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India in Perspective   *April 2015*

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Busy street
© Miran Rijavec

Chapter 1 Geography

Introduction

India occupies the peninsular part of subcontinental South Asia and is located along historically important trade routes. India is bordered by Pakistan on the northwest, Nepal and China on the north, and Bhutan and Bangladesh on the northeast. India has extensive maritime borders: the Arabian Sea on the southwest, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the Bay of Bengal on the east. Noncontiguous territories include the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea, and the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal. India is approximately 65 km (40 mi) from Sri Lanka, across the Palk Strait in the Indian Ocean.[1, 2, 3]

Few countries can match India's geographical diversity, which offers a survey of the

Earth's many terrains and climates. India's northern areas are topped by the towering peaks of the Himalayas, some of which reach over 8,000 m (26,250 ft). The Himalayas also contain the headwaters of several of India's fabled rivers, including the Ganges (Ganga) and the Brahmaputra. In the east and the far southern mountains are lush tropical rainforests. In western India lies the Great Indian Desert, also known as the Thar Desert, where annual rainfall averages less than 15 cm (5.9 in) in parts.[4, 5, 6, 7, 8]

Geographic Divisions

India can be divided into seven major geographic regions.[9] From north to south, they include the Northern Mountains, the Great Plains, the Central Highlands, the Peninsular Plateaus (also called the Deccan Plateau), the East Coast, the West Coast, and the island chains found in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. Some consider the combined area of the Thar Desert and the Rann of Kachchh in western India to be an eighth region.[10]

Northern Mountains

Himalayas
Courtesy of NASA

The Northern Mountains region consist of the Himalayan ranges along India's northern border, the Naga Hills that form the Indo-Burman (Myanmar) border, and the Khasi Hills region that lies south of the Brahmaputra River in Meghalaya State. The Northern Mountains region is the least populated in India, with the largest city being Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.[11, 12,13, 14, 15]

The Great Plains

The Great Plains are the most fertile and densely populated areas of India and Pakistan. The Plains consist of the basins of the Ganges (Ganga), Brahmaputra, and Indus Rivers, and their tributaries. The Thar Desert lies in the southwestern portion of this region. Delhi in the northwest, and Kolkata in the southeast, are the largest cities.[16, 17, 18]

Family in Thar Desert
© Dylan DeFalco

The Central Highlands

The Central Highlands consist of several hills and mountain ranges that run generally east to west. The region's southern boundary is the Satpura Range, which is between the Narmada and Tapti rivers, the only two major rivers in India flowing westward. Most of the rivers in this region flow north towards the Gangetic Plains. On the western edge of the region is Jaipur, its largest city.[19, 20, 21, 22]

The Peninsular Plateaus

The Peninsular Plateaus consist of various sections of the Deccan Plateau and the Eastern and Western Ghats that form the Deccan's boundary along the coasts. (*Ghats* is Hindi for "steps" or "hills.") Most of the rivers in this region run from west to east. The largest cities on the Deccan Plateau are Bengaluru (Bangalore) and Hyderabad.[23, 24]

The East Coast

The East Coast lies east of the Eastern Ghats and contains the deltas of the Mahanadi, Godavari, and Krishna rivers. India's fourth-largest city, Chennai, lies on the southern portion of the East Coast, along a stretch known as the Coromandel Coast.[25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30]

The West Coast

India's West Coast is narrower than the East Coast; it lies to the west of the Western Ghats and the Peninsular Plateaus. The largest rivers draining into the West Coast are the Narmada and Tapti, both on the northern end of the coastal plain. Mumbai is on the West Coast.[31, 32, 33, 34]

Cape Comorin
© Bryce Edwards

The Island Chains

India's three coral limestone island chains—the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea, and the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the eastern Bay of Bengal—are the most remote and least populated of India's union territories. The latter two island chains, particularly the Nicobar Islands, were hard-hit by the devastating December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.[35, 36, 37]

Climate

The two great influences on India's climate are the Himalayas (which block the cold air coming from Central Asia) and the Indian Ocean.[38] Temperatures and climate vary with altitude in the Himalayas. In the middle Himalayas, between 1,850 and 3,050 m (6,000 to 10,000 ft), summer temperatures average between 15 to 18 °C (59 to 64 °F), but by 4,800 m (16,000 ft) the temperature rarely rises above 0 °C (32 °F).[39] There are record below-freezing temperatures during the Himalayan winters. In the arid Thar Desert, temperatures can range from near freezing in the winter, to over 50 °C (122 °F) in the summer.[40]

Sunset
© Pankaj Kaushal

Along the eastern and western coasts, the climate is tropical, damp, and rainy.

India has four relatively distinct seasons, according to the Indian Meteorological Department. Winter is dry and cool from December through February, followed by the summer, or pre-monsoon season, which is dry and hot from March through May. The other two seasons are the southwest monsoon season (June through September), and a period characterized by the dry northeast monsoon (October and November).[41, 42]

The Monsoon

Life in India revolves around the annual monsoon season because it determines the agricultural cycle. Coming off the sea, the southwest monsoon usually arrives in western India in early June and then moves north. An eastern branch of the monsoon moves northward from the Bay of Bengal, bringing occasional torrential rains and flooding to the low-lying areas of eastern India and Bangladesh. This eastern branch of the monsoon is blocked by the Himalayas and turns toward the west. The two branches ultimately meet in the Gangetic Plains.[43, 44]

Monsoon
© Rakesh Krishna Kumar

The retreat of the monsoon, also known as the northeast monsoon, moves from the northwest in October and November. Most of the country receives only low to moderate rainfall during this period, with the exception of coastal areas along the southeastern part of the Indian peninsula.[45, 46]

India receives up to 90% of its total precipitation during the monsoon period. Average

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rainfall is about 1,215 mm (48 in), but regional levels range from less than 100 mm (4 in) in the western Thar Desert to more than 2,500 mm (99 in) in the northeastern part of the country.[47, 48]

Major Rivers

Indus River
© Connie Ma

Major rivers are revered in India, and pilgrimage spots can be found along most of them. Nearly all of India's rivers (*nadi*) are named for Hindu goddesses. Only one is masculine, the Brahmaputra.

There are three major river basins on the Indian subcontinent: the Ganges (Ganga), the Indus, and the Brahmaputra. Of these, only the Ganges River originates within India and flows through the country for most of its length. Some of the world's largest stretches of flat alluvial soils have been created in these rivers' drainage basins, which now contain some of the most densely populated areas on Earth.[49]

Ganges (Ganga) River

Ganges, Banares
© Harneet Bhatia

Bounded by the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhya Range to the south, the Ganges River Basin is the largest in India. The basin has two main headwaters on the Indian side of the Himalayas. They are the Bhagirathi River, originating from the Gangotri glacier at Gomukh ("*cow's mouth*"), and the Alaknanda River, rising from near the Alkapuri glacier.[50] The glaciers that feed these headwater streams are shrinking at a rate of 36.6 m (120 ft) per year. Consequently, there is increasing concern that the Ganges may lose much of its flow during the dry, non-monsoon months.[51]

The Ganges watershed supports more than 600 million people.[52] Many Indians believe that the legendary source of the Ganges River in Gangotri is that of holy water. Lore has it that King Bhagirath was penitent for the sins of his predecessors. In response to his penance, the goddess Ganga came to earth in the form of water to absolve their sins. Pilgrimages are made during the non-winter months to a temple near Gangotri in honor of this legend.[53]

Brahmaputra River

The Brahmaputra River rises in the northern Himalayas in western Tibet and flows eastward for nearly 1,700 km (1,056 mi) before turning south and entering India in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. It then drops rapidly in elevation and flows southwest. In western Assam State, the Brahmaputra again turns toward the south and flows into Bangladesh. Here it splits into two main branches before reconnecting and merging with the Ganges River near the Bangladeshi city of Chandpur.[54, 55]

The Brahmaputra's length measures 2,880 km (1,790 mi).[56] It carries a larger volume of water than any other Indian river because of its reception of heavy monsoon rains.[57,] It also carries a heavy load of silt and, with the Ganges and Meghna rivers, forms the largest river delta in the world.[58] Most of this river is navigable, even at elevations of 3,962 m (13,000 feet).[59]

Indus River
© Sandeep Achetan

Indus River

Formed by what was called the *Sindhu* in ancient times, the Indus River Basin was the cradle of India's great Indus Valley Civilization. In fact, "India" is the namesake of the Indus River.[60, 61] Only a small portion of the main branch of the river flows through Indian-controlled areas (in Ladakh, on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Kashmir). When the Indus reaches the plains below the Himalayas in Pakistan, it is joined by five famous tributaries—the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—that give Punjab its name ("*five waters*"). All of these tributaries flow through areas that are either part of or controlled by India. Consequently, the division of their waters was one of the thorniest issues between India and Pakistan for over a decade following partition.[62, 63]

Yamuna River
© Gary Denham

Yamuna River

The Yamuna rises from the Yamunotri glacier in the Tehri Garhwal District of the Himalayas. It flows almost parallel to the Ganges for about 1,376 km (855 mi), until the two rivers meet at Allahabad.[64] The area between the Yamuna and Ganges rivers is referred to as the Yamuna-Ganges Doab, or simply "the Doab." This is a region of extensive irrigated farming, and this has made Uttar Pradesh India's top wheat-producing state.[65]

Large amounts of waste enter the Yamuna in the Delhi region. Despite major governmental investments in treatment plants, the Yamuna remains the country's most polluted river, particularly between Delhi and its confluence with the Chambal River. The cities of Agra and Mathura also contribute pollutants along this stretch of the river, which has relatively little flow except during the monsoon season. [66, 67, 68]

Godavari
© Kalyan Kumar

Godavari River

The Godavari River begins northeast of Mumbai. It follows a southeasterly course for about 1,465 km (910 mi) before flowing into the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of Andhra Pradesh, an eastern state. The delta area of the Godavari, which connects to the Krishna River via an irrigation-canal system, is one of the country's main rice-growing areas.[69, 70]

Krishna River

South of the Godavari, the Krishna River originates in the Western Ghats and flows eastward into the Bay of Bengal. Its current is not strong because it is fed by relatively low levels of rainfall—660 mm (26 in) annually at the city of Pune near the river's headwaters. Despite its low volume, the Krishna is the third-longest river in India.[71, 72, 73, 74]

Mumbai
© Reid MacDonald

Delhi slum
© Bu / Flickr.com

Major Cities

Since India's independence from Britain in 1947, a number of the nation's major cities have changed their names from the British anglicized forms. Several of them are among the 50 most populous urban areas in the world. As important transport and commercial hubs, India's major cities remain magnets for rural migrants who are unable to eke out a living from the land.

Delhi/New Delhi

The metropolis of Delhi, also referred to as the National Capitol Territory (NCT) of Delhi, comprises multiple urban areas. New Delhi, the capital and seat of India's government, is just one of the NCT's urban areas. The city has been the seat of power for many kingdoms and empires over the last 1,000 years. Throughout this time, seven cities were built by various rulers within what are the limits of modern Delhi. New Delhi is thus sometimes referred to as the eighth of Delhi's historical cities.[75, 76, 77]

The city's population has exploded since the mid-20th century. During the post-partition period from 1947 to 1948, the city absorbed many of the West Punjab Hindus who moved to India when their homeland became part of Pakistan. Subsequent waves of immigration from other parts of India began in the 1950s. In the last two decades of the 20th century alone, the city's population more than doubled. Many of the city's residents now live in urban slums called *jhuggi-jhompris*. Pollution and overtaxed infrastructure have been major consequences of this migration.[78] (Population: 17.8 million)[79]

Mumbai (Bombay)

Named for the goddess Mumba Devi, Mumbai is built on a set of seven islands. The islands were amalgamated into what is now Salsette Island by British reclamation, and by drainage projects during the 19th and 20th centuries. The main part of the city lies at the southern end of the island, with suburbs occupying most of the rest. Mumbai's long-time colonial name, Bombay, comes from the Portuguese words for "good bay," and the city's natural harbor was certainly one of the main reasons for its growth during the colonial era.[80, 81, 82]

Mumbai skyline
© jonah / flickr.com

Mumbai is the country's commercial capital. India's central bank—the Reserve Bank of India—is headquartered there, as is the Bombay Stock Exchange, the oldest stock exchange in Asia. The National Stock Exchange, also in Mumbai, is the world's third largest in terms of the number of transactions.[83] The city was industrialized as a textile production center for the domestic market, although textiles have since declined in importance. Today the information and entertainment industries, such as publishing and television, play an important role in the city's economy. Mumbai is world famous as the home of "Bollywood," India's counterpart of Hollywood, with over 1,000 films produced there each year.[84] In November 2008, the city experienced a coordinated wave of terrorist attacks that resulted in at least 166 fatalities.[85] Since then, India has boosted security, and nationwide security alerts have become common.[86] (Population: 20.5 million)[87]

Kolkata (Calcutta)

Kolkata began as a small, British East India Company trading post on the east bank of the Hugli (Hooghly) River in Bengal. There is some evidence that the location was chosen due to its proximity to three villages with local merchants. Then known as Calcutta, the city quickly grew and was once the most populated city in India, serving as the capital of British rule in India from 1772 to 1912. With the move of the British capital to Delhi, the city began a period of slow decline. The partition of Bengal, between India and Pakistan, was a particularly difficult time as hundreds of thousands of refugees arrived in the city. This just

Kolkata
© seaview99/ flickr.com

exacerbated the already serious problem of overcrowding.[88]

Kolkata now serves as the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. It lies 261 km (126 mi) from the ocean on a tributary of the Ganges River. Kolkata is considered one of India's best eastern ports because it maintains a deep harbor for large cargo ships and has substantial dry dock facilities.[89] The city was historically an industrial center, but several factors, including fallout from partition and union-led labor strife, contributed to industrial decline from the late 1940s through the 1980s. Since the mid-1990s, the leadership of the local Communist Party of India (which has held elective office in West Bengal State since 1977) has been supportive of measures to reform and modernize the economy of the state's largest city. The party's leadership has also been supportive of attracting foreign investment in a manner similar to China.[90]

Kolkata is particularly susceptible to flooding during heavy monsoon rains, due to its location on a narrow, low-lying strip between a river to the west and marshlands to the east. Some flooding is experienced each year, but extreme flooding occurred during the summer monsoons of 2007.[91, 92] (Population: 14.3million)[93]

Chennai (Madras)

Chennai (known as Madras until 1996) was founded as Fort Saint George, a fortress and "factory" (a trading post and warehousing facility), by the British East India Company in 1639—the first such British outpost on the subcontinent.[94] Chennai is now India's largest coastal city on the Bay of Bengal. It is a city of rivers, with the Cooum River dividing it into northern and southern halves. The Adyar River further divides the city's southern half in two.[95, 96]

Chennai is a major commercial center with a large number of industrial, textile, and software firms. Several factories manufacture vehicles and automotive parts, and output will soon reach 1.5 million vehicles per year.[97, 98, 99] Chennai is also becoming the nation's center for electronics manufacturing, especially mobile phones and related hardware, with Nokia, Motorola, Foxconn, and Flextronics either building or operating manufacturing plants around the city.[100, 101] (Population: 8.9 million)[102]

Bengaluru (Bangalore)

On 1 November 2006, Bangalore became the latest major Indian city to rename itself, shifting to its pre-colonial name, Bengaluru. This inland city, on a ridge in the southern part of peninsular India, was a British administrative center from 1831 to 1881. Despite Bengaluru's southern location, its climate is relatively mild. The availability of water is an ongoing concern because of the area's fast growth, its lack of nearby rivers, and a modest average rainfall by Indian standards.[103]

Bengaluru is a major transportation center in South India, with road and rail systems connecting it to Mumbai, Chennai, and other coastal cities. Over the last two decades, it has become known as India's Silicon Valley. Initially associated with outsourcing corporations such as Infosys and Wipro, the city has more recently received attention for its technology start-ups, making the Silicon Valley comparison even more apt.[104, 105] Yet Bengaluru's infrastructural development has not kept pace with its economic growth—a complication that could impede further expansion.[106, 107] (Population: 10.1 million)[108]

InfoSystems HQ, Bengaluru
© Amit / flickr.com

Environmental Concerns

As economic growth has contributed to increased urbanization in India, air and water pollution, land degradation, and shrinking biodiversity have become key concerns.

