

# World Geography

## Chapter 29

# The Countries of South Asia

# Indian Independence



- The British undercut the flourishing Indian textile industry because they wanted to use India as a market for cheaper, machine-made textiles produced in Britain.
- British officials held positions of power in the government and the army, while Indians were expected to take positions at the lower levels.
- As Indian **nationalism** began to develop in the late 1800s, Western ideas of individual rights and self-government spread through the Indian middle class.
- Mohandas Gandhi, a young law student who had traveled to England to study, used **nonviolent resistance** as a weapon against British injustice and won the hearts of many Indians.
- Gandhi peacefully resisted by **boycotting**, or refusing to purchase, British cloth and wearing clothes made from yarn he spun himself.
- As sales of British cloth fell sharply due to the spread of the boycott, Gandhi's program of nonviolent resistance developed into a mass movement, and Gandhi attracted support from other countries.
- In 1935, the British gave in to mounting Indian and international pressures and agreed to establish provinces governed entirely by Indians.



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# Religious Conflict



The deepening conflict between Hindus and Muslims, made worse by economic differences, led to the **partition**, or division, of the subcontinent into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan.

## Violent Partition

- Independence came to India and Pakistan in 1947.
- 12 million people moved to avoid the rule of a majority religion to which they did not belong.
- Many refugees died from hunger and thirst, and an estimated one million people were killed in fighting between Muslims and Hindus.
- Since independence, India and Pakistan have fought three wars.

## Bangladesh

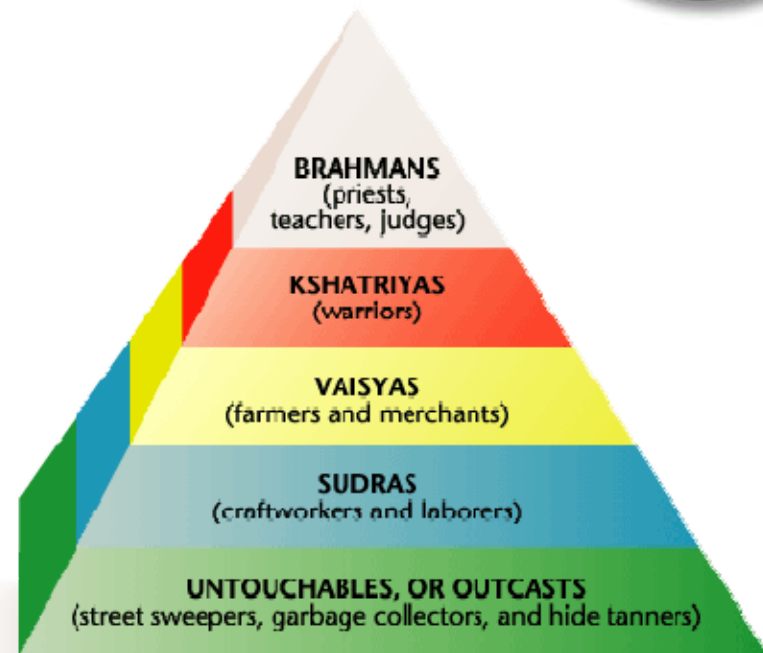
- Islam was the only thread that connected East and West Pakistan.
- East Pakistan had a less developed economy and paid more taxes than West Pakistan, where most tax dollars were spent.
- After a devastating cyclone in 1970, grievances led to fighting, and India joined the conflict on the side of the East Pakistanis.
- As a result, in 1971, East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh.



# Religious Life



- The majority of people practice Hinduism.
- Hindus believe in **reincarnation**.
- Hindu society has been organized according to the **caste system**, a social hierarchy in which people are born into a group that has a distinct rank in society.
- At the top of the caste system are Brahmans, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras, and “untouchables”, or outcasts.
- Untouchables still have fewer educational and economic opportunities.
- Other religions practiced in India include Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Jainism.



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# Village Life



- About 7 out of 10 Indians live in villages and farm for a living.
- Houses belonging to more prosperous families in a village are made of better materials than those of poorer villagers, most of which include only a **charpoy**, or wooden bed frame with knotted string in place of a mattress.
- For religious and economic reasons, Indians follow a mostly vegetarian diet, and most Indians eat some form of rice every day.
- Because most of India is hot and humid, clothing is light and loose.
- Many Indian women wear a **sari**, and some women follow the custom of **purdah**, whereby they cover their faces with veils while in public.
- Families in India are generally large, and many members of an extended family live in a single household in what is known as the **joint family system**.
- Because illiteracy is widespread, television, radio, and movies are more powerful media than newspapers for spreading new ideas to Indian villagers.



