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## Chapter 25

### Human Geography of South Asia: A Region of Contrasts

Both South Asia's rich and ancient history, and its religious and ethnic diversity, have strongly shaped and defined its people's lives.

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#### Section 1: India

#### Section 2: Pakistan and Bangladesh

#### Section 3: Nepal and Bhutan

#### Section 4: Sri Lanka and the Maldives

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#### Section 1: India

- India is the largest country in South Asia and has the most developed economy.
- Indian culture is deeply influenced by religion.

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### Invasions, Empires, and Independence

#### Early History

- Indian civilization begins in Indus Valley in 2500 B.C.
- Aryans from north of Iran invade in 1500 B.C.
  - establish kingdoms on Ganges Plain, push Dravidians south
  - Persians, Greeks later invade Indus Valley
- Mauryan Empire unites India in 321 B.C.; Asoka spreads Buddhism
- Gupta Empire later rules northern India
- Muslim **Mughal Empire** rules much of India by early 1500s

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#### *Continued* Invasions, Empires, and Independence

#### Europeans Arrive

- In 1500s, French, Dutch, Portuguese build cloth, spice trades
- British East India Company controls Indian trade by 1757
  - British establish direct rule in 1857
- **Raj**—90-year period of direct British control, opposed by most Indians
  - Mohandas Gandhi's **nonviolent resistance** achieves goals peacefully

- India gains its independence from Britain in 1947
- Muslim Pakistan splits from Hindu India; violence, migrations result

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## **Governing the World's Largest Democracy**

### **India After Independence**

- Constitution is created under first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru
  - a democratic republic since 1950
- System has federation of states, strong central government, like U.S.
  - parliamentary system, like U.K.
- India is mostly Hindu, but with large Muslim, Sikh, Tamil minorities
  - Sikhs kill Gandhi's daughter, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, 1984
  - Tamils assassinate her son, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, 1991

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## **Economic Challenges**

### **Dependence on Farming**

- India has large economy, but half its people live in poverty
- Two-thirds of people farm; most farms are small with low crop yields
- **Land reform**—more balanced distribution of land among farmers
  - 5 percent of farm families own 25 percent of farmland
  - land-reform proposals make little progress
- After famines of 1960s, scientists improve farm techniques, crops
  - **Green Revolution** increases crop yields for wheat, rice

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### *Continued* **Economic Challenges**

### **Growing Industry**

- Cotton textiles have long been a major product
  - iron, steel, chemical, food industries develop after 1940s
- Main industrial regions include:
  - Kolkata (Calcutta), Ahmadabad, Chennai (Madras), Delhi
- Mumbai (Bombay) is India's most prosperous city
  - a commercial center which produces metals, chemicals, electronics
- Bangalore is the high-tech center, home to software companies

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## **Life in Modern India**

## Daily Life

- Most Indians have male-dominated, arranged marriages
- Diet is mostly vegetarian: rice, legumes, flatbreads
  - meat is eaten in curry dishes, but is limited by religious beliefs
- Sports include soccer, field hockey, cricket
- Classical music uses sitar, tabla instruments
- Large film industry in Mumbai

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## *Continued* Life in Modern India

### Education

- Indian economy is changing; more people work in factories, offices
- Education is key to change, most middle-class kids go to school
- Literacy has risen steadily since the 1950s
- In slums and rural areas, school attendance, literacy still low

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## Indian Culture

### Many Languages

- Constitution recognizes 18 major languages
  - India has over 1,000 languages and dialects
  - Hindi is the official language
  - English is widely used by government, business workers
- Southern India is a distinct Dravidian subregion in language, ethnicity
  - major languages are Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam

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## *Continued* Indian Culture

### Hinduism

- 80% of Indians are Hindu; complex Aryan religion includes many gods
  - reincarnation—rebirth of the soul after death
- Original Aryan **caste system** of social classes:
  - Brahmins—priests, scholars; Kshatriyas—rulers, warriors
  - Vaisyas—farmers, merchants; Sudras—artisans, laborers
- *Dalits* (untouchables) are outside caste system—lowest status
- Dharma is a caste's moral duty; only reincarnation changes caste

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## *Continued* **Indian Culture**

### **Other Religions**

- India's other faiths include Jainism, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism
- Buddhism originated in northern India
- Islam is still strong in certain parts of India
- Millions of Muslims left after 1947 independence
  - moved to new Muslim states in northwest, northeast

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## **Section 2: Pakistan and Bangladesh**

- Pakistan and Bangladesh are Muslim countries formed as a result of the partition of British India.
- Both Pakistan and Bangladesh have large populations and face great economic challenges.