Atmospheric Pollution

Between the 1951 and 2001 censuses, the percentage of population increase went from 17.3 to 27.8%[109] As India's urban population has grown, the number of automobiles has mushroomed even faster, particularly in the largest urban centers. Delhi alone has the highest concentration of airborne particles in the world.[110] India's burgeoning middle class has made the country one of the fastest growing markets for auto manufacturers.[111] Yet unleaded fuel was not introduced until 2000, after the effects of lead poisoning had become evident.[112] Air pollution fluctuates throughout the country. In many cities, air pollution has reduced

Air pollution, Mumbai
© Shreyans / flickr.com

over the years. However, in the cities experiencing the greatest growth, pollution has risen exponentially.[113, 114]

Water pollution, Chennai
© Andrew Sorensen

Water Pollution

India's water quality has suffered from a growing population that is increasingly centered in urban areas. In addition, the widespread use of chemical fertilizers to increase agricultural production has led to rising levels of nitrates, potassium, phosphates, and zinc in groundwater. Water pollution poses a serious threat to public health. [115, 116] The rates of waterborne diseases are high, with 92% of the population accessing sources of drinking water that are contaminated.[117, 118] There are report that as much as 80% of India's sewage is untreated and is discharged directly into its river systems.[119]

Land Degradation

There is a high ratio of people to arable land. Therefore, farmers are forced to engage in intensive cultivation that depletes the soil of nutrients. To compensate, farmers may add fertilizers that subsequently wash away into the water table.[120]

Deforestation
© Seema K K / flickr.com

Deforestation has been a long-term process. Prior to British colonial rule, some landowners had begun to plant cash crops, such as cotton. This trend accelerated after colonization. Forests were cleared to grow crops for export.[121] The process continued after independence, and the land exhausted its carrying capacity as the population grew. In order to succeed, conservation efforts must provide alternate livelihoods to impoverished farmers.[122, 123, 124, 125]

Biodiversity

India is one of the world's 17 "megadiversity" countries, a classification given to countries that are home to an estimated 10% of all known world species.[126] Within India, the rainforests of the Western Ghats, and the Eastern Himalayas of the northeast, provided some of the richest habitats for plant and animal species.[127]

In the 1970s and 80s, India passed important legislation—the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980—designed to protect its remaining wild habitats. However, enforcement of this legislation has been somewhat problematic and controversial. For one, subsequent governmental development policies and, in some cases, corruption have allowed timber and other industries to extend their interests into areas intended for protection.[128, 129] Second, the original forest conservation legislation did not adequately take into account the needs or concerns of the local, mostly tribal groups living in India's forested regions. As a result, the ban on forest encroachments has come under fire from those fighting for the rights of the indigenous people to maintain their way of life, which might rely on slash-and-burn agriculture. The latter problem was addressed by a controversial Recognition of Forest Rights bill in 2006, but the effects of this bill on India's forest inhabitants, both human and wildlife, remain to be seen.[130]

Bengal tiger
Courtesy Wikipedia.org

Monsoon
© Kshitiz Anand

Natural Hazards

India's most frequent natural disaster is flooding. The monsoonal rains that deliver most of the annual rainfall to the Indian subcontinent often overwhelm the capacity of Indian rivers to accommodate the increased flow. This problem has become more acute because the flood plains have eroded, and riverbeds have filled with sediment from intensive cultivation of the land. For example, in the fall of 2010 heavy rainfall, floods, and landslides in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand forced millions to relocate, damaged infrastructure, and inundated hundreds of villages.[131] The consequences can be even more disastrous when monsoonal rains fail to deliver. Drought can result in hundreds of thousands of deaths. Northwestern and eastern India are particularly susceptible to flooding and to drought.[132]

Coastal regions of India, particularly the eastern coast on the Bay of Bengal, are subject to catastrophic losses from cyclones. Many storms create catastrophic damage and the loss of life has sometimes been immense.[133, 134]

Mountainous northern India, where plate motions continue to drive the uplift of the Himalayas, is the region most prone to earthquakes and landslides. The Eastern Highlands near the Burmese border, where rainfall totals are some of the highest within India, are also subject to frequent earthquakes and landslides.[135, 136, 137]

Even though earthquakes are most common in India's northern and eastern hills and mountains, three of the country's largest and most devastating earthquakes (in 1819, 1956, and 2001) occurred in the near-coastal region south of the Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat State.[138] The 2001 earthquake was one of the deadliest in India's history, killing approximately 20,000 people.[139]

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Chapter 1 Assessment

1. The Central Highlands are the most densely populated region of India.

   FALSE

   The most densely populated region of India is the Great Plains region, where the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Indus river basins are home to hundreds of millions of people.

2. India receives most of its rainfall during the southwest monsoon season.

   TRUE

   Typically occurring from June through September, the southwest monsoon provides up to 80% of the country's total annual precipitation.

3. Hindus believe that the Ganges River is a sacred water source.

   TRUE

   According to Hindu belief, the Ganges River is the earthly manifestation of the goddess Ganga, whose waters are thought to purify the soul and heal the sick.

4. Mumbai is the capital of India.
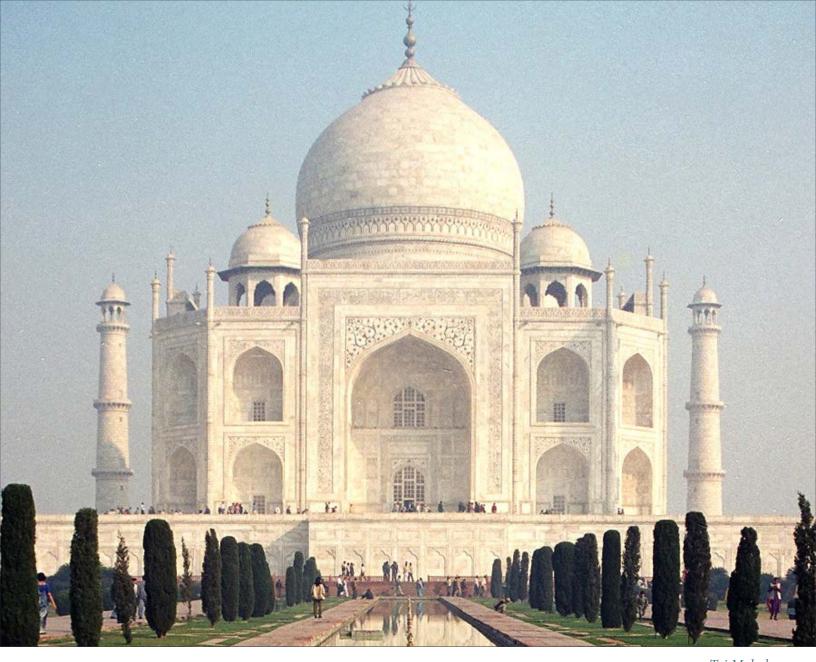
   FALSE

   New Delhi is the Indian capital and longtime seat of government; Mumbai is the nation's chief financial center and most populous city.

5. Cyclones are the most common natural disaster in India.

   FALSE

   India's most frequent natural disaster is flooding, which often occurs when heavy monsoon rains overwhelm the carrying capacity of the country's major rivers.

Taj Mahal
© Meutia Chaerani

Chapter 2 History

Introduction

The archeological record shows that India has been inhabited since at least 2500 B.C.E. During this period, urbanism developed in response to the needs of an agricultural products exchange network. According to some accounts, Aryan nomads migrated into the subcontinent during the second millennium B.C.E., where they settled in the Upper Ganges River area, before spreading east and south into adjoining regions. Over the centuries, the political map of ancient India frequently changed as kingdoms rose and fell. During the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., Northern India was united under

the Gupta Empire, which corresponded to what many view as the golden age of Hindu culture. European explorers and merchants arrived in the late 15th century, and the first British outpost on the subcontinent was established in 1619. India subsequently became known as Britain's colonial "jewel," as precious gems, foreign goods, and trade revenues made their way to London.

After the country gained independence from Britain in 1947, multiethnic India embraced and sustained a democratic system of governance. This was achieved despite lacking a sizeable middle class—an achievement unique among postcolonial nations.[1] Historically, its elections have been considered free and fair, with high rates of voter participation. However, no other parliamentary democracy has such an unwieldy character, with 24 separate coalitions comprising the national government. This inherently factious structure ensures that legislation will have to accommodate many interests.[2]

Lothal, ancient dock
© Nataraja /fr.wikipedia.org

Early History

The Indus Valley Civilization

The beginning of India's complex history dates back at least 5,000 years, to the emergence of the Indus Valley Civilization. Most remains of Indus Valley cities are located in present-day Pakistan, but settlement ruins have been uncovered in the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Punjab as well. The sites in Gujarat seem to have developed later and survived longer than the northern Indus Valley cities.[3] Most famous of the Gujarat ruins are those at Lothal, where there is evidence of a dockyard that connected to the nearby Sabarmati River, a route to the Arabian Sea.[4, 5]

The Aryans

Historically, India was not a politically unified region, but a land of many independent kingdoms. Over the centuries, various peoples invaded or migrated to India, gradually contributing to the region's diverse cultural composition. The first of these invasions/migrations is the most disputed: the emergence of the Aryans during the Vedic Age.[6, 7]

There is significant disagreement among scholars about events that took place around 1500 B.C.E. About this time, Aryan tribes from the northwest supposedly invaded the Indus River Valley, merged with the region's earlier inhabitants, and initiated the formation of what is often considered classical Indian (Vedic) culture. In opposition to this viewpoint, some Indian and Western scholars argue that the original "Aryan

invasion theory" was the culturally biased interpretation of 19th-century Christian scholars. The claim is that there is little evidence that Aryans were anything other than the people who had lived in the northwest Indian subcontinent since 6000 B.C.E. Reinterpretations that are more recent have reversed the Aryan invasion theory. Such reinterpretations are based on the idea that indigenous Aryans in the Indus River Valley spread to the north and west into adjoining regions. This hypothesis is known as the "Out of India theory."[8, 9]

Modern proponents of the Aryan invasion theory primarily base their arguments on linguistic and literary grounds, rather than archaeological evidence. Recent archaeological and genetic research does not provide any evidence of a massive influx of outsiders overrunning the ancient Indus River Civilization around 1500 B.C.E. Many scholars who support this theory now believe that the Aryan "invasion" into the Indian subcontinent was actually a slow-but-steady immigration of a largely nomadic population, rather than a militaristic invasion.[10, 11]

These arguments are much more than academic exercises because they reflect how modern Indians may view their collective cultural identity. Dissenters note that the Aryan invasion theory has been used to assert that the pre-Aryan Indus River dwellers were proto-Dravidian-speaking people who were driven south by the invasion, thus dividing the subcontinent into northern Aryan and southern Dravidian cultures. Such a north–south cultural divide is still felt today in India. Those who disagree with the invasion theory provide an alternate explanation. They argue that the migrations of Indus River people to the south was a response to the drying up of a massive prehistoric river, the Saraswati, which apparently once drained the Ganges and Yamuna rivers.[12, 13]

The Mauryan Empire

The Aryans eventually moved east and south, and by the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E., most of northern India was inhabited and under cultivation. Between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E., short-lived invasions by the Persians and, later, the Greeks (led by Alexander the Great) primarily affected the Indus River Valley and Punjab.

Magadha King Chandragupta Maurya
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Toward the end of this period, the Magadha King Chandragupta Maurya began to extend his kingdom (based in modern Bihar State) to adjoining regions. By the time his grandson Ashoka the Great came to power around 270 B.C.E., the Mauryan Empire extended across all but the southernmost end of the Indian subcontinent. The early years of Ashoka's reign were marked by numerous military conquests, yet the later years were noteworthy as a time of peace. After the bloody conquest of Kalinga in modern Orissa State, Ashoka renounced warfare and converted to Buddhism.[14] He was influential in propagating this religion throughout his empire and beyond.[15]

The Gupta Empire

Several centuries passed after the breakup of the Mauryan Empire in the second century B.C.E.; a time when much of India was ruled by local kingdoms. Conflict between these kingdoms led to frequent power reversals. During the fourth century C.E., most of northern India was reunited into the Gupta Empire. This was a period when Hindu culture, science, and arts flourished and is is referred to as the Golden Age. However, this ended by the mid-sixth century when the Gupta dynasty crumbled after a series of attacks led by invaders from the northwest. Northern India again split into regional kingdoms.[16, 17, 18]

Muslim Rule

In 711, Arab military forces conquered the Indian province of Sindh (part of modern Pakistan) and established an Indo–Muslim state. They used this foothold to establish trade relations with the Middle East, but they otherwise had little interaction with the rest of South Asia. By the end of the 10th century, Central Asian Turkish tribes, who were recent converts to Islam, began moving into northwest India. Their leader, Mahmud of Ghazni, also known as the "Sword of Islam," conquered Punjab in 1027.[19, 20] By the early 13th century, a Turkish kingdom was established in Delhi, known as the Delhi Sultanate. This kingdom continued to extend its power throughout the subcontinent, serving as the dominant influence south to the Deccan Plateau, and east to Bengal during the early 16th century. However, internal conflicts and political assassinations plagued the Sultanate and reduced its reach.[21, 22]

Mahmud of Ghazni
Courtesy of Wikipedia

On the heels of this tumultuous period came the Mughal Empire founded by Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur in 1526. His grandson, Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Akbar,

later built upon and consolidated the Mughal dynasty, in part by reconciling with and assimilating the large Hindu population. As part of this effort, he promoted a new religion, *Din-i-Ilahi* (Divine Faith), which endorsed the acceptance of all religions and sects, but it was not widely embraced.[23] The architecture of the Akbar reign reflects a blending of Hindu and Muslim cultures, most notably in the Mughal royal city of Fatepuhr Sikri, now a World Heritage Site near Agra.[24]

Portuguese influenced villa
© Dominik Hundhammer

The Colonial Era

The Rise of European Powers in India

As part of an extensive search for riches, trade routes, and religious converts, European seafaring nations began exploring the world in the 15th century. In 1498, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed on the western coast of India. The Portuguese defeated the local sultan's forces 12 years later, and seized the port of Goa. There, the Portuguese established a monopoly over trade in the immediate vicinity for the next 450 years.[25] The Portuguese eventually established a chain of outposts along India's western coast, but by the beginning of the 18th century, only Goa and the smaller towns of Diu and Daman (coastal enclaves of modern Gujarat State) remained of the Portuguese colonial territories.[26]

Both the British and the Dutch chartered trading companies to break Portuguese control of trade. The British East India Company was formally founded in 1600, followed by the Dutch United East India Company in 1602. Both companies focused initially on developing the spice trade. Ultimately, however, the British company steered toward trade in bulk goods rather than luxury goods, in part because the former required less military support to enforce a monopoly.[27] Local Indian rulers, most of whom were Muslim, authorized both the Dutch and English to trade in their ports because the rulers hoped to pit the new companies against the anti-Islam/anti-Muslim Portuguese.[28]

The British and the Dutch established factories, or "warehouses," on the Indian coast. The Mughal port town of Surat, on the Gulf of Khambhat, became the first colonial flash point in India in 1612, when the British defeated the Portuguese in a naval battle off Surat. This battle marked both the decline of the Portuguese trading monopoly in India, and the beginning of the British ascendancy.[29]

British Expansion

The early British agents gained a competitive edge over other European colonizers of India by learning the local customs and languages, including Persian, the official language of the ruling Mughals. In some cases they also married Indians. The French, Danish, and Austrians later established themselves in India, but found themselves consistently outmaneuvered in diplomacy and developing alliances with local rulers.[30] A turning point for the French in their struggle with the British East India Company came in 1751, when a small force of British soldiers (led by Robert Clive) successfully captured and then defended the fort at Arcot,

