INDIA

SELECTED TEXTS FOR
LINGUA STRANIERA 0420
LAUREA TRIENNALE
June 2017- January 2018

From Empire to Independence: The British Raj in India 1858-1947

1858: Beginning of the Raj

In 1858, British Crown rule was established in India, ending a century of control by the East India Company. The life and death struggle that preceded this formalisation of British control lasted nearly two years, cost £36 million, and is variously referred to as the 'Great Rebellion', the 'Indian Mutiny' or the 'First War of Indian Independence'. Inevitably, the consequences of this bloody rupture marked the nature of political, social and economic rule that the British established in its wake.

It is important to note that the Raj (in Hindi meaning 'to rule' or 'kingdom') never encompassed the entire land mass of the sub-continent. Two-fifths of the sub-continent continued to be independently governed by over 560 large and small principalities, some of whose rulers had fought the British during the 'Great Rebellion', but with whom the Raj now entered into treaties of mutual cooperation. Indeed the conservative elites of princely India and big landholders were to prove increasingly useful allies, who would lend critical monetary and military support during the two World Wars. Hyderabad for example was the size of England and Wales combined, and its ruler, the Nizam, was the richest man in the world. They would also serve as political bulwarks in the nationalist storms that gathered momentum from the late 19th century and broke with insistent ferocity over the first half of the 20th century.

But the 'Great Rebellion' did more to create a racial chasm between ordinary Indians and Britons. This was a social segregation which would endure until the end of the Raj, graphically captured in EM Forster's 'A Passage to India'. While the British criticised the divisions of the Hindu caste system, they themselves lived a life ruled by precedence and class, deeply divided within itself. Rudyard Kipling reflected this position in his novels. His books also exposed the gulf between the 'white' community and the 'Anglo-Indians', whose mixed race caused them to be considered racially 'impure'.

Government in India

While there was a consensus that Indian policy was above party politics, in practice it became embroiled in the vicissitudes of Westminster. Successive viceroys in India and secretaries of state in London were appointed on a party basis, having little or no direct experience of Indian conditions and they strove to serve two masters. Edwin Montagu was the first serving secretary of state to visit India on a fact-finding mission in 1917-1918. Broadly speaking, the Government of India combined a policy of co-operation and conciliation of different strata of Indian society with a policy of coercion and force.

The empire was nothing if not an engine of economic gain. Pragmatism dictated that to govern efficiently and remuneratively, 1,200 civil servants could not rule 300 to 350 million Indians without the assistance of indigenous 'collaborators'. However, in true British tradition, they also chose to elaborate sophisticated and intellectual arguments to justify and explain their rule. On the one hand, Whigs and Liberals expounded sentiments most iconically expressed by TB Macaulay in 1833: 'that... by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government, that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. ... Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history.' On the other hand, James Fitzjames Stephen, writing in the 1880s, contended that empire had to be absolute because 'its great and characteristic task is that of imposing on Indian ways of life and modes of thought which the population regards without sympathy, though they are essential to its personal well-being and to the credit of its rulers.'

What was less ambiguous was that it was the economic interests of Britain that were paramount, though as the 20th century progressed, the government in India was successful in imposing safeguards. For instance, tariff walls were raised to protect the Indian cotton industry against cheap British imports.

Financial gains and losses

There were two incontrovertible economic benefits provided by India. It was a captive market for British goods and services, and served defence needs by maintaining a large standing army at no cost to the British taxpayer. However, the economic balance sheet of the empire remains a controversial topic and the debate has revolved around whether the British developed or retarded the Indian economy.

Among the benefits bequeathed by the British connection were the large scale capital investments in infrastructure, in railways, canals and irrigation works, shipping and mining; the commercialisation of agriculture with the development of

a cash nexus; the establishment of an education system in English and of law and order creating suitable conditions for the growth of industry and enterprise; and the integration of India into the world economy. Conversely, the British are criticised for leaving Indians poorer and more prone to devastating famines; exhorting high taxation in cash from an inpecunious people; destabilising cropping patterns by forced commercial cropping; draining Indian revenues to pay for an expensive bureaucracy (including in London) and an army beyond India's own defence needs; not ensuring that the returns from capital investment were reinvested to develop the Indian economy rather than reimbursed to London; and retaining the levers of economic power in British hands.