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## **New Countries, Ancient Lands**

### **Early History**

- **Indus Valley civilization**—largest of early civilizations
  - arises around 2500 B.C. in what is now Pakistan
- Features well-planned cities like Harappa
  - city of Mohenjo-Daro had brick buildings, sanitation systems
- Civilization falls around 1500 B.C.; Aryans invade soon after
- Mauryan, Gupta, Mughal empires all rule entire region
- Area is then ruled by British Empire until 1947

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## *Continued* **New Countries, Ancient Lands**

### **Partition and War**

- 1947 **partition** creates Hindu India, Muslim Pakistan
- Hindu-Muslim violence killed one million people
  - 10 million crossed borders: Hindus to India, Muslims to Pakistan
- Ethnic differences led to civil war between West and East Pakistan
  - East Pakistan won independence in 1971, became Bangladesh

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*Continued* **New Countries, Ancient Lands**

**Military Rule**

- Both countries have had military rule, political corruption
- Pakistan fought wars with India over **Kashmir** territory
- Both countries had female prime ministers in 1990s

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**Struggling Economies**

**Subsistence Farming**

- Rapidly growing populations, low per capita income in both countries
- Small plots farmed with old methods struggle to feed families
- Climate hurts yields: arid Pakistan, Bangladesh, stormy
- Pakistan's irrigated Indus Valley grows wheat, cotton, rice
- Bangladesh's deltas produce rice, jute (used for rope, carpets)
  - freshwater fishing is also vital to economy

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*Continued* **Struggling Economies**

**Small Industry**

- Neither country is highly industrialized
  - small factories lack capital, resources, markets to expand
- Both export cotton clothes; Pakistan exports wool, leather goods
- **Microcredit** policy allows small loans to poor entrepreneurs
  - **entrepreneurs**—people who start and build businesses
  - small businesses join together to get microloans
  - program raises standards of living, especially for women

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**One Religion, Many Peoples**

**Islamic Culture**

- Islam has been part of culture since rule of Muslim Mughal Empire
- Customs include daily prayer
  - **Ramadan**—month of fasting from sunrise to sunset
- Mosques are large, impressive structures
- Pakistan's stricter Islamic law includes *purdah*—women's seclusion
  - women have no contact with men not related, wear veils in public
- Bangladesh's religious practices are less strict

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### *Continued* **One Religion, Many Peoples**

#### **Ethnic Diversity**

- Pakistan is more diverse: five main groups, each with own language
  - Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans, Muhajirs, Balochs
  - Punjabis are half the population, Muhajirs left India in 1947
  - national language is Muhajirs' Urdu
- Majority of people in Bangladesh are Bengali
  - Bengali language based on Sanskrit, ancient Indo-Aryan language

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### **Modern Life and Culture**

#### **A Love of Poetry**

- Strong oral tradition: Pakistanis memorize long poems
  - poets and poetry readings (*mushairas*) are popular
- Bangladesh poet Rabindranath Tagore won 1913 Nobel Prize
  - his song "My Golden Bengal" is national anthem

#### **Music and Dance**

- *Qawwali* is the Muslim Sufi's devotional singing
- Bangladesh's folk dances act out myths, legends

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### **Section 3: Nepal and Bhutan**

- Nepal and Bhutan are landlocked Himalayan kingdoms.
- Rugged terrain and an isolated location have had a great impact on life in Nepal and Bhutan.

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### **Mountain Kingdoms**

#### **Geographic Isolation**

- Both countries are located in Himalayas; each has:
  - central upland of ridges, valleys leading to high mountains
  - small lowland area along Indian border
- Mountain landscape isolates Nepal, Bhutan: hard to reach, conquer
- China controlled Bhutan briefly in 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Both remained mostly independent, rarely visited by foreigners

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### *Continued* **Mountain Kingdoms**

#### **Evolving Monarchies**

- In past, both countries split into religious kingdoms, ruling states
- Unified kingdoms emerge, led by hereditary monarchs
- Today both are **constitutional monarchies**
  - kingdoms where ruler's power is limited by constitution
  - Bhutan's king is supreme ruler, Nepal's shares power with parliament
- Both must balance the interests of neighboring China and India

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### **Developing Economies**

#### **Limited Resources**

- Both countries are poor: agricultural economies, but little farmland
  - mountainous terrain, poor soil, erosion
  - terraced farms grow rice, corn, potatoes, wheat
  - livestock include cattle, sheep, yaks
- Timber industry is important, but has led to deforestation
- Manufacturing: wood products, food processing, cement production
- Most trade is with India