British in India
Courtesy of Wikipedia

the inland capital of the Madras region, for over 50 days. The battle resulted in a local power shift to Indian rulers who were beholden to East Indian Company interests. This signaled the end of France's role in India, and by 1763, France's colonial possessions in India were reduced to Pondicherry (now Puducherry), south of Madras, and a few smaller outposts.[31, 32]

From 1757 until 1857, the East India Company substantially and aggressively expanded its domain. There were occasional arguments in the British Parliament against the expansion, but the arguments that justified military operations for security reasons always won. At the same time, the British attitude toward Indian culture changed from admiration and appreciation, to a feeling of superiority and a belief in the "mission to civilize." Indians felt this shift in attitude through British missionary efforts in publishing, schools, orphanages, vocational institutions, dispensaries, and hospitals.[33, 34]

Rebellion

In 1857, in what became known as the "Sepoy Rebellion" (or for Indians, the "First War of Indian Independence"), some Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army (*sepoy*) mutinied in the Meerut garrison northeast of Delhi. The rebels quickly offered their services to the Mughal emperor in Delhi, who was by then ruling an extremely diminished empire that had been in decline since 1707. The *sepoy* began a year-long war against the British that engulfed all of northern India. Two significant events led to the rebellion. The first was the 1856 British annexation of Oudh (central Uttar Pradesh State in modern India), which represented one of the last vestiges of Mughal authority. The second event was the use (at least initially) of beef and pork fat by the British to grease the cartridges for new guns issued to *sepoys*, an act that was deeply offensive to both Hindu and Muslim soldiers. Although the British eventually stifled the insurrection and

Sepoy Rebellion
Courtesy of Wikipedia

drove the rebels into Nepal, the uprising was a major turn in the British occupation of India. In 1858, the British banished the Mughal emperor, liquidated the British East India Company. In 1885, the Indian National Congress (INC), a body formed largely from upper class and Western-educated elites, met to consider the role of native Indians in government and the determination of civil rights. Early gains were slight, but by 1900 the Congress had become an all-Indian political organization, with one major exception: few Muslim Indians belonged to the Congress. Their minority status within much of India caused many Muslims to fear that their rights and religious practices would be in danger should the Hindu majority come to power.[35, 36, 37] In 1906, the All-India Muslim League was founded as a counterbalance to the National Congress. The All-India Muslim League's goal was to represent the interests of a nation within a nation.[38, 39]

A British attempt in 1905 to divide Bengal into East and West Bengal was met with resistance, first by Bengali Hindus and later by Hindu populations in other parts of the country. The partition resulted in an INC-led boycott of British goods. The boycott was extended to English schools in Bengal, and it led to calls for indigenous educational institutions. Subsequent British reform efforts to mitigate the national dissension were mostly successful, and during World War I India provided substantial support to England.[40]

After the war, the Government of India Act of 1919 allowed power sharing between appointed British officials and elected Indians.[41, 42] Yet at the same time, the British approved the Rowlatt Acts, which empowered the government to silence the press, detain political activists without trial, and make warrantless arrests. The passage of the Rowlatt Acts led to a nationwide work stoppage. The strike was orchestrated by Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi, who was at that time primarily known for his dedicated efforts in pursuing civil rights for Indians living in South Africa.[43, 44]

Gandhi, 1918
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Amritsar and Further Protests

On 19 April 1919, in the Punjab city of Amritsar, over 10,000 unarmed men, women, and children gathered in a public square to attend a protest meeting, despite an official ban on public assemblies. The British commander, Reginald Dyer, ordered his soldiers to fire point-blank into the crowd. Official figures show that 1,650 rounds were fired, killing 379 and wounding 1,137. (These figures are a source of disagreement and considered too low by some.) The Amritsar massacre, perhaps the most infamous event of the entire British period in India, produced shock waves inside and outside India and galvanized the Indian nationalist movement.[45]

Gandhi chose a path of nonviolent, civil disobedience to combat the British. Under his leadership, the Indian National Congress passed a new constitution with the goal of self-rule (*swaraj*). Gandhi urged the country to boycott all British institutions, laws, and products. He asked Indians to refuse to pay taxes and to discard British titles and honors. He called off the movement in 1922 because of Indian atrocities committed against the police in a remote eastern village. However, in 1930 he returned to the national spotlight, leading a successful nonviolent resistance (*satyagraha*) against British taxes on salt. Thousands of the protestors were jailed. This reinvigorated the resistance movement and motivated the British to fitfully, but inexorably move forward on reform legislation, such as the Government of India Act in 1935. This act led to the first provincial elections in India in 1937.[46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51]

Muslim League Committee
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The Growing Hindu–Muslim Divide

As India inched toward self-rule in the 1930s, the divide between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress widened. In the 1937 election, the INC won effective control of 9 of the 11 provinces. As a result, the INC had little motivation for sharing power with Muslim League members. This further stirred Indian Muslims to feel that their future was not in a federated India, but in a separate Muslim nation.[52] World War II further divided the two sides. The INC led protests from 1940 to 1942 against Britain's unilateral dissolution of the provincial governments and declaration of India's involvement in the war. Meanwhile, the Muslim League supported the British war effort.[53]

After the elections of 1946, a final proposal to create an Indian nation comprising relatively autonomous Hindu- and Muslim-majority regions was negotiated and approved by all parties. Yet, subsequent comments by the National Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru convinced Muslim League members that the INC would not abide by all tenets of the agreement. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, declared a Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946 in support of a separate Muslim nation. Strikes and protests quickly evolved into full-scale rioting in Calcutta, and a wave of violence across northern India. Any remaining hopes for a united India were lost.[54, 55, 56, 57]
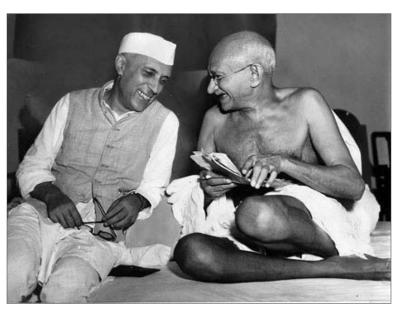
Partition and Independence

Almost one year later, on 15 August 1947, the nations of India and Pakistan were officially formed. Rioting, rapes, and massacres took place after the partition, as Muslims in India moved to the Pakistani side of the border and Hindus in Pakistani regions moved in the opposite direction. Over 10 million people relocated, and some estimate that at least 1 million people died.[58, 59]

The partition of greater India led to a conflict that remains unresolved; specifically, the territorial dispute over the Kashmir region. Because Kashmir was then a monarchy, the terms of the India–Pakistan partition dictated that the Kashmiri ruler should decide which country the kingdom should join. The Hindu Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim region (except for southern Jammu, which had a Hindu majority), did not decide immediately, nor did he accede to putting the issue to a popular vote. Only when tribal forces from Pakistan began moving into the western part of the region did he sign the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, ceding the kingdom of Kashmir to India. Pakistan claims that the Maharaja was pressured by India into signing this document and that it illegally ignores the previous Pakistan–Kashmir

Standstill Agreement. Thus, several wars later, Pakistan and India each still claim Kashmir as its own. The "line of control," a mostly unchanged remnant of the first Indo-Pakistani war, continues to separate the Pakistani-controlled areas of Kashmir from Indian-controlled areas. It has become the *de facto* boundary between the two countries in this volatile region.[60, 61]

Modern History

The Nehru Years

Nehru and Gandhi, 1946
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The new nation and the world were shocked by the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi, shortly after India gained its independence. Gandhi's death paved the way for India's other key leader of the independence movement, Jawaharlal Nehru, to become the country's first prime minister, a position he held until his death in 1964. During his nearly two decades as India's leader, Nehru stressed secular politics and a foreign policy of nonalignment. One of his major achievements was to push a country deeply divided by language, religion, and caste, toward democracy.[62] Nehru was also a Fabian socialist, and he modeled elements of India's planned economy after that of the Soviet Union.The largest changes to India's economy only emerged when the government began to implement a restrictive business registration process, which came to be negatively referred to as the "License Raj." India developed new industries during Nehru's time in power, yet the overall growth of the economy was sluggish.[63, 64]

During the last years of the Nehru era, India became involved in two military engagements. One occurred in 1961, when India took over the Portuguese colony of Goa. The other came in 1962, when China and India went to war for over one month over territorial claims to border regions adjacent to China's Xizang Autonomous Region (Tibet). At the end of the hostilities, a battered Indian military found itself defeated, while China was left in control of the Aksai Chin region (adjoining western Xizang) and Arunachal Pradesh (then called the North East Frontier Agency) to the east. China still controls and administers Aksai Chin, but Arunachal Pradesh was returned to Indian control shortly after the two countries agreed to a cease-fire.[65]

The 1965 India–Pakistan War

Following Nehru's death, former Minister of Home Affairs Lal Bahadur Shastri became India's second prime minister. His brief tenure was marked by India's second war

with Pakistan in 1965. The first skirmishes began in the spring, in the marshy Rann of Kachchh region along the southern Indian–Pakistani border. A few months later, full-scale war broke out in Kashmir, and India eventually opened a southern front by launching offensives against the Pakistani cities of Lahore and Sialkot. A cease-fire was finally reached by the end of September. In January 1966, both countries attended a peace conference in Tashkent in the Soviet republic of Uzbek. A peace declaration was signed during the conference, but the next day Shastri died of a heart attack. The Tashkent Agreement affirmed a desire on both sides to commence normalized peaceful relations, yet it did not have any lasting effect in quelling future hostilities.[66, 67, 68, 69, 70]

Indira Gandhi: The Early Years of Power

Shortly after Shastri's death, Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, was elected Prime Minister of India by the Congress Party to be the new Prime Minister of India. Initially dismissed by some political leaders as a *goonji gunjiya* ("dumb doll"), she proved to be a forceful, if sometimes autocratic, individual who led the Indian government for 15 of its next 18 years.[71] By the end of the 1971 war with Pakistan, many Indians were comparing her to the Hindu warrior goddess Durga.[72]

Gandhi continued many of her father's economic policies. She campaigned on a platform to eliminate poverty. Her government initiated several anti-poverty programs, although few achieved their desired results. The most important poverty-reducing program was the Green Revolution. This program centered around the use of double cropping and new, high-yield seed stocks to greatly increase agricultural productivity.[73, 74, 75]

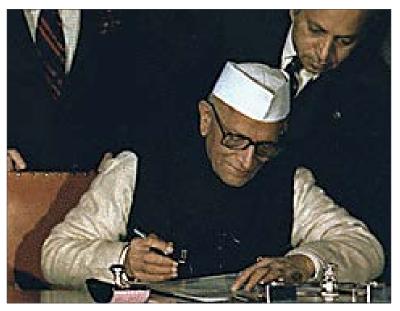Gandhi also proved quite savvy in her ability to break up old political alliances, while still maintaining power. She purged many of the old-line Congress leaders. After her expulsion from the party, she was able to create a new, even more powerful branch of the party, which was originally referred to as the Congress (R) Party

Indira Gandhi
Courtesy of Wikipedia

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and later Congress (I) (the "I" stood for Indira). By the end of 1970, her new party had won 350 of 515 seats in parliamentary elections.[76, 77]

The height of Gandhi's popularity came in the wake of the 1971 India–Pakistan War, in which the Indian army supported the Bangladeshi nationalists in East Pakistan. The war shifted to a western front along the India–West Pakistan border after the government forces in East Pakistan quickly surrendered. However, that campaign fared no better for the West Pakistan forces. A cease-fire was arranged in December, leaving Pakistan a devastated nation. Post-war Pakistan contained less than half as many people as before the war due to the independence of Bangladesh. The country's military forces were also in severe disarray after experiencing heavy losses.[78]

Morjari Desai
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Emergency Rule and Its Aftermath

By 1975, with India suffering from soaring oil prices and high inflation, strikes and protests broke out in the states of Gujarat and Bijar. As the protests grew, Gandhi was found guilty of election malpractice and she served a short period of incarceration.[79]

Measures to reduce inflation and boost the economy were also introduced during this period. Many of these were effective, although some (such as a sterilization program designed to slow India's population growth) proved quite unpopular.[80] Morarji Desai was elected Prime Minister of India after Indira Gandhi was removed from office. Desai's time as prime minister was short. The coalition that he headed was factious, and political infighting made it almost impossible to address pressing economic needs. Nonetheless, during his brief time in office, progress was made in normalizing relations with Pakistan and China.[81, 82]

The Desai government briefly arrested Gandhi and her son Sanjay, and made several criminal charges against them for their actions during the period of emergency rule. However, the investigation and attempted prosecution of Gandhi backfired politically, inciting a wave of sympathy for her among many Indians. By July 1979, Desai faced a vote of no confidence and he decided to resign. His successor, Chaudhary Charan Singh, resigned a few weeks later, after Gandhi retracted her support for him. New elections were held less than six months later, sweeping Gandhi back into office.[83]

Rajiv Gandhi Memorial
PlaneMad / Wikipedia.org

The 1980s: A Turbulent Decade

Indira Gandhi's political resurrection gave her a chance for a fresh start. However, her last 4 years in office were marred by growing unrest in Punjab state. Sikh militants had initiated a wave of terrorist attacks to further their goal of a obtaining a separate Sikh state in Punjab. As tensions escalated, Gandhi ordered an attack on militants encamped in Amritsar in the Harmandir Sahib (also known as the Golden Temple), the holiest shrine of Sikhism. The multi-day attack was carried out in June 1984, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of militants, Indian Army forces, and civilians caught in the crossfire.[84, 85]

Several months after the Golden Temple siege, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for the Golden Temple operation. Her younger son Rajiv, a relatively inexperienced politician who had spent most of his adult life as an airline pilot, took over as prime minister and won a full term in a landslide election victory later that year.[86, 87]

Soon after taking office, the Rajiv Gandhi administration embarked on a path of economic liberalization. During his 5 years in office, some of the License Raj restrictions were rescinded and foreign investment was courted for the first time. However, a bribery investigation conducted by Finance Minister V. P. Singh began to envelop numerous members of the Congress (I) Party, including Rajiv Gandhi. (Gandhi was acquitted of any wrongdoing by the Delhi High Court, albeit almost 20 years later.)[88]

This bribery scandal, amid rising inflation, increasingly made the Congress (I) Party politically vulnerable. Elections in 1989 brought to power a new, deeply splintered coalition headed by V. P. Singh's Janata Dal Party.[89] Rajiv Gandhi remained in politics, retaining his leadership of the opposition Congress (I) Party. Less than two years later, he was assassinated by a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a terrorist group waging a battle for a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka. At the time, Gandhi was campaigning to return the Congress (I) Party to power after new elections were called following the collapse of the fragile Janata Dal coalition.[90]

Manmohan Singh
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The Emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party

After the 1991 elections, the Congress (I) Party was able to form a new government headed by P. V. Narasimha Rao. (The party was denied an outright parliamentary majority.) Born in Andhra Pradesh, Rao became India's first prime minister from the southern part of the country. During his 5-year administration, the Indian government wholeheartedly embraced economic liberalization that extended reforms initiated during the Rajiv Gandhi era. The architect of many of these economic policies was Manmohan Singh, who worked for the International Monetary Fund before becoming Rao's finance minister.[91, 92]

As the Rao administration worked on transforming the economy, a new political force was gaining momentum. Following the collapse of the governing Janata Dal coalition in 1999, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh party and other members from the Janata coalition formed the Bharatiya Janata Party, usually referred to as the BJP. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh party had been the political arm of the militant, Hindu nationalist organization known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The BJP, the outgrowth of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, is a religiously conservative party that is felt by many to support a Hindu nationalist ideology (*hindutva*), although the BJP leadership describes their platform as one based on "Indianness."[93, 94, 95]

In 1992, militant BJP supporters and others destroyed the Babri Masjid, a mosque in the Uttar Pradesh city of Ayodhya, a city that is holy to Hindus. The mosque site is believed by many Hindus to be the former location of a Hindu temple that commemorated the birthplace of Lord Rama.[96] The razing of the Ayodhya mosque set off communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, and threatened India's policy of a secular government and society.[97, 98, 99, 100]