The Indian National Congress

The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 as an all India, secular political party, is widely regarded as a key turning point in formalising opposition to the Raj. It developed from its elite intellectual middle-class confines, and a moderate, loyalist agenda, to become by the inter-war years, a mass organisation. It was an organisation which, despite the tremendous diversity of the sub-continent, was remarkable in achieving broad consensus over the decades.

Yet it was not a homogenous organisation and was often dominated by factionalism and opposing political strategies. This was exemplified by its splintering in 1907 into the so-called 'moderate' and 'extremist' wings, which reunited 10 years later. Another example were the 'pro-changers' (who believed working the constitutional structures to weaken it from within) and 'no-changers' (who wanted to distance themselves from the Raj) during the 1920s.

There was also a split within Congress between those who believed that violence was a justifiable weapon in the fight against imperial oppression (whose most iconic figure was Subhas Chandra Bose, who went on to form the Indian National Army), and those who stressed non-violence. The towering figure in this latter group was Mahatma Gandhi, who introduced a seismic new idiom of opposition in the shape of non-violent non-cooperation or 'satyagraha' (meaning 'truth' or 'soul' force'). Gandhi oversaw three major nationwide movements which achieved varying degrees of success in 1920-1922, 1930-1934 and in 1942. These mobilised the masses on the one hand, while provoking the authorities into draconian repression. Much to Gandhi's distress, self-restraint among supporters often gave way to violence.

Reasons for independence

The British Raj unravelled quickly in the 1940s, perhaps surprising after the empire in the east had so recently survived its greatest challenge in the shape of Japanese expansionism. The reasons for independence were multifaceted and the result of both long and short term factors.

The pressure from the rising tide of nationalism made running the empire politically and economically very challenging and increasingly not cost effective. This pressure was embodied as much in the activities of large pan-national organisations like the Congress as in pressure from below - from the 'subalterns' through the acts of peasant and tribal resistance and revolt, trade union strikes and individual acts of subversion and violence.

There were further symptoms of the disengagement from empire. European capital investment declined in the inter-war years and India went from a debtor country in World War One to a creditor in World War Two. Applications to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) declined dramatically from the end of the Great War. Britain's strategy of a gradual devolution of power, its representation to Indians through successive constitutional acts and a deliberate 'Indianisation' of the administration, gathered a momentum of its own. As a result, India moved inexorably towards self-government.

The actual timing of independence owed a great deal to World War Two and the demands it put on the British government and people. The Labour party had a tradition of supporting Indian claims for self-rule, and was elected to power in 1945 after a debilitating war which had reduced Britain to her knees. Furthermore, with US foreign policy pressurising the end of western subjugation and imperialism, it seemed only a matter of time before India gained its freedom.

Partition and religion

The growth of Muslim separatism from the late 19th century and the rise of communal violence from the 1920s to the virulent outbreaks of 1946-1947, were major contributory factors in the timing and shape of independence. However, it was only from the late 1930s that it became inevitable that independence could only be achieved if accompanied by a partition. This partition would take place along the subcontinent's north-western and north-eastern boundaries, creating two sovereign nations of India and Pakistan.

Muslims, as a religious community, comprised only 20% of the population and represented great diversity in economic, social and political terms. From the late 19th century, some of its political elites in northern India felt increasingly threatened by British devolution of power, which by the logic of numbers would mean the dominance of the majority Hindu community. Seeking power and a political voice in the imperial structure, they organised themselves into a party to represent their interests, founding the Muslim League in 1906. They achieved something of a coup by persuading the British that they needed to safeguard the interests of the minorities, a demand that fed into British strategies of divide and rule. The inclusion of separate electorates along communal lines in the 1909 Act, subsequently enlarged in every successive constitutional act, enshrined a form of constitutional separatism.

