Lands of Belonging



For Milun and Mani. For the story you are part of, and the stories to come.
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For Ammi, Thaththi, Kumudu, Surani, Susantha, and Kalum.
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A HISTORY OF INDIA, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH AND BRITAIN



Donna and **Vikesh Amey Bhatt** · **Salini Perera**

Contents

Welcome!	6
What Makes You, You?	8
Inventive Ancient India	10
One Land, Many Religions	12
Ancient Indian Empires	14
The Dazzling Delights of India	16
One Land, Many Kings	18
Building an Empire	20
The World at War	22
Dividing a Country	24
Independence for India	26
From South Asia to Britain	28
A Place to Call Home	30
Racism and Uprisings	32
South Asian Culture Today	34
Bold South Asian Flavour	36
Party Time!	38
Fireworks, Food and Fasting	40
A Day in Your Life	42
South Asian Customs	44
Do You Speak South Asian?	46
Fun and Games!	48
Amazing South Asians	50
Amazing South Asians Today	52
A South Asian Calendar of Celebrations	54
Time to Reflect	56
What Happened When?	58
What Happened Next?	60
Glossary	63
Index	64



Welcome!

You might think things that are Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi are easy to spot, such as brightly coloured temples, tall-towered mosques or supermarket shelves stocked with ingredients to make hot, spicy curries. But other things may surprise you, from words you use every day like 'pyjamas', to yoga classes or even washing your hair with shampoo.



The History Mystery

The United Kingdom has a huge number of people living in it whose family stories began in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Often, the story of how South Asian and British history is tightly linked together isn't explained in schools or in books.

> The way that we learn about our past is decided by the people who record our history. There are many different ways of telling the same story, and what you write down and how you write it depends on your point of view, such as if you think some events and people are more important than others.

For hundreds of years, the wealthy in Britain were educated enough to read and write, so we know a lot about what they thought of themselves and of the world. But being taught to read and write was much less common for people who lived in South Asia, so written historical stories from a South Asian point of view are much harder to find.



This book aims to piece together how South Asian and British history are connected. You might find it interesting, surprising and sometimes very sad – but for the people of South Asia, and for South Asians in Britain, the future is full of hope and excitement.

Turn the page to discover why Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi history *is* British history.



REARRANGING SPACES

The invisible lines that separate one country from another are called borders, and they can change over time, usually because rulers disagree about what land belongs to which country. The name of a country can change too, depending on who is in charge. Bangladesh and Pakistan are quite new countries – less than a hundred years ago they were both part of India.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, along with Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Maldives, are all in the southern part of Asia, one of the world's seven continents. People from these countries are sometimes called 'South Asians'.

GREAT OR UNITED?

The United Kingdom (UK) as we know it today is made up of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Great Britain is made up of England, Wales and Scotland. The United Kingdom is tiny compared to the size of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.



What Makes You, You?

When asked to describe yourself, it can be hard to know where to begin. You might start by saying something about the way you look, such as having curly hair or freckles. Perhaps you could mention the things you enjoy or are really good at, or even something you really hate, like going to bed when it's still light outside!



All the things that make you, *you*, form different parts of your identity.





Some people might feel that their identity is simply something they were born into:



a certain kind of family, living in a certain kind of place, who believe in a particular religion, or are not religious at all.





Others might say that what makes you, *you*, are the experiences you've had throughout your life.



Often, no matter what you think of yourself, other people might describe you differently. They might focus on only one aspect of your personality, looks or history, when in fact all of us are many things.

Where Are You *Really* From?

How important is where you were born, where your parents were born and where your grandparents were born, to who you are today? Having a sense of who you are and where you're from isn't as simple as having the place you were born written in your passport. For people whose family trees begin many miles away, it can be complicated.





Take Vikesh (who's written this book), for example . . . He was born in Ealing, in London, in England, to parents who had arrived in the United Kingdom from Tanzania in East Africa four years before, whose own parents fled Gujarat in India after their home became unsafe to live in.

Vikesh has never lived anywhere but the United Kingdom, but he understands his parents' language which is a mixture of Gujarati and Swahili (the language of Tanzania). He grew up following Hinduism, one of the main religions in India, and if you saw him, you would probably say that he 'looks Indian'.



He loves fish and chips with curry sauce, puts chilli on his eggs in the morning, and sometimes says 'panjama', the Swahili word for pyjamas.





He counts in his head in English, replies in English when he is spoken to in Gujarati, and remembers cheering on Great Britain, when the Olympic Games were in London, as one of the best days of his life.

When people ask Vikesh, 'Where are you from?' what should he say? London? The United Kingdom? Africa? India? Asia?

Inventive Ancient India

Ancient India was a land of inventors, big thinkers and skilled tradespeople. Archaeologists (people who study history by examining objects) have found evidence of ideas and inventions being used in ancient India that were far more advanced than anything in Europe at the time.

Fine Craftsmanship

The first people to grow cotton for making cloth were the Harappan people, also known as the Indus Valley Civilization, in the area of modern-day Pakistan around 4,500 years ago. Over thousands of years, expert clothmakers perfected their weaving techniques and dyed their cotton in vivid colours, using ingredients such as pomegranate seeds and turmeric, which grew in India's warm climate.



INDIA THEN AND NOW

When we talk about India *before* 1947 in this book, we are talking about the lands of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Before this date they were all one country.



It wasn't until after the invasion of India by Alexander the Great of Greece in 327 BCE – over 2,000 years later – that trade in cotton began with the ancient Greeks and Romans. By this time, Indian cotton was so incredibly fine it was often mistaken for silk.

Ancient Indian people also developed special ways of working with iron which were not used in Europe until around 1,500 years later. The seven-metre-tall iron pillar of Delhi has been standing since around 400 CE.

As Easy as One-Two-Three

Around 1,500 years ago, Indian mathematicians developed the Hindu-Arabic numeral system, a way of writing numbers that was much simpler than the Roman numerals commonly used at the time. Roman numerals are letters that represent numbers, so 1 = I, 5 = V and 10 = X, and so on. Depending on the order of the letters, you add or subtract numbers to reach your total figure, and that's before you even do any sums! The Hindu-Arabic numeral system is also known as the decimal system, and is made up of the numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. This clever way of writing numbers didn't catch on in Europe until about 500 years later!

Not long after the invention of the decimal system, another impressive mathematical development came when an Indian astronomer named Brahmagupta defined zero as the result of subtracting a number from itself, and proposed rules for calculating negative numbers. (You could say, he invented nothing!)





The ancient Indian approach to healthcare, known as *Ayurvedic* medicine, is to care for the body and soul together, based on the belief that the two are very closely connected. It was practised in India around 1000 BCE, hundreds of years before Hippocrates, the ancient Greek 'father of medicine' was born!

There is also evidence of advanced surgery in ancient India, with records from as far back as around 600 BCE instructing surgeons on how to reconstruct a person's nose if it had been cut off – the procedure is still known as the 'Indian Flap' today.

This surgery was important because cutting off a person's nose was a common punishment in ancient India. The idea was that everyone who saw a person with no nose would instantly know they were untrustworthy. Having a nose rebuilt by surgeons could once again allow a person (rightly or wrongly accused of crime) to live a more normal life.



CHECKMATE!

Chess as we know it today was invented in India around the 6th century. It is thought to have evolved from an older Indian game called *Chaturanga*, which may have had four players instead of just two – and used elephants instead of bishops!