For the BJP, which had used the Ayodhya controversy for political gain, the razing of the Babri Masjid led to a political reassessment within the party. Accepting "moral responsibility" for the attacks, the BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani resigned his post after the wave of violence, and the party began to distance itself from its confrontational stance on issues such as Ayodhya.[101] As the BJP moderated toward the center, it grew more capable of forming coalitions with other parties opposing the Congress Party.[102]

BJP Ascendancy

Bihari Vajpayee
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Elections held in 1996 produced highly fragmented results. The BJP received the most seats but was unable to establish a ruling majority. Thus, for 2 years, India was led by a patched-together coalition that was headed by the Janata Dal party, but totally dependent on the support of the Congress Party. When the Congress Party withdrew this support in 1998, new elections were called. The results were again indecisive, but this time the BJP was able to establish a governing majority; it collapsed one year later.[103, 104, 105]

During the brief period of control, BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee became prime minister. In his first months, India startled the world by carrying out its first underground tests of nuclear weapons since 1974.[106, 107, 108] Several weeks later, Pakistan followed suit with its own first nuclear weapons tests. Many western governments, including the United States, responded by instituting broad economic sanctions on both India and Pakistan because of an increased fear of nuclear warfare between the two rival nations.[109, 110] These fears intensified when the two countries briefly carried out a border war in Kashmir during the spring of 1999.[111, 112]

Under Prime Minister Vajpayee, India continued to liberalize its economic policies. In doing so, the country achieved solid growth rates, although rural poverty remained

rampant. Relations between India and Pakistan also began to improve. But an outbreak of communal violence between Muslims and Hindus fueled concerns about the BJP *hindutva* philosophy. The incidents took place in Gujarat State, after a train fire resulted in the deaths of dozens of Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya. The fire was believed to have been set by a group of Muslims, and subsequent retaliatory violence left about 2,000 dead, most of whom were Muslim.[113, 114]

Sonia Gandhi
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The New Congress Party Coalition

One of the most startling political upsets in India's recent history took place during the 2004 parliamentary elections. The BJP and its National Democratic Alliance were widely expected to retain their leadership. However, they were soundly defeated by an opposition alliance, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by a resurgent Congress Party and its leader Sonia Gandhi. The party's victory was based on rural voter dissatisfaction with the inequitable distribution of economic prosperity, and a rejection of the party's former nationalistic agenda. Within the UPA, Gandhi shocked her party, as well as most of India, by refusing the role of prime minister after the election. Instead, she nominated Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic liberalization reform during the early 1990s. Thus, only 20 years after the Golden Temple attack and the violence against Sikhs following Indira Gandhi's assassination, a Sikh was named prime minister of India.[115, 116]

Recent Events

India celebrated its 60th year of independence in August 2007, at which time Prime Minister Singh made an address at the Red Fort in Delhi. He focused his remarks on one of the continuing challenges the country faces in its seventh decade. He stated, "India cannot become a nation with islands of high growth and vast areas untouched by development, where the benefits of growth accrue only to a few…We have moved forward in the many battles against poverty, ignorance and disease. But can we say we have won the war?"[117]

In late November 2008, Islamist militants carried out coordinated terrorist attacks at several locations in southern Mumbai, a city that for many "represents the side of India [that the country] wants the world to see: modern, open, capitalist, global and affluent…"[118] The Mumbai terrorist attack forced an immediate restructuring of the nation's security agencies and intelligence collection methods.[119]

Narandra Modi
Courtesy of Wikipedia

In 2014, India was active on the national and international stages. Indian Prime Minister Narandra Modi reached out to Australia to create alliances in defense strategies, and to bolster economic ties. India has also created electronic visa facilities in order to develop its tourism industry. Coordinated with 43 countries, India has become the first nation to develop an on-arrival tourist visa system. India continues to develop its aero-space industry and to develop and test its nuclear capabilities.[120]

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Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Aryan tribes played a role in the early development of Indian civilization.

   TRUE

   Aryan tribes invaded or migrated into the Indus River Valley from the northwest, and merged with the local population.

2. European explorers and merchants did not arrive in India until the 17th century.

   FALSE

   Led by the explorer Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese landed in India in the late 15th century, beginning a long-term European presence in the region.

3. The British government did not take direct control of colonial India until 1858.

   TRUE

   Previously administered by the British East India Company and the diminished Mughal Empire, India officially came under direct administration of the British crown in 1858.

4. Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi orchestrated several nonviolent, civil disobedience campaigns as part of the Indian independence movement.

   TRUE

   Gandhi employed a nonviolent strategy in his sustained fight for Indian civil rights and independence.

5. India gained its freedom from the British in 1950.

   FALSE

   India became an independent nation in 1947. It subsequently adopted its first constitution in 1950.

Wealth and poverty
© anaxila / flickr.com

Chapter 3 Economy

Introduction

Following independence from British rule, India's new government opted to pursue industrial growth through self-reliance (*swadeshi*). This is the second-most important rallying cry after self-rule (*swajar*). The country was in need of land reform and other measures that would boost agricultural productivity, as well as insulate farmers from monsoonal rains and flooding. Instead, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and subsequent administrations pursued socialist policies designed to diversify the economy through centrally planned enterprises that served the domestic market. High tariffs reduced imports and shielded Indian industries from external competition, as well as a complex, market-distorting array of subsidies. All of this made necessities (such as food and fuel) affordable to consumers.

This organization offered Indian politicians control over resources and this was used to build patronage networks. In turn, these networks were expected to turn out voters

on Election Day. Overall, the dearth of off-farm jobs forced most Indians into poverty. Not until the early 1990s, under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, were free-market reforms instituted in response to a foreign exchange crisis precipitated by the First Gulf War.[1] New Delhi had to obtain loans from the International Monetary Fund to remain solvent in the face of surging petroleum prices. In hindsight, the foreign exchange crisis allowed structural reforms of the economy, which included actively recruiting foreign investments. Without such reforms, foreign investments might not have occurred for years.[2] This led to economic growth propelled by a competitive services industry, rather than simply creating the conditions for broad-based industrialization and the manufacturing of physical goods.[3]

Despite this expansion, the state continues to make large claims on the country's resources.[4, 5] Thus, Indians remain fond of saying "our economy grows at night when the government is asleep."[6] Moreover, the country has been affected by the global economic downturn. In 2008, access to credit tightened, the value of the rupee fell dramatically, and Sensex index of the stock market lost more than 50% of its value (largely because of the withdrawal of foreign investment).[7]

Nonetheless, India quickly rebounded from the global financial crisis. Its economy continues to grow, and investments in tourism, research and development, high tech, medical research, and trade have helped to boost its standing in the world economic index. Problems with government intervention in the economy persist, however, which have resulted in large deficits.[8, 9]

The Legacy of Government Controls

Parliament building, New Delhi
© Sarah Gould
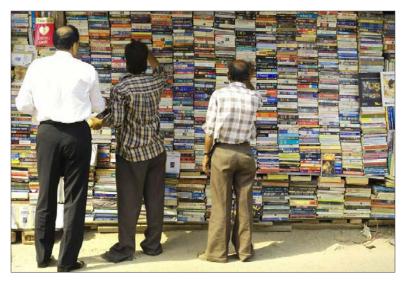
Until the economic reforms, public sector employment offered one of the few means to achieve a middle-class life. Even unskilled and semi-skilled positions provided such an opportunity. While the public sector has shrunk over the last few decades, the legacy of government-enabled opportunity—through either legal or corrupt means—remains influential. For example, salaries are just one component of the compensation package for public sector employees, who may also be granted housing, electricity, telecommunications, first-class travel, and other benefits. Moreover, Article 311 in the constitution gives civil servants ironclad job security, even if corruption is demonstrated.[10]

Precisely because demand for such employment far outstrips supply, the door is open for officials to benefit from enrichment schemes when new positions need to be filled. Moreover, the persistence of the state-instituted practice known as "the License Raj," which sets a ceiling on the number of permits for a particular activity, enables public servants to benefit handsomely from excess demand.[11] India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, upon coming to power in 2014, began a process of removing obstacles to business growth by repealing many outdated rules for operating businesses that prevent companies from meeting demand for goods and services.[12]

Standard of Living

Street bookstore, Delhi
© Marc oh! / flickr.com

India conducted its first national census in 1951, when the literacy rate was 16%. Only one out of six Indians could read and write, and those that could were clustered in particular communities, rather than spread evenly throughout the population. Average life expectancy was a mere 32 years.[13] Since then, India has shown measurable improvement in its overall standard of living. The country's human development index (HDI) score is a measure of overall national well-being based on average income, life expectancy, literacy, and educational attainment, and has only shown modest development so far. Of the 169 countries measured in 2014, India ranked 135th. While this is higher than Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Burma, it is lower than its other neighbors: China and Sri Lanka.[14]

Telecommunications

New Delhi abolished the state telecom monopoly in 1994. After another 4 years, 9 million Indians had private telephone lines. In 1999, the New Telecom Policy opened the market to IP telephony services (which use the internet) and abolished the government's monopoly on transmitting international calls.[15] By 2005, there were more than 100 million telephones in India, with an additional 2 million added each month. This surge reflected foreign investment and the technological revolution in cellular phone service.[16]

Cellular phone service now extends to much of rural India. This enables small-town merchants and artisans to create much larger markets for their services and products. Many mobile phone service providers are targeting women in rural areas as a way to boost sales and increase rural use of cellular phones. Rural women are adopting the

mobile technology, despite cultural trends in many rural areas that do not favor women using mobile phones. At the beginning of 2014, 364 million rural mobile phone users were recorded in India. The growth in rural mobile phone usage has helped to increase the quality of life for many by providing access to quality information, job opportunities, mobile banking, and for keeping up with familial resource groups.[17, 18, 19, 20]

The Service Sector and Global Outsourcing

Chennai software park
© Jbritto / Wikipedia.org

India's integration into the world economy was based on the outsourcing of routine back-office work, such as credit card and banking transactions handled by call centers. It now includes higher value-added services such as legal work. By 2009, India secured half of the global outsourcing market.[21] A year later, its market share rose to 55%.[22] Although India lost 10% of the global outsourcing market in 2013, it still held its place as the top global outsourcing market in 2014.[23, 24]

Information technology has generated links in the domestic economy, which supplies software, information technology (IT), and IT-enabled services to the U.S. and other markets. India's ascendance in IT has been facilitated by an educational system capable of training pioneering engineers. Of particular importance are the seven institutes that make up the Indian Institutes of Technology, known as the Harvard of India. In an effort to capitalize on the success of the school's graduates, the government is expanding the institute's number of campuses.[25] India's IT market size is enormous, encompassing nearly 52% of the IT outsourcing market in the United States. Industry experts project continued growth into the future, and expect to see additional employment growth above its current level of 10 million.[26]

Employees with skills and valuable experience to have pursued jobs with other companies during the period of expansion in order to obtain higher salaries and better benefit packages. This has generated wage inflation in the country.[27] Thus, in an ironic twist, some software and IT services are now being outsourced by Indian companies to countries in Asia, Europe, and North America. As the outsourcing of back-office operations and specialized software development extends to a larger market (beyond that of only English-speaking clients), more and more foreign employees are being trained by Indian IT companies in India, and then employed in offices in their home countries.[28, 29]

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Industry and Manufacturing

Post-colonial India was slow to industrialize. Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi had identified this stage of economic development as responsible for the twin ills in the West: materialism and the disintegration of community.[30] Cumbersome raj licensing restrictions, such as limits on how many workers a business could employ, served to stifle industry. Similarly, factories were required to produce in accordance with 5-year plans, which were based on the intention of spreading economic development evenly. However, the government's policies encouraged firms to acquire licenses, rather than produce goods.[31] Import liberalization has been a major component of India's economic policy since 1991, when the weighted average import tariff was more than 80%. By 1997, this average tariff rate had been reduced to about 30%. As of 2004, it had further fallen to roughly 24%.[32] Today, India has reduced tariffs on gold and silver. This reduction was made in an effort to increase the profitability of India's jewelry industry and to balance its national invoicing of gold and silver. This was an important move, since gold is India's second largest import item after petroleum.[33, 34]

Salt works
© Michael Cross

India's largest industrial segments in 2014 were textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software, and pharmaceuticals.[35]

Once a global leader in iron ore production and export, India has suffered shortages of raw material at home. Its number one buyer of raw iron ore—China—has reduced the amount of Indian iron ore it imports, and global prices have fallen sharply in recent years. Additionally, new government regulations on the iron and steel industry have reduced illegal mining, which has limited India's supplies. India is now importing large amounts of iron ore from around the globe.[36, 37, 38]

Within the chemical and chemical products sector, fertilizer production used to be one of the most important segments and one that grew out of the Green Revolution. However, India's population continues to grow rapidly, and production has not kept up with demand. In 2009, India was the world's top importer of fertilizer.[39] The government has subsidized fertilizers for the past 30 years, but with some negative results. For example, one type of fertilizer has damaged the soil, reduced yields, and increased food prices.[40] The government now recognizes that petrochemicals have the potential to grow India's economy. Slow but steady growth in this industry since 2009 has kept the it profitable. It currently ranks 3rd in Asia and 12th in the world.[41, 42, 43]

Agriculture

From the late 1960s to late 1970s, India's agricultural output increased dramatically. This Green Revolution was highlighted by a transition to high-yield varieties of key crops, such as rice and wheat (particularly in the states of Punjab and Haryana). Additionally, there has been an expansion of irrigation capacity, allowing more land to be farmed and existing farmland to be double-cropped. During this period, India became a net exporter of food grains for the first time.[44]

Rice paddy
© F. Fiondella (IRI/CCAFS)

More than half of India's land is farmed.[45] Overall, agriculture supports about 50% of India's population, but only contributes 17.4% of GDP.[46] Approximately 30% of agricultural households own no land and must work for wealthier landowners to supplement their income.[47] The failure rate among small landholders is particularly high because of market fluctuations and damaging monsoons.[48]

The Indian government recognizes the importance of sustaining agricultural production and plans to create storage space for food grains.[49] In addition, it plans to raise the production of coarse cereals, palm oil, and pulses (e.g., peas and beans). Food processing initiatives are in the works, and the government is investing in hybrid seeds to boost food production.[50, 51]

Banking

India's banking system has mirrored the policies, strategies, and reforms of the nation's economy over its first 60 years. Prior to independence and during the first two decades after, India's largest commercial banks were private institutions. The sole exception was the State Bank of India, which was nationalized in 1955. It later merged with several other state-affiliated banks, creating India's largest bank.[52] India's commercial banking system went through two major nationalization waves, in 1969 and 1980, as a means for the government to exercise control over interest rates and access to credit. This left over 90% of all deposits within publicly owned banks. Banks essentially served as a source of credit for state-owned businesses, where profitability was heavily contingent on a protected marketplace.[53]

Since 1991, several banking reforms have been implemented. These have reduced market entry barriers to new private banks, but state-owned banks still dominate.[54] Modernization and liberalization has also reduced barriers to foreign banks seeking to serve the emerging private sector and provide consumer services, such as credit cards.[55]

Inequitable banking operations throughout the country led to the Indian Parliament passing banking law amendment bills in 2012. These were designed to grow banking operations within the country, and standardize operations throughout the industry. Critics of banking changes claim that inequity continues to drive banking in India. Only 47% of Indians have bank accounts, and 50% of those see no activity because they are reliant on cash transactions. Private banks are gaining ground in India, yet state run banks continue to dominate the industry.[56, 57]

Gem company, Kolkata
© seaview99 / flickr.com

Trade

India continues to carry a significant trade imbalance, even though markets improved significantly in 2013-2014. This is due mainly to oil imports, which at 34% are the largest share of imports.[58] Economic reforms are still not yet comprehensive, yet since 1991, some barriers to foreign trade have been lowered, and Indian exports have increased significantly.[59, 60, 61, 62]

