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India – The Largest Democracy In The World

By Josiah William

Although India, officially the Republic of India, is the seventh–largest country by geographical area

or the second most populous country in the world, the most prestigious fact for this large South–Asian country is being the most populous democracy in the world.

The Indus Valley civilization, where it is originated from, is one of the oldest in the world, dates back at least 5,000 years. Aryan tribes from the northwest infiltrated onto Indian lands about 1500 B.C.; their merger with the earlier Dravidian inhabitants created the classical Indian culture. Those of European traders, beginning in the late 15th century, followed Arab incursions starting in the 8th century and Turkish in the 12th. By the 19th century, Britain had assumed political control of virtually all–Indian lands. In the early twentieth century, a nationwide struggle for independence was launched by the Indian National Congress, largely led by Mahatma Gandhi and during Second World War by Indian National Army led by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Millions of protestors would engage in mass campaigns of civil disobedience with a commitment to ahimsa or non–violence. Finally, on 15 August, 1947, India gained independence from British rule. Three years later, on 26 January, 1950, India chose to be a republic, and a new Constitution came into effect.

India is divided into twenty–eight states, and seven union territories (or territories owned by the Central Government). All states and the union territories of Delhi and Pondicherry have elected governments. The remaining five union territories have centrally–appointed administrators. The states and territories are further divided into 602 districts.

India's northern and northeastern states are partially situated in the Himalayan Mountain Range. The rest of northern, central and eastern India consists of the fertile Indo–Gangetic plain. In the west, lies the Thar Desert. The southern Indian Peninsula is almost entirely composed of the Deccan plateau, which is flanked by two hilly coastal ranges, the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats. India is home to several major rivers, including the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Yamuna, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, and Krishna. India has three archipelagos - Lakshadweep off the southwest coast, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands volcanic island chain to the southeast, and the Sunderbans in the Gangetic delta in West Bengal. India has a coastline of over seven thousand kilometres, and borders Pakistan to the west, Nepal, the People's Republic of China and Bhutan to the north–east, and Bangladesh and

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Myanmar to the east. In the Indian Ocean, it is adjacent to the island nations of Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia.

Climate in India varies from tropical in the south to more temperate in the Himalayan north, with elevated regions in the north receiving sustained snowfall in winters. India's climate is strongly influenced by the Himalayas and the Thar Desert. The Himalayas, along with the Hindu Kush mountains in Pakistan, provide a barrier to the cold winds from Central Asia. This keeps most of the Indian subcontinent warmer than most locations in similar latitudes. The Thar Desert is responsible for attracting the moisture laden southwest monsoon winds that provide most of India's rainfall between June and September.

India is the second-most populous country in the world with an estimated 1.1 billion people in 2006. Language, caste and religion are determinants of social and political organisation within the highly diverse population. Although 80.5% of the people are Hindus, India is also home to the third-largest

population of Muslims in the world (13.4%), after Indonesia and Pakistan. Other religious groups include Sikhs (2%), Christians (2.04%), Buddhists (0.76%), Jains (0.40%), Jews, Zoroastrians, Ahmadis, and Bahá'ís. The national average literacy rate is around 64.4% (with males–75.6% and females–54.2%).

India has a rich and unique cultural heritage, and has managed to preserve its established traditions throughout history whilst absorbing customs, traditions and ideas from both invaders and immigrants. Many cultural practices, languages, customs and monuments are examples of this co-mingling over centuries. Famous monuments, such as the Taj Mahal and other examples of Islamic-inspired architecture have been inherited from the Mughal dynasty. These are the result of a syncretic tradition that combined elements from all parts of the country.

The nation also produces the world's largest number of motion pictures every year. The most recognisable face is that of cinema production based in Mumbai, which produces mainly commercial Hindi films, often referred to as "Bollywood". There are also strong cinema industries based on the Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu languages. There were five Miss World winners from India. This is the highest number of winners in Miss World as of 2005.

The cuisine of India is diverse, as ingredients, spices and cooking methods vary from region to region. Rice and wheat are the staple foods in the country. The country is notable for its wide variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian cuisine. Spicy food and sweets are popular in India.

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Josiah William works in marketing for

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