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### **Developing Economies**

#### **Increasing Tourism**

- Tourism is fastest-growing industry in Nepal
  - people visit capital at Kathmandu, climb Himalayas
  - hotels, restaurants, services grow
  - also hurts Nepal's environment; trash, pollution left on mountains
- Bhutan regulates, limits tourism, keeps some areas off-limits
  - tourism provides revenue, economic potential

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### **Rich Cultural Traditions**

#### **A Mix of People**

- Nepal's Indo-Nepalese, Hindu majority came from India centuries ago
  - speak Nepali, variation of Sanskrit
- Nepal also has groups of Tibetan ancestry, including **Sherpas**
  - high-Himalayan people; traditional mountain guides of Everest area

- Bhutan's main ethnic group is the Bhote, who trace origins to Tibet
- Bhutan's minority Nepalese don't assimilate; keep language, customs

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*Continued* **Rich Cultural Traditions**

### **Religious Customs**

- **Siddhartha Gutama**, the Buddha, born in 500s B.C.
- Nepalese were Buddhist; today most are Hindu
- Tibetan-style Buddhism is official religion of Bhutan
  - uses **mandalas**—symbolic geometric designs for meditation

### **The Arts and Recreation**

- Artisans make bells, jewelry, sculptures, textiles
- Festivals feature songs on flutes, drums, brass horns
- Bhutan is famed for its archery contests

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## **Section 4: Sri Lanka and the Maldives**

- Sri Lanka and the Maldives are island countries with strong connections to the South Asian subcontinent.
- Sri Lanka and the Maldives face difficult challenges that affect their political and economic development.

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### **History of the Islands**

#### **Settlement of Sri Lanka**

- In 500s B.C. Indians cross strait to Sri Lanka, become **Sinhalese**
- In A.D. 300s, **Tamils**—Indian Dravidian Hindus—settle in north end
- Portuguese, Dutch come in 1500s; British rule in 1796, call it Ceylon
  - island gains independence in 1948, becomes Sri Lanka in 1972
- Tensions lead Tamils to seek *Tamil Elam*, an independent state
  - civil war between Sinhalese, rebel Tamil Tigers begins in 1980s

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*Continued* **History of the Islands**

#### **A Muslim State in the Maldives**

- Buddhists, Hindus from India, Sri Lanka settle islands in 500s B.C.
  - Arab traders visit often, population converts to Islam by 1100s



- Governed by six dynasties of Muslim **sultans**—rulers
- Declares itself a republic in 1968, headed by elected president
- 1,200 islands; a land area of 115 square miles; population 300,000
  - one of the world's smallest independent country

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## Life in the Islands

### Ethnic Mosaic of the Islands

- Sri Lanka is 75% Sinhalese Buddhists, 18% Tamil Hindus, 7% Muslim
- Sinhalese live in south, west, central island; Muslims live in east
  - Tamils are in northern Jaffna Peninsula
- Capital is Colombo; most Sri Lankans live in small towns, villages
- In Maldives, Sinhalese and Dravidians mixed with Arab, Asian traders
  - official language is Divenhi; Arabic, Hindi, English are also spoken

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## Life in the Islands

### Cultural Life in Sri Lanka

- Buddhist, Hindu temples, Muslim mosques dot landscape
  - art, literature strongly influenced by religions
- At Buddhist festivals, *Kandayan* dance tells of kings, heroes
- At *Perahera* festival, dancers in glittering silver perform

### Cultural Life in the Maldives

- Culture is strongly influenced by Muslim customs
  - Islam is state religion—no others allowed
- *Bodu beru* (“big drum”) music and dance has African influences

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## Economic Activity in the Islands

### Economic Strengths

- Sri Lanka has South Asia's highest per capita income
  - agricultural economy: rice farms; tea, rubber, coconut exports
  - manufacturing is increasing
  - famous for gemstones like sapphires, rubies, topaz
- Maldives has limited farming, food is imported
  - fishing for tuna, marlin, shark still provides 1/4 of jobs
  - main economy is now tourism centered on beaches, reefs

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*Continued* **Economic Activity in the Islands**

**Tough Challenges**

- Tourism in Sri Lanka grew until civil war began in early 1980s
  - war has also damaged infrastructure, disrupted economic activities
- Maldives must deal with global warming
  - if polar icecaps melt at all, islands could flood completely
  - scientists warn this could happen by the end of this century