In 2009, industries in the metals, coins, precious stones, and pearls category constituted the largest export group by value, followed by vehicles, and then by electrical and electronic equipment.[63] Exports declined during the 2009–2010 fiscal year, but picked up consistently until the present day.. The largest agricultural export by value has been rice.[64] Demand for protein-rich goods such as eggs, milk, meat, and fish has increased in the country, with accompanying high prices.[65, 66] India's main import partners are the United Arab Emirates, the United States, China, Singapore, and Hong Kong.[67]

Energy and Natural Resources

Energy consumption in India has surged because of population and economic growth.[68] Yet, energy production does not meet demand. Currently, about half the country has no access to electricity, with unreliable power grids making blackouts a problem.[69] India has pledged to provide electricity to all its citizens by 2019.[70]

India's annual energy production currently amounts to approximately 1% of the global total, while its usage level stands at approximately 4.2%.[71, 72] India must boost its energy supply domestically and through imports to cover some of the gap. Almost all the electrical power in India is provided by coal, along with natural gas, oil, and 20 nuclear power plants.[73, 74, 75]

The only abundant fossil fuel energy source that India possesses is coal.[76, 77] Yet, India

Construction in Mumbai
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must import coal, despite having the fourth-largest reserves in the world. This is due to the country's limited excavation ability, as well as other factors.[78, 79, 80] In addition, the quality of India's coal is poor, and most is found in eastern India. Therefore, it requires long-distance transport to reach most of the major urban centers.[81, 82, 83] Moreover, the complete lack of coal-cleaning infrastructure poses grave future environmental challenges.[84, 85]

The coalmines are administered by the state-run Coal India. This is currently the world's largest coal producer, with 64 billion tons of reserves.[86, 87] However, India is still facing a shortage of coal, despite billions of tons in its reserves. Consequently, private and state-owned firms are buying mines in other countries, such as Australia, Mozambique, Indonesia.[88, 89, 90]

India produces only a small portion of its total petroleum energy needs. The country imports the balance, which contributes significantly to its trade deficit. In 2013, oil demand in India reached 3.7 million barrels per day. The EIA forecasts annual consumption growth at 8.2 bbl/day by 2040.[91] As a result, India may become the fourth-largest net importer of oil, after the United States, China, and Japan.[92] The Middle East (most notably Saudi Arabia and Iran) is the source of about 70% of India's oil imports. India's oil reserves are offshore of western India and onshore in the northeast, with significant reserves in the Bay of Bengal and Rajasthan.[93, 94, 95]

Natural gas is also imported because domestic sources are insufficient to meet demand. Most of India's natural gas is located offshore, however, onshore fields in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Assam are also productive.[96] The government runs Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and Oil India Limited, two of the biggest producers. The government also regulates natural gas prices. Natural gas demand, particularly in the power sector, is expected to grow considerably. To meet increased demand, India is considering importing natural gas from neighboring countries through gas pipelines.[97, 98, 99, 100, 101]

Nuclear power is limited in India, but rising. There are currently over 20 nuclear power plants located in the country.[102, 103] In December 2014, India's nuclear plant located at Kudankulam was its first power plant to operate at full capacity, producing 1000MW of power.[104] Growth in the nuclear power sector has been praised in India. It is hoped that the extra energy will minimize pollution, reduce dependence on imported oil and gas, and supply 25% of India's electricity.[105, 106]

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Tourism

India has a wealth of historical sites, natural attractions, and architectural wonders, and the country appears poised for the development of a strong tourism industry. While the industry has shown significant growth in recent years, the number of international visitors—especially women—has declined in 2014because if a number of high profile sexual assault and rape cases throughout the country.[107, 108, 109, 110]

A growing number of international tourists come for medical treatment, such as cardiac care, dentistry, cosmetic enhancement, and joint replacements. These services are often provided at a level of quality comparable to that of industrialized countries, but at a fraction of the cost.[111] Currently, India is ranked as one of the top three destinations for medical tourism. It is estimated that medical tourism alone generated USD 78.6 billion a year in 2012, and it could reach USD 158.2 billion by 2017.[112]

Cochin airport, Kochi
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It will be a major challenge to keep pace with demand as India's tourism industry grows. Currently, India is considered a relatively high-cost tourist destination because of an overall shortage of hotel rooms, especially at the budget and mid-price levels. India's high taxes also add to the overall cost of visiting the country. In the past, delays in processing travel visa requests generated fears that tourism growth could stall, unless systematic reforms aimed at increasing convenience were carried out. To remedy this, India instituted an e-Visa system that allows tourists from 43 countries to purchase their visas online, and pick them up at the airport upon arrival in India.[113, 114, 115] Furthermore, the global economic downturn and ongoing terrorist concerns threaten to stifle the industry's expansion and erase gains made in recent years. Yet the industry continues to see gains.[116, 117]

Transportation

India is making transportation and infrastructure a priority in the coming years for a number of reasons, including congested roads, deteriorated railways, and high food prices.[118, 119, 120, 121] Pending parliament approval, India may spend USD 1 trillion in infrastructure upgrades, a possible increase of 23% over 2010.[122, 123, 124]

Train
© David Brossard

Railroads

The government-owned rail system, India Railways, is one of the largest in the world. It is the largest network in Asia and the second largest in the world under single management.[125] The budget for 2014-2015 provides funding for high-speed trains and additional lines, improved safety and security measures, green initiatives, and connectivity to areas currently poorly served by rail.[126] The railways in India employ 1.4 million people. The economy and people depend on the system, which is one of the largest single employers in the world.[127, 128, 129] Freight tariffs have subsidized passenger travel on the railroads, and until recently, this tax motivated freight carriers to shift their cargo from rail to road transport, contributing to rail system deficits. However, in recent years, efforts to reduce the unit cost of freight loading have restored India Railways to profitability. New train fare and freight tariff increases were implemented in 2014 to help mitigate sluggishness in the economy.[130, 131, 132, 133]

6 lanes of traffic
© Ramesh Sripathy

Highways

Road transportation accounts for approximately 90% of passenger traffic and over 60% of freight transport, despite the size of the Indian rail system.[134] One consequence is that 30 to 40% of agricultural produce spoils before it reaches market because of the time spent in transit. Another factor contributing to spoiled produce is the lack of climate-controlled transportation equipment.[135] Road density is comparable to that of the United States, and nearly four times denser than that of China.[136] India's government is aware of the problem and is investing heavily in upgrading its transportation system.[137, 138, 139] India's largest highway project is the National Highways Development Project, and is currently underway. Numerous other projects have been completed and more projects are being developed, including expressway projects.[140, 141, 142] In the meantime, many roads are unpaved or too narrow to handle the current traffic load. Within metropolitan areas, traffic is growing more congested along with increased private automobile ownership.[143]

Ports

Busy port
© Nishanth Jois

India has an extensive coastline on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, with numerous ports, big and small. Of these facilities, 12 are considered major ports, and they collectively handle about 75% of freight traffic. Capacity at these government-run ports is overstretched. As a result, private entities have begun to develop their own loading facilities. This helps them circumvent the delays and resultant costs at the main ports, where shippers are also charged for the cost of dredging the harbor.[144, 145] Servicing time is slow by international standards. In Hong Kong, it takes an average of 8 hours to unload or load a container ship, whereas it takes an average of 3.4 days at an Indian port.[146] In addition, several of the ports, including the country's largest, Jawaharlal Nehru (near Mumbai), do not have enough depth to accommodate the largest container ships.[147]

Airports

Air transportation in India is primarily handled through 125 airports owned and managed by the Airports Authority of India. Of these airports, 11 are designated as international, with the 2 largest in Mumbai and Delhi. Both of these airports have recently begun to privatize and modernize through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). PPPs are also being used to build new airports in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, two of India's fastest growing cities. Private sector airlines handle over 80% of domestic travel.[148] In 2014, the sector was in a high-growth stage, and analysts project that by 2030 India will have the largest aviation market.[149] Both passenger and cargo traffic have risen dramatically, and the number of aircraft operating within the country has surged, along with investment in the industry.[150] High airport and fuel taxes have increased operating costs, which has fueled fierce competition between operators—including the Indian government—and this could have a detrimental effect on the industry.[151]

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Chapter 3 Assessment

1. The Indian government pursued socialist economic policies during the first several decades after independence.

   TRUE

   It was not until the early 1990s, under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, that free-market reforms were instituted.

2. Overall, the standard of living in India is relatively high in comparison with most countries in the world.

   FALSE

   Due to severe socioeconomic disparities between different regions and social groups, India maintains only a medium Human Development Index score.

3. India's integration into the global economy was primarily driven by the practice of outsourcing.

   TRUE

   The country's development of a services sector—one largely based on subcontracting office work and information technology services—propelled its integration into the global economy.

4. Kolkata is the country's foremost center for information technology (IT) services.

   FALSE

   Bengaluru, known as India's Silicon Valley, is the site of the country's largest IT cluster, which is the fourth-largest in the world.

5. Only a small percentage of the Indian workforce now works in agriculture.

   FALSE

   Agriculture supports approximately 50% of the Indian population.

Busy street, Chennai
© Matthiew Aubry

Chapter 4 Society

Introduction

India is the second-most populous country in the world, with over 1 billion people. As a result, the country brims with cultural diversity. The nation has 29 states and 7 union territories. More than half of them have official languages other than Hindi, the central government's official language. [1] Religious, caste, and tribal affiliations further segment the population into thousands of groups and subgroups. The socioeconomic disparities between these groups can be profound. This is due to portions of the country being prosperous and well developed, while other portions remain impoverished and without basic services, such as water and waste treatment. Overall, India is a country where luxury automobiles and animal-drawn carts share the road; where religious mystics rub shoulders with stock-market traders on cell phones; and, where the biggest movie star is a Muslim married to a Hindu who produced a movie about the great Buddhist leader Ashoka.[2]

Tribal women, Orissa
© Rita Willaert

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Few countries are as ethnically and linguistically diverse as India. The classification of India's many people into distinct ethnic groups is difficult, and somewhat controversial. On a broad level, the Indian people can be divided into tribal and non-tribal. Over 570 tribal groups (referred to as *adivasis*) are recognized under the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and are legally referred to as Scheduled Tribes.[3, 4, 5]

The Scheduled Tribes comprise 8.6% of the Indian population, and typically live in central and western Indian.[6] The sparsely populated eastern hill states have the highest percentages of Scheduled Tribes.[7] The largest tribes are the Gond, who live in the hill regions of central India, and the Santal.[8, 9, 10]

India's many languages fall into four major linguistic groups. The largest of these is the Indo-Aryan group, which includes Hindi (the country's most widely spoken first language), Urdu, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Bengali, Kashmiri, Assamese, Oriya, and several less-spoken languages. The Indo-Aryan languages are dominant in the northern and central parts of India. Approximately 75% of the Indian population speaks an Indo-Aryan language.[11, 12]

In India's four southern states, Dravidian languages predominate. Accordingly, each of the four southern states has a Dravidian language as its official language: Andhra Pradesh (Telugo), Tamil Nadu (Tamil), Kerala (Malayalam), and Karnataka (Kannada). Dravidian languages are the primary languages for approximately 25% of the Indian population.[13, 14]

Tibeto-Burman languages are mostly spoken in India's Himalayan and easternmost regions. Manipuri (Meitei) is the most widely spoken of these languages, but none has more than a few million speakers. There are also a few Austro-Asiatic languages spoken in scattered areas of India. The tribal language Santali is by far the most widely used of these languages. [15, 16]

Religion

India has often been referred to as a cradle of religions. Most notably, two of the world's major religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—trace their roots to the region. Two other significant religions, Sikhism and Jainism, are indigenous to India. Besides these four belief systems, a number of animist religions are practiced in the tribal areas of eastern India. The two major non-indigenous religions are Islam and Christianity.[17, 18]

Over 80% of Indians are Hindus. The largest minority religion, Islam, is practiced by slightly more that 13% of the population.[19]

Hinduism

Hinduism is the dominant religion of India.[20] The sources of what is today called "Hinduism" date to the second millennium B.C.E. The earliest Vedic text is the Rigveda, which was written during this time. Its hymns describe the religious practices, culture, and philosophy of the early Vedic civilization, which was based in northwestern India. The central beliefs and practices of modern
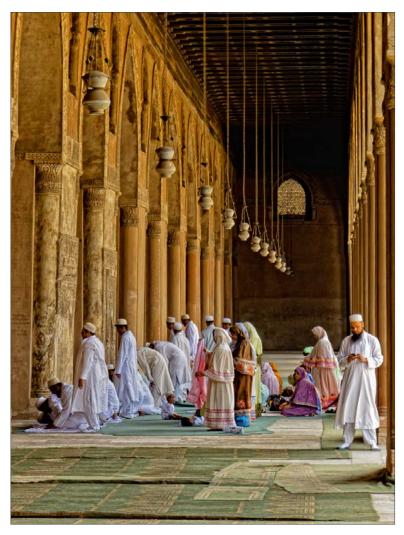
Buddha Purnima
© al / flickr.com

Hinduism are traced to the Rigveda and other early Vedic texts. Additional sacred foundational texts include the Upanishads, which is a continuation of the Vedas; the Mahabharata, which is an epic poem; and, the Bhagavad Gita, which is a section of the Mahabharata.[21]

Hinduism, unlike most major religions, does not have a founding figure nor a formal theocratic doctrine or central authority. The Vedas are the sacred texts, but unlike the Bible or Quran, they do not prescribe certain practices for the religious follower. The essential Hindu belief is in Brahman, the eternal and infinite force of the universe from which everything else derives. The pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses—of which there are 330 million in Hindu scripture—represent different aspects of Brahman, and thus they may be selected and worshipped at will by followers of the religion.[22] In this way, the religion is open to diverse interpretation, focus, and practice, and is a result of thousands of years of religious evolution and assimilation. For this reason, Hinduism has long been viewed as a religion that is tolerant of other belief systems. However, the recent rise of Hindu nationalist groups in India has upset this trend.[23, 24]

The caste system is a traditional hierarchy of social classes. It is most directly associated

with Hinduism, although other religious groups in India follow similar practices, including some Muslim and Christian communities. The caste system is officially banned by the Indian constitution, but it continues to influence social relations and political discourse within the country.[25, 26, 27, 28]

Morning prayer
© Scott D. Haddow

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning its followers profess faith in a single God. In the Muslim community, or *ummah*, God is known as Allah (the Arabic term for God). The Arabic term *islam* means "to submit" or "to surrender." A Muslim, therefore, is one who submits to the will of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad to be the last of a long line of prophets that included Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), and Jesus (Esa). In this way, Muslims share some of the basic elements of the Judaic and Christian traditions. However, they believe that the message relayed by Muhammad is God's final and definitive revelation to humankind. This message is recited in the *Quran*, which is the sacred scripture of Islam. Additional sacred texts include the *Hadith*, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the *Sunnah*, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad's example.[29, 30, 31]
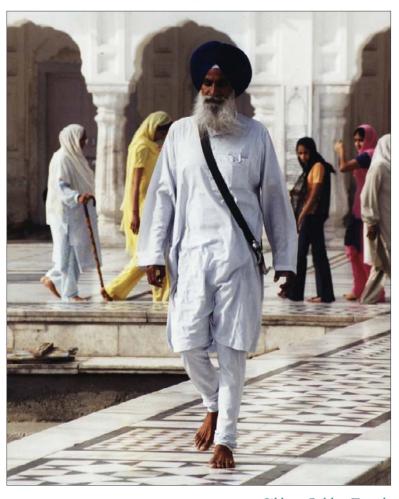
The essential beliefs and rites of the Islamic faith are encapsulated in the five pillars of Islam. The first and foundational pillar is the sincere recitation of the *shahada*, or Islamic creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah." The remaining pillars include, the performance of ritual prayers five times per day; the giving of alms to the poor and needy (traditionally, through a tax on income); fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and the undertaking of a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca to perform religious rituals.[32] Muslims believe that Allah will judge them for their actions on earth, with the consequences of spending their afterlife in heaven or hell.[33, 34]