While there is no denying that Islam and Hinduism were and are very different faiths, Muslims and Hindus continued to co-exist peaceably. There were, however, occasional violent outbursts which were driven more often than not by economic inequities. Even politically, the Congress and the League cooperated successfully during the Khilafat and Non Cooperation movements in 1920-1922. And Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the eventual father of the Pakistani nation) was a Congress member till 1920.

Although Congress strove to stress its secular credentials with prominent Muslim members - for example, Maulana Azad served as its president through World War Two - it is criticised for failing to sufficiently recognise the importance of a conciliatory position towards the League in the inter-war years, and for its triumphant response to Congress's 1937 election victory. The Muslim League advocated the idea of Pakistan in its annual session in 1930, yet the idea did not achieve any political reality at the time. Furthermore, the League failed to achieve the confidence of the majority of the Muslim population in the elections of 1937.

Hasty transfer of power

The lack of confidence in the Muslim League among the Muslim population was to be dramatically reversed in the 1946 elections. The intervening years saw the rise of Jinnah and the League to political prominence through the successful exploitation of the wartime insecurities of the British, and the political vacuum created when the Congress ministries (which had unanimously come to power in 1937) resigned *en masse* to protest at the government's unilateral decision to enter India into the war without consultation.

The rejuvenated League skilfully exploited the communal card. At its Lahore session in 1940, Jinnah made the demand for Pakistan into its rallying cry. The ensuing communal violence, especially after Jinnah declared 'Direct Action Day' in August 1946, put pressure on the British government and Congress to accede to his demands for a separate homeland for Muslims.

The arrival of Lord Louis Mountbatten as India's last viceroy in March 1947, brought with it an agenda to transfer power as quickly and efficiently as possible. The resulting negotiations saw the deadline for British withdrawal brought forward from June 1948 to August 1947. Contemporaries and subsequent historians have criticised this haste as a major contributory factor in the chaos that accompanied partition. Mass migration occurred across the new boundaries as well as an estimated loss of a million lives in the communal bloodbaths involving Hindus, Muslims and also Sikhs in the Punjab.

The final irony must remain that the creation of Pakistan as a land for Muslims nevertheless left a sizeable number of Muslims in an independent India making it the largest minority in a non-Muslim state.

About the author

Chandrika Kaul is lecturer in Modern History at the University of St Andrews. Her research interests include British press and political culture (1850-1950), the British imperial experience in South Asia, the Indian press and communications in world history.

Questions:
1. Discuss some of the key points in the history of the British Raj.
2. What were some factors that led to the end of the British Raj?
3. Discuss some of the economic effects of British control over India.

Mahatma Gandhi

By V. Lal, Associate Professor, University of California, Los Angeles

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in the town of Porbander in the state of what is now Gujarat on 2 October 1869. He had his schooling in nearby Rajkot, where his father served as the adviser or prime minister to the local ruler. Though India was then under British rule, over 500 kingdoms, principalities, and states were allowed autonomy in domestic and internal affairs: these were the so-called 'native states'. Rajkot was one such state.

Gandhi later recorded the early years of his life in his extraordinary autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. His father died before Gandhi could finish his schooling, and at thirteen he was married to Kasturba [or Kasturbai], who was of the same age as Mohandas himself. In 1888 Gandhi set sail for England, where he had decided to pursue a degree in law. Though his elders objected, Gandhi could not be prevented from leaving; and it is said that his mother, a devout woman, made him promise that he would keep away from wine, women, and meat during his stay abroad. Gandhi left behind his son Harilal, then a few months old.

In London, Gandhi encountered theosophists, vegetarians, and others who were disenchanted not only with industrialism, but with the legacy of Enlightenment thought. They themselves represented the fringe elements of English society. Gandhi was powerfully attracted to them, as he was to the texts of the major religious traditions; and ironically it is in London that he was introduced to the Bhagavad Gita. Here, too, Gandhi showed determination and single-minded pursuit of his purpose, and accomplished his objective of finishing his degree from the Inner Temple. He was called to the bar in 1891, and even enrolled in the High Court of London; but later that year he left for India.

