the Bill of Rights. During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States sought to adopt a neutral policy toward India and Pakistan and offered broad-based development support to India in an effort to prevent Communist inroads in South Asia. During the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. support tilted toward Pakistan amidst escalation in the Cold War as the Soviet Union gained control of neighboring Afghanistan in 1979. The United States also began seeking closer cooperation with China, with whom India had fought a war in 1962. In 1991, just as the Cold War ended, India liberalized and opened its economy, paving way for software and information technology (IT), which led to growth and collaborative exchange with the United States. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, India and the United States found common ground in their opposition to terrorism, with the large, prosperous, and growing population of Indian immigrants and Indian-Americans in the United States emerging as a bridge between the world's two largest democracies.

History of Relations with the United States

In the late fifteenth century, Columbus found the Americas while trying to reach India using an eastward sea route; thinking he had found India, he referred the local inhabitants as Indians. A controversial view holds that India appears to have had relations with the Americas that predate the Columbian era. An ancient cultural contact is evident in what appear to be representations of several New World plant species, such as maize, sunflowers, pineapples, and cashews, in the Jain and Hindu temple art of southern India as early as the second century BCE and later in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries CE.

Relations before India's Independence

From the 1830s onward, Indians have immigrated to the United States, seeing in it a land of opportunity that offered jobs, escape

from British colonial domination, and religious freedom. In the United States, it was mainly intellectuals, such as Ralph Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who had an aware-

ness of India; both Emerson and Thoreau were influenced by the universalist message of Hinduism. In 1893 the spiritual leader

Vivekananda presented a paper on Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago; the paper was well received by an appreciative American crowd. In a classic travelogue (*Following the Equator*, 1897-288), the U.S. novelist Mark Twain described his visit to India with both revulsion and attraction, concluding "[India is] the only foreign land I ever daydream about or deeply long to see again."

Since the early nineteenth century, U.S. missionaries in India have been known for their nonproselytizing social work related to education and health care for deprived segments of the population and their care of women (on issues such as child marriage and widows). Their concern for women's status in India, however, led to an impression in the United States that Indian women are living in shackles with no self-worth, a stereotype that Indians resent.

During World War I and interwar eras, many Indians shared a message of nonviolence, peace, and exchange with the Americans. In 1913 Har Dayal, a visiting professor at Stanford University, started the influential Gadar movement to mobilize U.S. support against British colonialism. The art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy established Indian artifact collections in major U.S. cities, starting with the Boston Museum of Art in 1917. Mohandas Gandhi, whose principle of civil disobedience was influenced by Emerson and Thoreau, caught the U.S. imagination when *Time* magazine chose him as its man of the year in 1930. Later, during the U.S. civil rights struggles of the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr., adopted Gandhi's nonviolent approach to civil disobedience.

In August 1941, in the early months of World War II, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt (served 1933-1945) told the British prime minister Winston Churchill that if the world was to secure a stable peace, it must involve the freedom of India. His wife Eleanor recorded that later, in January 1943, the president asked Churchill to immediately make India a free member of the Commonwealth