Sunni and Shi'a Divide

Islam has two major branches: Sunni and Shi'a. The two sects formed shortly after the initial spread of Islam in the 7th century C.E. They divided over disagreements about the selection process for the successor, or caliph, to the Prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 C.E. The Sunni, as they came to be known, believed that Muhammad had not chosen a successor. Consequently, they decided that the first caliph should be elected from among the leaders of the Muslim community. They selected Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, as the first caliph. The opposing group was later known as the Shi'a (which translates to "party of Ali"). They believed that Muhammad had designated his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, as his successor. Consequently, they also believed that only Muhammad's descendants held rightful claims to the caliphate. The unresolved issue of rightful succession created a deep divide between the two groups, leading to infighting and the assassination of Ali.[35] While the two sects share the fundamental tenets of Islam, their separation resulted in a divergence of practices and beliefs. Over time, several additional sects emerged within the two major branches. Today, Sunnis comprise approximately 85% of the global Muslim community.[36]

Sikh at Golden Temple
© Nick Leonard

Islam today is the largest minority religion in India, with Sunnis far outnumbering Shi's.[37, 38] For several centuries over the last millennia, much of the Indian subcontinent was variously ruled by Sunni and Shi'a sultanates and kingdoms. Some of India's most famous architectural wonders, such as the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort in Delhi, date from these periods of Muslim rule.[39, 40]

Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in the early 16th century by a Punjabi, Guru Nanak. He was followed by a line of nine gurus, whose teachings were compiled in a book, *Guru Granth Sahib*. This book is considered the descendant of the gurus, and the living word of God.[41, 42] Today, there are nearly 20 million adherents of Sikhism in India. Together, they form approximately 1.9% of the total population.[43] The 14th Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, who governed from 2004-2014, was the first Sikh and non-Hindu in the history of the Indian Republic to hold the top political position.[44]

According to the last census, about 80% of Indian Sikhs live in Punjab, the only state in India where

Sikhs comprise the majority (approximately 60%) of the population. Sikhs also live in the northern states and territories closet to Punjab.[45]

Church, Bangalore
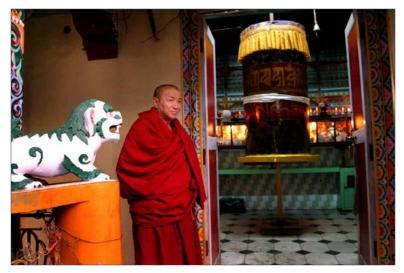*© Lisa Leckie*

Christianity

Traditional narratives instruct that Christianity reached southwest India with the arrival of St. Thomas the Apostle, not long after Christ's own lifetime. However, some historians argue that the first Christians did not arrive in southwest India until several centuries later.[46] Nonetheless, scholars so agree that in the early 16th century, Portuguese missionaries began converting local populations along the western coast of India to Roman Catholicism. The most famous of these early Christian arrivals was the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier, who arrived in Goa in 1542.[47, 48, 49]

Today the majority of Indian Christians live in southern India and in the sparsely populated northeastern states. Christianity is the predominant religion in the areas where Christians live. Overall, there are over 24 million Indian Christians, who represent 2.3% of the total population.[50] Roughly, 70% of Indian Christians are Roman Catholic, while the other 30% belong to Protestant churches. The largest of the Protestant churches are the Church of South India and the Church of North India, both of which are united churches representing several different Protestant denominations.[51]

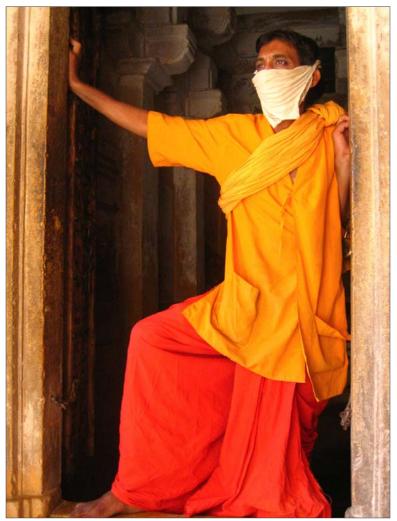Many of the modern converts to Christianity in India are former Hindu Dalits, or "untouchables." Despite their conversion, many experience caste-based organization and discrimination within some Christian churches.[52, 53] In recent years, several Indian states have passed "anti-conversion" laws that have made converting to Christianity, or any other non-Hindu religion, a more regulated and time-consuming process.[54, 55, 56]

Buddhism
© *Steve Evans*

Jain with mask
© *Meena Kadri*

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E. in the northeastern Gangetic Plain by the first Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama.[57] *Buddha* is a generic term meaning, "awakened one."[58] Although the religion spread throughout South, East, and Southeast Asia, it reached its peak in India during the seventh century C.E. By the 13th century, when Turkish Muslims conquered much of northern India, the religion had virtually disappeared from the subcontinent. It survived in mountain kingdoms of northernmost India. However, the oldest intact form of Buddhism (Theravada) migrated south to Sri Lanka during the Muslim conquest of northern India. [59] From there it spread throughout Southeast Asia and Burma. Its influence in those countries is still strong.[60, 61, 62]

A dramatic revival of the religion came during the second half of the 20th century. In October 1956, the Dalit political leader and author of the Indian Constitution, B. R. Ambedkar, announced his conversion to Buddhism. Over a short period, millions of Indians (mostly Dalits) also converted. Today, nearly 8 million Indians are Buddhists, representing 0.8% of the population. The majority (73%) of these Buddhists live in Maharashtra.[63, 64, 65]

Jainism

Jainism originated in India in the eastern Ganges River basin sometime between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C.E. Its teachings were consolidated by Vardhamana Mahavira, who was a contemporary of the first Buddha and the last of 24 *Tirthankaras* (spiritual leaders). Both religions can be viewed as "reform" movements that rejected the Hindu Brahmic tradition in which only Brahmans, or priests, could perform and interpret religious rituals. Furthermore, in contrast to Hindu practices, Buddhism and Jainism were

less formally organized and more focused on individualistic inward belief.[66]

Jainism is one of the world's most ascetic religions. Its essential principle is *ahimsa*, or nonviolence. This is based on the notion that all living creatures have souls of equal value. Thus, they are spiritually connected.[67] In adhering to this belief, Jains are devout vegetarians who strive to avoid causing harm to any form of life, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.[68, 69]

Today, Jains are a small minority in India's religious mix; they number over 4 million people, comprising roughly 0.4% of the Indian population. Most of them live in the western and central portions of India.[70] Despite their small numbers, many Jains hold prominent positions in commercial businesses.[71] Furthermore, their literacy rate of over 94% is much higher than that of the Indian populace as a whole.[72, 73]

Women in saris
© Steve Wright

Traditional Dress

India is known for its multitude of clothing styles, which vary by region and religious affiliation. In general, women tend to wear traditional attire, whereas men tend to dress more in line with Western conventions. Regardless, dress is usually conservative.

The most common garment for women is the wrap dress, or *sari*, which is made from a rectangular piece of cloth approximately 5.5 to 8.2 m (6 to 9 yd) long. It is usually first wrapped around the waist and then the shoulder. The sari is worn over a tight-fitting *choli* (blouse), which may be short, leaving the midriff bare. In western states, such as Gujarat and Rajasthan, the choli is worn with a colorful skirt known as a *lehanga* or *ghagra*. This style is completed by draping an *odhni* or *dupatta* (veil cloth) over the head or neck.[74, 75]

Men have increasingly adopted Western modes of dress in urban areas, but traditional styles are still frequently worn in Indian villages and to formal social events. *Longis* and *dhotis* are traditional garments that are wrapped around the waist. Dhotis are further wrapped through the legs. In many parts of India, these garments are worn under *kurtas*, or knee-length tunics. Turbans, also known as *safas*, are worn frequently in northwestern states such as Punjab and Rajasthan.[76, 77, 78, 79]

In an urban business setting, men usually wear a suit and tie, except in the very hot summer months when a white cotton safari suit is appropriate. Businesswomen usually wear conservative dresses or pantsuits.[80, 81]

Gender Issues

Hinduism, unlike many religions, has numerous female deities, many symbolizing feminine power, creativity, and other ideals. Nonetheless, the vast majority of India is patriarchal and the customary roles for women are wife and mother. Patrilineal customs trace a family's lineage through its male heirs, and this is a longstanding practice in India. As a result, boys are often valued more highly than girls because they will carry on the family name, inherit family property, earn an income in the public sphere, and care for the parents in their old age. Conversely, daughters are married off to other families, with the added cost of a dowry (although the law forbids dowries).[82] Furthermore, Hindu custom also demands that male children perform

Microfinance participants
© Akshay Mahajan

certain funeral rites for their fathers, thereby making sons a necessity in Hindu families. Thus, giving birth to a baby boy gives a Hindu woman higher standing in her extended family.[83, 84]

Because of technological advances, sex selection is an option among those who can afford it. Although sex-selective abortion has been illegal since 2001, expectant mothers may opt for a legal abortion up to the 20th week of pregnancy without specifying a reason.[85, 86] According to UNICEF, fewer girls are born in India than nature would dictate.[87] Today, gender selection is on the rise. The result is skewed female to male ratios that are often described as disturbing..[88, 89, 90] Though it is true that a daughter's dowry can bankrupt a poor family, the wealthiest states of Gujarat and Punjab also exhibit higher gender imbalance ratios than poorer parts of the country.[91, 92, 93]

India's integration into the world economy has allowed for greater female participation in the paid workforce. Yet, these opportunities have not been sought by all Indian women. The disparity between female to male rates of employment participation ranks low on world indices. In 2011, India ranked below Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia on the United Nations Gender Inequality Index.[94, 95, 96] *Purdah*—the practice of seclusion within the home—is practiced by female members of the conservative Hindu upper-caste and Muslims. They are required to cover their faces and must be accompanied by a male family member whenever they venture out.[97, 98, 99]

However, the role seclusion plays within the two groups is different. Hindus use seclusion to ensure that a married woman makes her family a top priority, particularly in terms of caring for her in-laws. Hence, Hindu female adherence to *purdah* begins upon marriage. The rite of passage occurs when a bride-to-be uses her sari to cover her

face for the first time upon departure from her natal village as she travels to her new home.[100] On the other hand, Muslim veiling begins at puberty and is intended to ensure that female family members do not come into unnecessary contact with men outside their family.[101, 102, 103]

Kerala meal
© George Augustine

Cuisine

The wide variety of Indian cuisine reveals its diverse cultural and religious heritage, the size of the country, and its topography. In fact, dietary restrictions define the eating habits of most Indians. For example, devout Hindus do not consume beef (and many are purely vegetarian); Muslims abstain from pork, and Jains are strict vegetarians who also avoid onions.[104, 105] One constant of Indian cuisine is the use of a variety of spices. The order in which they are used, as well as the way in which they are toasted to pop or mixed in oil, also varies greatly. Prior to independence, restaurant dining was not held in high esteem. For example, members of some castes were not allowed to cook professionally because the occupation was considered beneath them.

Kashmir

Many Kashmiri dishes are meat-based, and flavored with spices such as saffron, cardamom, cloves, and Kashmiri chilies. *Rishta* (meat balls made from mutton and cooked in Kashmiri chili gravy) is one such dish. Both Hindus and Muslims eat lamb, but their distinct preparations offer uniquely different flavors. For instance, Muslims add onions and garlic, while Hindus use spices such as asafetida.[106]

Tandoori chicken
© Premshree Pillai

Punjab

Hearty, flavorful food is often cooked tandoori style, which means the meat is marinated in yogurt with spices and then barbequed in a *tandoor*, or clay oven. This type of meat preparation is common in the Punjab region. *Murgh makhani* (tandoori chicken cooked in a tomato butter sauce) is one of the most popular dishes. After the country was partitioned, many Punjabis resettled in New Delhi, where they made their living in the restaurant industry. Others opened dining establishments overseas. As a result, Indian restaurants in the West often serve Punjabi cuisine.[107, 108]

Delhi

Mughlai cuisine was passed down from the kitchens of the old Mughal emperors and is today associated with the Delhi region. The food is spicy and rich, and dishes often include dried fruits and nuts. *Biryani* is a rice dish that is slow-cooked with dried fruit, nuts, and lamb or other meat in a clay pot, and is a classic meal from this tradition.[109, 110]

Gujarat

Due to the influence of local Jain and Hindu traditions, the famous foods of the Gujarat region are primarily vegetarian. In general, Gujarati cuisine is known for its combination of sweet, salty, and mildly spicy flavors, with meals composed predominantly of vegetables, pulses (e.g., beans, lentils, or peas), and cereals. Gujarati dinners are typically served in the form of a *thali*, or a platter containing small servings of various dishes. A traditional *thali* in Gujarat includes rice, bread (usually the flatbread *roti*, also known as *chapati*), beans or lentils (often in some form of *dal*), pickles (a Gujarati specialty), various vegetable curries and chutneys, and yogurt.[111, 112, 113]

South India

Dishes in the southern Indian states are traditionally served on plantain leaves.[114] Rice is a staple of the region's primarily vegetarian diet, although coastal areas often include specialty fish dishes. Perhaps the most famous regional cuisine in the south is that of Hyderabad, which is located in inland Andhra Pradesh. Like that of the Delhi region, Hyderabadi cuisine has strong Muslim and Persian influences. Hyderabadi biryani is as popular there as Mughlai biryani is in the north, but with spices that are generally hotter. Hyderabadi dishes are also more likely to include meat than in other regions in the south.[115, 116]

The Arts

Historically, the arts of India flourished through the development and cross-fertilization of many rich traditions and styles. Music, visual arts, dance, and architecture have all seen numerous strains and variations evolve over the millennia.

Man playing a sitar
© Dey Alexander

Music

Styles of popular music vary by region. Punjab is famous for *bhangra*, a lively musical form that accompanies a traditional folk dance. This style uses a *dhol* (drum), *iktar* and *tumbi* (one-stringed instruments), *chimta* (tong-like percussion instrument), and various other instruments to create its sound. *Bhangra* music has become a global phenomenon in recent years. Today it is heard on dance floors around the world, in both its traditional style and fused with other musical forms, such as rock and hip-hop.[117, 118]

Classical Indian music is defined by its *raga*, or melodic tones, and *tala*, its rhythmic form.[119] There are two major regional styles: northern Hindustani and southern Karnatic. Both styles are more improvisational than Western classical music. The instrument most associated with the various North Indian *raga* styles is the *sitar*, whereas the lute-like *vina* is a featured instrument of South Indian ragas. *Tablas* are often used as a percussion instrument for the *tala*.[120, 121]

Visual Arts

Much of classical Indian art is religious in theme and purpose. This partly explains why the style of Indian art of the past is often abstract and symbolic, as opposed to naturalistic. In effect, its purpose was to represent religious ideas, rather than present an image in an illusionistic manner. Buddhist and Hindu art of the same era often appear similar in style, reflecting the fact that artists were members of nondenominational guilds. Likewise, in the past an artist's personality was unimportant in comparison to the message of the work. Thus, unlike in Western art, few Indian artists of past eras are known to us today.[122]

Dance

Like all the arts in India, classical Indian dance takes numerous forms. However, most are based on the ancient Sanskrit dramaturgical text, *Natya-sastra*, which describes the postures, hand movements, and other elements of Indian dance dramas. In classical dance, all elements are based on nine emotions: *hasya* (happiness), *shoka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *bhibatsa* (disgust), *bhaya* (fear), *viram* (courage), *karuna* (compassion), *adbhuta* (wonder), and *shanta* (serenity).[123] The movement of the dancer's body usually tells a story based on an Indian epic.[124, 125, 126]

Folk dancing in India also has innumerable forms; some of the more popular include *Bhangra* (Punjab), *Bihu* (Assam), *Garba* (Gujarat), and *Kummi* (Tamil Nadu).[127] Many of these dances are associated with one or more of India's many festivals.[128, 129]

Folk dance
© Daniella Schoch

Architecture

India's many architectural treasures reveal the mixed influences of the subcontinent's numerous cultures and religions. Representative examples that can still be seen include products of the Mughal Empire, such as the Taj Mahal and the capital city of Fatehpur Sikri, and the Sikh gurdwaras—most notably, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Hindu, Persian, and Islamic influences can be observed in the design and detail work of these buildings.[130, 131, 132]