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# Urbanization



- **Many of India's people live in small or medium-sized towns, which are larger and livelier than rural villages.**
- **India's cities are very densely populated, as evidenced by Mumbai's population density of 714,000 inhabitants per square mile.**
- **Despite the extreme crowding and poverty, cities offer more opportunities for work and education than do rural areas.**
- **Mumbai, on India's west coast, is the country's busiest port and its financial center, while Chennai and Kolkata are major centers of commerce and shipping on the east coast.**
- **New Delhi is the country's capital and center of government.**
- **Varanasi, on the banks of the Ganges, is regarded by Hindus as their holiest city, and devout Hindus hope to visit the city at least once within their lifetime to wash in the sacred Ganges River.**



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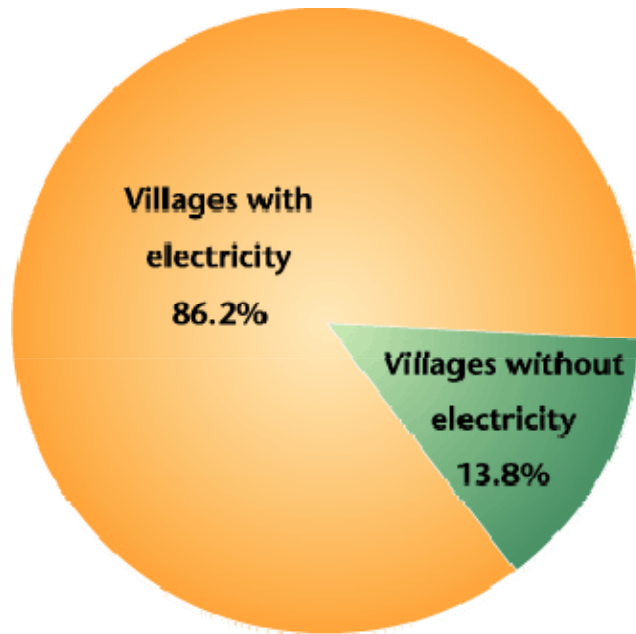
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# Economic Improvements



Source: Press Information Bureau,  
Government of India

- Farming methods have improved, but few families own enough land to support themselves.
- Many farmers have set up cottage industries to add to their income.
- India is a leading industrial nation, and advances have been made there in technology and consumer industries.
- The growing middle class forms the market for consumer goods.
- The literacy rate has increased, but many children do not complete their schooling because their families need them for other work.
- Improvements in health care have increased life expectancies, but many cannot afford even basic care.



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# Pakistan



- **Pakistan is made up of three physical regions: the Hindu Kush, the Baluchistan Plateau, and the Thar Desert.**
- **Sandwiched between the plateau and the desert is the fertile Indus River valley, which contains most of the country's agricultural areas as well as its major **hydroelectric power** stations.**
- **Most people in Pakistan live in farming villages, and almost all Pakistanis are Muslims.**
- **Disputes among the country's ethnic groups often turn violent.**
- **Pakistan's literacy rate is lower than India's, while its population growth rate is higher.**



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# Afghanistan



- The Hindu Kush forms the backbone of the country, and most Afghans live in fertile valleys at the foot of the mountains, rather than on the semiarid plains to the north or in the deserts to the south.
- Although the Hindu Kush formed a barrier, it had many passes, which merchants and soldiers used to cross Afghanistan for centuries.
- As successive invasions and migrations led to many ethnic groups living in Afghanistan, each group maintained its own language, but was united with most other groups by Islam.
- In the 1800s, Britain and Russia invaded Afghanistan in an effort to control Central Asia, but when they both failed to conquer it, they agreed to leave it alone as a **buffer state**.
- In 1979, the Soviet Union sent troops to Afghanistan to put down a revolt at the request of the Afghan government, causing 3 million people to flee into Pakistan.
- Pakistan and the United States helped arm and train Afghan resistance fighters.
- After the Soviets withdrew in 1989, rival factions struggled for power, and by 2000, a radical Muslim faction, the Taliban, controlled most of Afghanistan.



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# Bangladesh



- **Bangladesh is a huge delta formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna Rivers, which gives the country fertile soil, but opens it up to flooding.**
- **Monsoon rains and tropical storms can cause catastrophic flooding.**
- **Bangladesh is struggling with overpopulation, which has combined with natural hazards to create problems of hunger and **malnutrition**.**
- **Bangladesh has few roads or bridges, and cannot improve its transportation or communications systems without massive aid.**



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# Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka



## Nepal and Bhutan

- Nepal and Bhutan span a great range in altitude.
- Both countries have hot, humid lowlands in the south, where crops flourish.
- Nepal is 90 percent Hindu, while Bhutan is 75 percent Buddhist. Yet, each religion has influenced the other.
- Today, Bhutan discourages contact with foreigners, while Nepal welcomes tourists.

## Sri Lanka

- The economy is agricultural, but farming and development have reduced the rain forest by almost two thirds.
- Deforestation may have helped change the island's weather and caused droughts.
- Since independence from Britain in 1948, this ethnic conflict has divided the island and caused the economy to suffer.



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