



India

Lesson 1
The Country of India

Key Facts



India has the second largest population on earth, just behind China. It represents just over 15% of the world's population.

Population: 930 million people.

Geographic size: 1.2 million square miles.

Capital: New Delhi.

Major cities and population: New Delhi, Delhi (7 million), Bombay (13 million), Calcutta (11 million), Madras (6 million), Bangalore and Kanpur.

Geographic Landmarks



India is basically a peninsula, with the Arabian Sea on the west, the Bay of Bengal on the east, and the Indian Ocean to the south.

The Himalayan Mountains separate India from much of the rest of Asia and China. The Himalayas have many of the tallest mountains in the world. The

tallest mountain in India is the Kanchenjunga at 28, 208 feet.

Just south of the Himalayas is the Indo-Gangetic Plain which lies between the Indus and Ganges rivers. On the north-western end of India is the Thar desert. Most of southern India is the Deccan Plateau, which is mostly rolling hills with many rivers. The plateau is separated from the northern plain by the Vindhya mountains. The Eastern and Western Ghats are coastal mountains on either side of the plateau.

Points of Interest



India has many interesting architectural designs. The Taj Mahal (shown above to the right) was built between 1632 and 1653 by the Mughal Empire. It was the emperor Shah Jahan's monument to his wife Mumtaz Mahal.

Traditional Indian art includes a variety of sculpted images on temples and other buildings. Art was a major component of the architectural design.

Major Industries

India's central government controls most major industries and sets production guidelines. Agriculture is still the largest industry, involving about two thirds of the population. Major crops include rice, cotton, jute, wheat, barley, linseed, tea, coffee and rubber. Poultry and sheep are the main sources of meat.

India also has a large textile industry. Manufacturing such as machinery and transportation equipment have become major industries. Electronics and engineering are emerging new industries.

Historical Highlights

Early civilization dates back to about 4,000 BC, although most early settlements appear to start about 2,000 BC. Early India was not a single nation, but many independent kingdoms. The Aryans ruled northern India from 2,000 BC to 1000 BC. The Aryan philosophy eventually evolved into the Hindu religion. The Aryan social system created the caste system in which people became members of a rigid social structure. The caste system preserved strong social divisions and slavery. The Hindu religion and priests helped to enforce the caste system. In 600 B.C., Magadha was the major Aryan state with religious reforms founding Buddhism and Jainism.

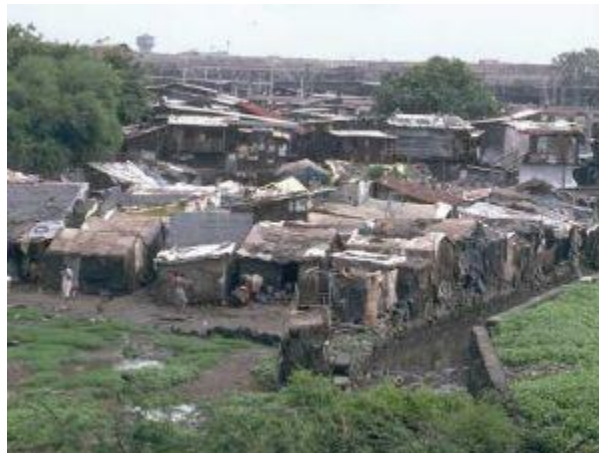
In the late 7th century A.D., Muslims began to invade India. By the 11th century, the Muslims took control of India, but the Muslim and Hindu religions continued to clash.

In the early 1500s, the Mughal Empire emerged to control India. In the 1600s, the Mughals established trading with the Britain and the France. When the Mughal empire began to decline, in the 1700s, the British and French fought to gain power. In 1858, Britain gained control of India and ruled for about 100 years. During this time, there were constant demands for India's independence. In 1947, after World War II had ended, Britain could no longer afford India. India became an independent country.

Population and Culture



India with its 930 million people has over 15% of the world's population living in only 2% of the world's space. This makes India a very densely populated country. Although India has many large cities, less than 30% of the population live in cities.



The caste system still controls India's society. A person's social level is determined by birth, such as rulers, merchants, artisans and servants. There are also many people who fall outside of the caste system. These outcasts have no social or economic role. Despite India's growing economy, its large population keeps most people below poverty levels.



Over 80% of the Indian population are Hindu. Muslims represent about 10%, with other religions such as Buddhism and Christianity making up the rest.

Climate

Northern India, especially in the Himalayas, has seasonal temperatures with cool winters. Most of southern India, particularly inland, is hot and dry. Temperatures can reach as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Monsoons during June through September produce severe storms with rain. The western and north-eastern coasts hit by monsoons get considerable rain, some areas getting over 100 inches per year.