Film

India is best known today for the most modern of art forms: movies. Films produced in Mumbai, known colloquially as Bollywood, are popular throughout the world. Vibrant film industries also exist in other areas of India; they typically cater to local populations and their languages. Most notable of these is the Tamil film industry, which is centered in Chennai and known as Tollywood. Bollywood films often feature plots in which star-crossed lovers must overcome societal and familial obstacles to find their love, with frequent (and lavish) musical production numbers helping to move the story along.[133]

India's long literary tradition has resulted in the preservation of folk stories from antiquity. Many of these stories were originally written in Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Rigveda. This is the oldest and most important text of Brahminical Hinduism.[134, 135] The Sanskrit text *Katha-saritsagara*, or "The Ocean of Rivers of Stories," is a collection of ancient stories collected and recounted by the Indian writer Somadeva in the 11th century B.C.E. This is perhaps the most famous of the non-religious collections of Indian folktales. The central narrative of this work concerns a prince named Naravahanadatta, who becomes king of the sky dwellers and who is imbued with magical powers. Yet, this story line is somewhat submerged among the many other stories that Somadeva compiled in the collection.[136, 137, 138]

Modern folklore is most associated with the tribal societies of India, who pass on their stories in the oral traditions of their many tribal languages.[139] Many of these tribes live in remote regions of the seven states of northeast India (sometimes referred to as the "Seven Sisters"), as well as in the highlands of central India.[140]

Sports

Kids playing kabaddi
© Todd Gehman

In addition to soccer and cricket, Indians play *kabaddi*, an indigenous game. It requires neither special equipment nor a designated playing field, so a lack of money is not an obstacle to participation. The game is played by 2 teams with 12 players each. The match starts when one team sends a member over to the opposite team where he chants a particular tune like "kit, kit, kit" or "hu, tu, hu, tu" while holding his breath. His objective is to touch as many of the other team's players as possible, which renders them "out." If he loses his breath, then he's "out." However, if he manages to hold his breath long enough to drag himself across the mid-line, all those who attempted to wrestle him are "out." The two sides alternate in raiding each other's players. The game is played not only in India, but also in Pakistan. The British Army initially organized a team as a means to recruit ethnic South Asians. Yet, the caliber of the English players may one day enable it to win an international championship and avenge its losses on the cricket field to South Asian teams.[141, 142, 143, 144]

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Chapter 4 Assessment

1. India's many tribal groups are officially known as Scheduled Tribes.

   TRUE

   Also known as adivasis, India's tribal communities are formally referred to as Scheduled Tribes.

2. Punjabi is the most widely spoken language in India.

   FALSE

   Hindi is the country's most widely spoken language; it is also the official language of the Indian government.

3. The majority of the Indian population practices Hinduism.

   TRUE

   Hindus comprise over 80% of the Indian population.

4. The caste system is no longer influential in India.

   FALSE

   Although the caste system is officially banned by the Indian constitution, it continues to influence social relations and political discourse within the country.

5. A sari is a common garment worn by Indian women.

   TRUE

   Worn throughout India, the sari is a rectangular piece of cloth that is wrapped around the body in various manners according to social group and region.
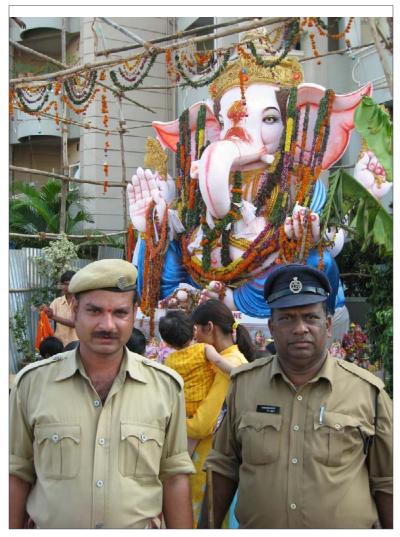
Wire barrier
© Kaiesh Vorha

Chapter 5 Security

Introduction

The sheer geographic size and population of India has contributed to it becoming the dominant power in South Asia. In fact, modern India was born of security concerns.[1, 2] In 1947, British India was divided between Hindu and Muslim majorities to create the independent nation-states of India and Pakistan.

In addition to Pakistan, India is bordered by five other countries, from Bhutan to China. India has gone to war with its two largest neighbors, China and Pakistan, which are nuclear powers like India. The country has been embroiled in a violent insurgency in neighboring Sri Lanka, and has battled internal insurgent groups that have maintained encampments in Bhutan, Nepal, and Burma (Myanmar). Such a volatile neighborhood has ensured that security considerations remain paramount to India's leaders.

Security Issues

India's perceived external security threats (most notably, Pakistan) have spurred it to develop one of the world's largest military forces. However, internal security threats are considered by some to pose an even greater challenge.[3, 4, 5] Hindu nationalist and Islamist radical groups have gained more adherents in recent years through appeals to "identity politics." As a result, New Delhi's ability to rein in these divisive forces has been strained.[6, 7, 8, 9, 10]

India has the world's second-largest population of Muslims.[11] Periodic outbreaks of Hindu–Muslim violence have widened India's religious fault lines.[12] Some political parties use these divisions to further their interests, which increases the volume of rhetoric and the possibility of further violence. At the same time, violent Islamist groups have tried to use temple attacks to trigger communal rioting.[13]

Hyderabad, with quite a large Muslim population, is a prime example of an Indian city subject to these communal problems.[14] Much of its Muslim population lives in the Old City, which also contains mixed Hindu–Muslim neighborhoods.

Everyday security
© Kalyan Neelamraju

Communal violence has broken out several times in the city in recent decades. Furthermore, politicians in Islamist and Hindu nationalist parties—in particular, the Muslim Majlis-e-Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen (MIM) and the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—have not been shy to take advantage of their constituencies' grievances or fears. This has only served to amplify the existing tensions.[15, 16] It is suspected that several deadly bomb attacks in the city were carried out by the Bangladesh-based Islamist jihadist group Harkat-ul-Jihad e-Islami (HUJI). The apparent motive was to trigger communal rioting between Hindus and Muslims.[17, 18] In March 2010, violent clashes between Muslims and Hindus led the police to impose an indefinite curfew on the city.[19] Riots also broke out in 2014 in Hyderabad. Three people were killed by police gunfire and many more people were injured, including women and children.[20]

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Military and Police Structure

India Navy
© Michael Scalet

Governed under the Ministry of Defense, India's military forces comprise the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force. There are several paramilitary forces, including the Coast Guard, the National Security Guards; the Border Security Force; the Assam Rifles; the Central Industrial Security Force; the Indian Police Service; the Central Reserve Police Force; the Indo-Tibetan Border Police; the National Security Guard; and, the Rashtriya Rifles. Only the Army, Navy, and Air Force report to the Ministry of Defense, while the others are under the domain of the Ministry of Home Affairs.[21, 22]

India has over 1 million soldiers and has the world's fourth largest army, as of October 2014.[23, 24] Major army deployments include Jammu and Kashmir in the northeastern states, where numerous insurgency groups have generated internal security problems.

The Indian Navy is the world's fifth-largest. It operates from major naval bases in Mumbai (Bombay) on the Arabian Sea and Vishakhapatnam on the Bay of Bengal.[25] Like the United States Navy, the Indian Navy has a naval air squadron.[26] India has developed bases in the Bay of Bengal to protect its growing maritime trade with Southeast Asian nations, and to monitor Chinese naval activities.[27, 28]

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is the world's fourth-largest.[29] It has five regional commands and two functional ones (training, maintenance).[30] The IAF has approximately 600 combat aircraft, and over 500 transports and helicopters.[31, 32] By 2020, India plans to add 126 MMRCA, 160 Sukhoi-30MKI, and 140 LCA to its fleet.[33] India is considered a huge market for the defense industry, and it became the world's largest importer of arms in 2011.[34, 35] India has continued to grow its defense industry in the second decade of the century, nurturing relationships with a number of countries, such as France, Great Britain, the United States, and Russia. Foreign investment in the Indian defense industry has grown enormously in recent years.[36, 37, 38]

On the domestic front, Indian security forces continue to be cited for abuse. Indian government agents have been responsible for arbitrary or unlawful killing. Abuse is particularly common in the northeast, where there are high rates of extrajudicial killings of suspects.[39] Some human rights and media organizations have reported systematic torture in detention centers. Some centers have even ignored international standards to the point that detention itself is life-threatening.[40, 41] Corruption is pervasive among the

police, who are reported to make arbitrary arrests and illegally detain suspects.[42, 43, 44, 45]

The Indian military has participated in many UN peacekeeping missions. Since the 1950s, nearly 100,000 troops have engaged in over 40 missions worldwide.[46] Currently, India is the third-largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, with over 8,000 peacekeepers (7,077 troops and 1,002 police).[47, 48] Most are involved in operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the mission in Sudan (UNMISS), and in Lebanon (UNFIL).[49]

Indian flag
© 2007 Clipart.com

U.S.–India Relations

A Strategic Realignment

During the Cold War, India became a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), whose members attempted to develop and pursue foreign policy independently of the U.S.S.R. and the United States.[50] After the Cold War, the organization did not disappear, nor did Washington and New Delhi immediately cultivate a closer relationship. India moved cautiously to liberalize its economy and to open its doors to direct foreign investment. As a result, there was no American business lobby to push for engagement and to strengthen bilateral ties, as there was in China.[51]

India's growing stature as an economic and military power. It emerged in the 1990s as a leading producer of information technology, and it conducted nuclear weapons testing in 1998. Closer ties were initiated in the waning days of President Bill Clinton's administration, with the process accelerated under his successor, George W. Bush. The strategic concerns of the two countries became more closely aligned after 11 September 2001. India and the United States both faced increasing terrorist threats, the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and the rise of China. However, each country utilized different approaches to deal with these threats, and relations between the two nations have not always been smooth.[52] Nevertheless, the US and India signed a civilian nuclear agreement in 2008, after which the US Secretary of State attempted to repair relations. The US President invited India's most recent prime minister to the White House.[53, 54, 55]

Nuclear and Space Partnerships

One of the highest-profile areas in U.S.–India cooperation is civil nuclear energy. India is a non-signatory of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), opting to remain outside NPT regulations so it can pursue its nuclear weapons program.[56] In response, the United States and India issued a joint statement in July 2005, outlining the goal of working together to achieve "full civilian nuclear energy cooperation."[57]

The two countries then signed a controversial, bilateral agreement in August 2007, outlining the terms for civil nuclear commerce between them. One of the more contentious issues for the United States was India's desire to purchase spent nuclear fuel so it could be reprocessed for use in new nuclear energy fuels. Conversely, officials on the Indian side were concerned with language in the agreement that would obstruct their country's testing of nuclear weapons. The agreement was finally ratified by the U.S. Congress in 2008.[58] India and the International Atomic Energy Agency then completed a safeguarding agreement in February 2009 that granted New Delhi global access to civil nuclear equipment and fuel.[59]

Less controversial has been the U.S.–India initiative to increase cooperation in their civilian space programs. In March 2006, the two countries signed agreements permitting the launch of U.S. satellites (and satellites containing U.S. components) from Indian space-launch vehicles.[60] Since then, the U.S. has cooperated with India on its Moon mission and on its Mars Orbiter Mission. NASA has also teamed up with the Indian Space Research Organisation—India's version of NASA—to develop data-collecting satellites to research variability in precipitation and environmental systems around the globe.[61, 62, 63]

Looking Ahead

Bilateral relations continue to improve as the United States increasingly recognizes India as a global power and a strategic partner in South Asia.[64, 65] The Obama administration has worked to expand cooperation with India, and in June 2010, the U.S. formally resumed the Strategic Dialogue (generally reserved for major world powers) initiated under President Bush.[66, 67] The dialogues focus on cooperation in counterterrorism, trade, climate change, energy, and education (and others), and have been largely successful.[68] India is growing quickly as a source of direct U.S. investment. The two countries conduct routine joint military operations, and defense trade between the two countries has grown rapidly (the U.S. is second only to Russia in defense trade)[69, 70]

Both countries are interested in creating a stable Asia, yet the United States does not seek to intervene in India's internal security matters or relations with its neighbors. Some experts also believe India may become involved in finding a resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan and India hold different views about the kind of state the war-torn country should become.[71, 72]

President Obama at Indian Parliament
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The United States remains India's second-largest trading partner. India saw a temporary decline in investment in 2011, yet investments were rekindled in 2014 as the economy recovered from its record-low growth in 2013.[73] Trade totaled USD 46 billion in fiscal year 2014.[74] India is currently opening its economy to Foreign Direct Investment from around the world, especially countries like the United States. India has enacted new laws—that will take effect in 2016—designed to discourage investment funneled through tax havens, such as Mauritius and Cayman Islands. These new laws are called General Anti-Avoidance Rules, or GAARs, and they have encouraged investors to clear legal ground for investments. The United States is eager to break into India's retail market.[75, 76]

Relations with Neighboring Countries

Pakistan

India's sole neighbor to the west is Pakistan. Relations have been infamously difficult since the 1947 partition of British India into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Foremost, Jammu and Kashmir (located in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent claimed by both India and Pakistan) continue to be a major source of tension. This is revealed in the unwavering military preparedness of both sides. Both governments have also developed nuclear weapons, and tests have been used for domestic political gain. The area is one of the world's major geopolitical flashpoints.[77, 78]

The two governments held a series of "composite dialogue" meetings to bring about the "peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides."[79] The opening of five border crossings between the Pakistani and Indian sides of the Line of Control was an outgrowth of these meetings.[80] Buses and trucks have been allowed to travel between the two countries at a border crossing in Punjab State.[81, 82] A decades-long ceasefire between the two countries was broken in 2013 amid accusations on both sides of cross-border raids that took the lives of

military personnel.[83, 84] Further attacks occurred in 2014. Indian troops were sent to the International Border and Line of Control after reports that Pakistan had commenced shelling of Indian civilian areas.[85, 86]

Peace talks between the two countries have been ongoing for decades. Most recently, in late 2014, India and Pakistan were scheduled to resume peace talks. Both sides withdrew from the talks, each citing a refusal of the other side to create an atmosphere appropriate to discussions. In October of the same year, Pakistan and India resumed shelling in the Kashmir region, forcing villagers to flee their homes in what has been described as the worst violence in the region in more than a decade.[87, 88]

In addition, there are ongoing boundary disputes between India and China over Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. All of these are vestiges of the two countries' 1962 war. In addition, strategic alliances continue to cloud the India–China relationship. In 2014, Chinese and Indian soldiers faced off after India accused Chinese troops of illegal incursion into its territory in Ladakh. Hundreds of Chinese incursions into Indian territory happen annually, despite efforts of the two countries to work together to develop economic growth,.[89, 90] Despite ongoing border issues and China's claim to Arunachal Pradesh remain, China–India relations are stable and improving.[91, 92] Both are expanding relations through a number of high-level visits, with a shared vision for the future.[93, 94] India and China are both part of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group of fast-growing and emerging nations.[95] Additionally, China and India are large oil and natural gas importers, and they occasionally compete for oil and natural gas delivery contracts from energy-exporting nations.[96] Now, the trade sectors of the two Asian giants are increasingly competitive in Asian markets.[97, 98]

Bangladesh

Bangladesh-India border fence
© Nicholas Lepetit

India assisted in the formation of Bangladesh by supporting the country formerly known as East Pakistan in its 1971 fight for independence. Yet, their relationship today is somewhat strained. Over the years, some Indian states have been magnets for illegal immigrants, mainly from poor and heavily populated Bangladesh. The influx of people has dramatically changed the ethnic makeup of these Indian states. Some northeast Indian militant groups initially formed as a reaction to the influx of foreigners (i.e., Bengalis). These groups endeavored to remove illegal immigrants from the area, while also seeking to establish tribal rights. Today, the primary goal of most of these groups is secession from India, and

several have even set up bases in Bangladesh.[99, 100, 101]

Illegal immigration, militant infiltration, and smuggling across its borders continue, despite efforts by the Indian and Bangladeshi governments.[102] As a result, the Indian government has erected a barbed-wire fence along the Indian–Bangladeshi border.[103] However, the fence has stopped neither trade nor migration.[104, 105] Moreover, the Indian guards are violent and unsympathetic as they implement orders to shoot-to-kill migrant Bangladeshis.[106, 107]

Despite the border and land problems between India and Bangladesh, the two countries continue to cooperate in several areas, such as energy and counterterrorism.[108] Bangladesh has taken its counter-terrorism role seriously. It has made great strides in combating terrorism in all sectors, including legislation, law enforcement, border security, terror financing, and social issues.[109] For its part, India has helped Bangladesh combat terrorism in the region. India has shared counter-terrorism intelligence that has prevented the execution of terror plots in Bangladesh, including a plot to assassinate its prime minister.[110]

Burma

The Indian government has developed ties with Burma in recent year that benefit India's strategic interests. India has stated its intention to use Burma as a land bridge and a link to other countries. Burma has significant oil and gas reserves, mineral wealth, and a long coastline along Indian Ocean shipping lanes. These factors make it strategically important to India and China.[111, 112, 113, 114] Burma is particularly important to India because of its long border with four of India's eastern states, all of which harbor militant secessionist groups that use Burma as a base.[115, 116, 117, 118]

India and Burma signed several pacts in 2010 to boost ties and cooperation in areas related to terrorism, organized crime, money laundering, smuggling of weapons, and drug trafficking.[119, 120] Bilateral trade between the two nations reaches more than USD2 billion. Trade encompasses agriculture, aviation, technology, healthcare, and infrastructure to name a few.[121, 122]

Nepal

Nepal border crossing
© Bo Jayatilaka

Nepal is one of the few countries with a Hindu-majority population besides India. Until recently, it was the only country to have officially declared itself a Hindu nation. That designation changed in May 2006 when a new, interim government came to power and declared the country a secular state. The country was declared a federal republic in May 2008 and the monarchy was abolished. This was followed by a number of difficulties related to creating a stable government. A coalition government and prime minister were finally installed in February 2014.[123]

The Indian and Nepalese governments have engaged in a border dispute for years, which include several hundred square kilometers at the source of the Kalapani River. India has also stepped up its border security in an effort to quell Maoist insurgents, and to stop drug traffickers from crossing into India.[124] India's new prime minister resumed visits with the Nepalese government in 2014, and updated the 1950 treaty between the two countries. The revision focused on tighter border security to staunch terrorist activities. It also ensures that the two nations will cooperate in trade, transit, connectivity, and hydropower.[125, 126, 127]

Bhutan

Bhutan-India border crossing
© Kaushal Karkhanis

The small, isolated Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan likely enjoys the closest relationship with India. The vast majority of Bhutan's exports and imports flow to and from India. Bhutan's trade balance with India recently achieved surplus levels because India purchased power from Bhutan's hydroelectric plants. Furthermore, India funded a new mega-hydroelectric plant in Bhutan. It was commissioned in 2006, and Bhutanese exports to India increased by roughly 60%.[128, 129]

Bhutan came under increasing pressure from India in late 2003 and clamped down on several Indian insurgency groups encamped within its territory.[130] Since then, Bhutan has been mostly free of Indian insurgency groups, although violence related insurgency increased in 2008.[131, 132, 133] Bhutan has since tightened security on its borders and continues to work with the Indian military to curb such activity.[134, 135, 136]

India and Bhutan revised and updated their major treaty in February 2007. This treaty is named the 1949 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. The updated treaty states that India will no longer "guide" Bhutan in its foreign policy, but they will work closely on matters of national interest.[137] In addition, the new agreement allows Bhutan to procure military equipment from sources other than India. They have also engaged in high-level visits as a demonstration of cooperation and strong bilateral relations.[138]

Signing of Bilateral Agreements
© President Sri Lanka / flickr.com

Sri Lanka

The island of Sri Lanka was embroiled in an intermittent civil war for over a quarter-century. The conflict was between ethnic Tamil Hindu separatists in the northern and eastern parts of the island, and the Sinhalese Buddhist majority who are predominantly in western and southern Sri Lanka. The civil war ended on 19 May 2009, when government forces captured all Tamil separatist-held territory and killed their leader.[139, 140]

India was drawn into the conflict as a nearby regional power, especially during the early years of fighting in the 1980s.[141] India then helped negotiate a peace accord in 1987, and sent Indian military forces to Sri Lanka to serve as peacekeepers.[142]

India has been slow to commit fully to bilateral relations with Sri Lanka, although trade has been increasing steadily since the turn of the century.[143]

Still, India has fallen far behind China in its relations with Sri Lanka. China has invested heavily in Sri Lanka's infrastructure, and nearly three-quarters of the infrastructure projects on the island are financed by Chinese banks. India continues to make its presence felt in Sri Lanka, and Sri Lanka continues to show its interest in developing better relations with India.[144, 145]

Terrorist Groups

Militant groups inside India can be broadly categorized into three groups: internally-based secessionist organizations; Kashmir-focused groups; and Maoist extremist groups that supposedly support India's landless poor, its tribal groups, and the lower castes.[146, 147] Most of the dozens of groups operating in India were banned in 2010, including the secessionists United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA); United National Liberation Front (UNLF); People's Liberation Army (PLA); People's Revolutionary

Maoist rebels
© K. Aksoy / flickr.com

Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK); and, the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF). Also banned are the Kashmir focused groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT); the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM); Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI); and, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and other various left-wing extremist organizations.[148]

Some of these groups also have camps in neighboring countries. Since 2009, strong counterterrorism cooperation between Bangladesh and India has led to the arrest and transfer to India of more than 50 rebel activists and leaders, including ULFA's chair and the senior members of LeT. India has cooperated with Bangladesh by sharing information on suspected terrorist plots on Bangladeshi targets, including an assassination plot on the prime minister of Bangladesh.[149, 150, 151]

Regional conflicts have displaced hundreds of thousands of people.[152] Furthermore, the use of child soldiers is not uncommon in these conflict areas.[153, 154, 155, 156]

Secessionists

India's secessionists are primarily from an area in the northeast region called the Seven Sisters. This area includes the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya.[157] These states border China (Tibet), Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Burma, and they are linked to mainland India only by a narrow strip of land called the "Siliguri Corridor." The Seven Sisters have historically been isolated from the rest of India, not only because of geography, but also because of race, culture, and religion.[158] Such differences and poor economic conditions have led to ethnic tensions and grievances against the government. Insurgent groups have formed in the region and they claim that the government is neglectful and indifferent towards the poverty-stricken area. These same groups also claim that the government discriminates against the people who live there.[159, 160 161, 162]

The majority of civilian and security personnel casualties, resulting from militant group attacks in India's northeast have occurred in two states: Assam and Manipur.[163] The

most active group operating in Assam is the United Liberation Front of Asom. The most active groups in Manipur are the United National Liberation Front, the People's Liberation Army, and the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF).[164, 165]

The ULFA was formed in 1979 as a student-led insurgency, and their aim was to create a sovereign socialist state for the Assamese.[166] They established camps in Bhutan and Bangladesh, beginning in the late 1980s.[167] However, the group has suffered political and logistical setbacks in recent years when Arabinda Rajkhowa, ULFA's chairman, was arrested in Bangladesh and turned over to India in 2010.[168, 169] As a peace offering, the Assam state government proposed talks and free passage to the leaders if the group gave up violence.[170] Rajkhowa agreed to talks upon his release from jail in December 2010. Initial talks with the government began in February 2011.[171] Anti-talk factions of the ULFA emerged, and the Indian government has pursued action against them.[172]

The UNLF was formed in 1964 and it is one of the oldest insurgent groups in northeastern India.[173] It was originally established by the native Meitei ethnic group as a nonviolent organization. UNLF was relatively peaceful during the 1970s and 1980s. However, during the 1990s it developed an armed wing, called Manipur People's Army (MPA). This caused a split within the organization and the two groups fought each other.[174] At the end of the decade, UNLF merged with the Revolutionary People's Front and the Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (RPK) to form an umbrella organization, the Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF). UNLF now has between 3,500-5,000 members, who fund their activities with money from smuggling, extortion, and gun-running.[175, 176] They operate out of bases that are primarily located in Manipur State, and some bases reportedly in Burma and Bangladesh. Peace talks with the government have been intermittent and unsuccessful. The organization's leader, Rajkumar Meghen, was arrested in Bangladesh and turned over to Indian authorities in November 2010.[177] He has vowed to continue his party's struggle. Violence continues in Manipur State, but incidents declined through 2014 into 2015. Still, the militants remain devoted to their cause, and the Indian government refuses to risk the integrity of Manipur State.[178]

The Revolutionary People's Front and its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army, were formed in the late 1970s to deliver Manipur from "Indian 'colonial occupation'" and to fight "social evils," such as drugs and alcohol.[179] The two organizations are primarily made up of Meitei, but they also other ethnic and tribal groups.[180] The PLA and RPF have ties with other northeastern separatist organizations.[181] After being banned in 1991, the RPF joined PREPAK and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) to form the Joint Committee (RJC), which help them increase in size and capability. In 1999, all the groups merged with the UNLF to form the Manipur People's Liberation Front. The RPF has a government-in exile in Bangladesh and the PLA has camps in Burma and Bangladesh.

Kashmir-Focused

Many groups are involved in terrorist activities in Kashmir, and related to Kashmir, but by far the most violent of these groups are Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM). The first 2 are among the 59 groups officially recognized by the U.S. government as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs).[182, 183] Their links to global terrorist groups distinguish them from those with a purely domestic agenda.[184] They typically select multiple targets in an urban area to maximize casualties. LeT, whose name means "Army of the Pure," was quickly connected to the Mumbai attack in 2008. Indian investigators also believe that the group played a role in the Mumbai train bombings of July 2006, which left over 200 dead.[185] LeT is officially banned in Pakistan, yet it has been operating under several aliases there in order to avoid sanctions.[186] LeT engaged in numerous violent confrontations in India during 2014.[187]

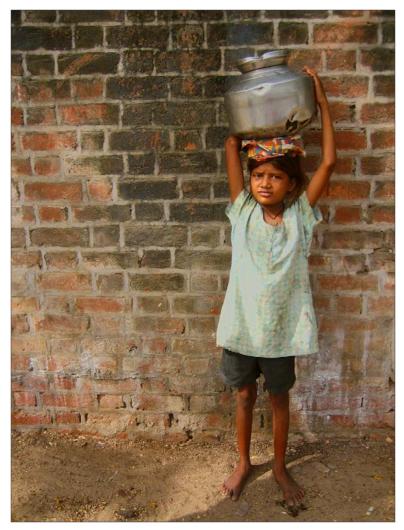*Naxalite flag*
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Maoists

A growing threat in India is the spread of Naxalite terrorism. The Naxalites are members of a militant agrarian movement that is also known as the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The movement began in 1967 with a peasant uprising in the district of Naksalbari (Naxalbari) in West Bengal State. In recent years, the group has spread its reach throughout central and eastern India.[188, 189]

The Naxalites draw strength from local support, but have little influence beyond rural areas. Still, they are powerful and, according to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, they are India's "greatest internal security challenge."[190] In July 2006, 800 Naxalites staged a daring attack in southern Chhattisgarh State that left 25 people dead.[191, 192] In 2009, Maoists took control of West Bengal's Lalgarh district (250km/155 mi from Calcutta) before Indian security forces were able to subdue them. In April 2010, they attacked soldiers in the state of Chhattisgarh, killing 76 paramilitary troops. The central government has now banned the group.[193] In addition, government forces pushed the Naxalites back in 2010 to their rural bases across several states, in one of the biggest offensives against the organization. Nevertheless, weekly skirmishes and attacks by the group are not uncommon. Over 6,000 people have died in the Naxalites' struggle to bring communist rule to India. India remains staunch in its efforts to oppose Naxalite demands for territorial concessions.[194, 195] Naxalites are seen as one of the greatest internal security threats in India.[196, 197]

Poverty

Wide income disparity exists across India and is one of the primary contributing factors to India's continuing problems with leftist militant groups and ethnic secession movements. India's tribal groups mostly inhabit the country's rural areas, which are the poorest regions of the country. Rural residents have reaped few economic benefits from the recent growth in India's economy.[198]

Numerous programs have been put in place by the Indian government to reduce poverty. However, many Indians remain desperately poor. Figures vary depending on the algorithm used to measure poverty.[199] The reality shows a real inequality in wealth in India, a gap that continues to grow despite the government's best efforts to alleviate poverty.[200] India still has far to go in addressing the needs of its rural poor. The violent unrest in many rural areas has contributed to the ongoing desperate conditions. Militant groups, such as the Naxalites, primarily target the rural poor for recruitment. This only adds to the deep poverty and lack of services in these areas, as it deters development and investment in these regions.[201, 202, 203]

Poverty
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The Indian government has begun exploring ways that it can recruit its citizenry in the fight against terrorism and insurgency. The government has begun to trade development for intelligence that it can use to combat militant groups within the county, such as the Naxalites.[204, 205, 206]

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Chapter 5 Assessment

1. The city of Hyderabad has been a significant site of conflict between Muslim and Hindu communities.

   TRUE

   Over the last several decades, Hyderabad has periodically suffered from communal conflicts and related terrorist attacks. The city is home to a substantial Muslim population.

2. The primary deployment zone for Indian troops is the southwestern coastal region.

   FALSE

   Major deployment areas include Jammu and Kashmir, the site of the country's ongoing territorial dispute with Pakistan, and the insurgency-plagued northeastern states.

3. India aligned itself with the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

   FALSE

   India was a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), whose members attempted to pursue foreign policy independently of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.

4. India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons.

   TRUE

   India and Pakistan developed and tested nuclear weapons. Their nuclear capabilities have been viewed as an equalizing force and a potential source of heightened conflict.

5. India has competed with China to secure energy delivery contracts with resource-rich nations.

   TRUE

   To meet the energy needs of their huge populations, India and China often compete to secure delivery contracts with energy-exporting nations.

Final Assessment

1. Mountain ranges form the western and eastern boundaries of the Deccan Plateau in peninsular India.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

2. The Indus River flows almost entirely within India's borders.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

3. Mumbai's accessible coastal location has long made it a major shipping port.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

4. The richest habitats for plant and animal life in India are found in the Western Ghats and the Eastern Himalayas.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

5. The Brahmaputra is the most polluted river in the country.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

6. The partition of British India into the independent nations of India and Pakistan was a peaceful process.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

7. Mohandas Gandhi was elected as the first prime minister of independent India.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

8. Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 while serving as India's prime minister.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

9. Communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims erupted in Gujarat State, during the Bharatiya Janata Party's majority leadership of India's government.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

10. The Indian capital of New Delhi was the site of a series of coordinated terrorist attacks in November 2008.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

11. India's domestic oil production fulfills most of its petroleum demand.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

12. Coal is the only fossil fuel source that India possesses in abundance.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

13. In recent years, India has surpassed China and Thailand in the total number of international tourists.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

14. India maintains one of the world's largest railway systems.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

15. The term "License Raj" refers to government-instituted controls on business practices in India. These were instituted during the era of socialist economic policies.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

16. In India, a family's lineage is traditionally traced through the male line.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

17. Many Indians are subject to dietary restrictions based on religious traditions.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

18. Delhi is the home of the Indian filmmaking industry known as Bollywood.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

19. In terms of total population, India's Muslim community is one of the smallest in Asia.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

20. Dravidian languages are predominantly spoken in northern India.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

21. India is constructing a massive fence along its border with Nepal in order to staunch the flow of Tibetan immigrants.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

22. India has imposed severe economic and diplomatic sanctions upon the ruling military regime in Burma.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

23. India's armed forces were temporarily involved in the civil conflict in Sri Lanka.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

24. Assam and Manipur are two northeastern states that suffer from high levels of militant activity.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

25. Poverty has not been a factor in the spread of insurgent and secessionist movements in India.
    TRUE OR FALSE?

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