After one year of a none too successful law practice, Gandhi decided to accept an offer from an Indian businessman in South Africa, Dada Abdulla, to join him as a legal adviser. Unbeknown to him, this was to become an exceedingly lengthy stay, and altogether Gandhi was to stay in South Africa for over twenty years. The Indians who had been living in South Africa were without political rights, and were generally known by the derogatory name of 'coolies'. Gandhi himself came to an awareness of the frightening force and fury of European racism, and how far Indians were from being considered full human beings, when he when thrown out of a first-class railway compartment car, though he held a first-class ticket, at Pietermaritzburg. From this political awakening Gandhi was to emerge as the leader of the Indian community, and it is in South Africa that he first coined the term *satyagraha* to signify his theory and practice of non-violent resistance. Gandhi was to describe himself preeminently as a votary or seeker of *satya* (truth), which could not be attained other than through *ahimsa* (non-violence, love) and *brahmacharya* (celibacy, striving towards God). Gandhi conceived of his own life as a series of experiments to forge the use of satyagraha in such a manner as to make the oppressor and the oppressed alike recognize their common bonding and humanity: as he recognized, freedom is only freedom when it is indivisible. In his book *Satyagraha in South Africa* he was to detail the struggles of the Indians to claim their rights, and their resistance to oppressive legislation and executive measures, such as the imposition of a poll tax on them, or the declaration by the government that all non-Christian marriages were to be construed as invalid. In 1909, on a trip back to India, Gandhi authored a short treatise entitled *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule, where he all but initiated the critique, not only of industrial civilization, but of modernity in all its aspects.

Gandhi returned to India in early 1915, and was never to leave the country again except for a short trip that took him to Europe in 1931. Though he was not completely unknown in India, Gandhi followed the advice of his political mentor, Gokhale, and took it upon himself to acquire a familiarity with Indian conditions. He traveled widely for one year. Over the next few years, he was to become involved in numerous local struggles, such as at Champaran in Bihar, where workers on indigo plantations complained of oppressive working conditions, and at Ahmedabad, where a dispute had broken out between management and workers at textile mills. His interventions earned Gandhi a considerable reputation, and his rapid ascendancy to the helm of nationalist politics is signified by his leadership of the opposition to repressive legislation (known as the "Rowlatt Acts") in 1919. His saintliness was not uncommon, except in someone like him who immersed himself in politics, and by this time he had earned from no less a person than Rabindranath Tagore, India's most well-known writer, the title of *Mahatma*, or 'Great Soul'. When 'disturbances' broke out in the Punjab, leading to the massacre of a large crowd of unarmed Indians at the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar and other atrocities, Gandhi wrote the report of the Punjab Congress Inquiry Committee. Over the next two years, Gandhi initiated the non-cooperation movement, which called upon Indians to withdraw from British institutions, to return honors conferred by the British, and to learn the art of self-reliance; though the British administration was at places paralyzed, the movement was suspended in February 1922 when a score of Indian policemen were brutally killed by a large crowd at Chauri Chaura, a small market town in the United Provinces. Gandhi himself was arrested shortly thereafter, tried on charges of sedition, and sentenced to imprisonment for six years. At The Great Trial, as it is known to his biographers, Gandhi delivered a masterful indictment of British rule.

Owing to his poor health, Gandhi was released from prison in 1925. Over the following years, he worked hard to preserve Hindu-Muslim relations, and in 1924 he observed, from his prison cell, a 21-day fast when Hindu-Muslim riots broke out at Kohat, a military barracks on the Northwest Frontier. This was to be of his many major public fasts, and in 1932 he was to commence the so-called Epic Fast unto death, since he thought of "separate electorates" for the oppressed class of what were then called *untouchables* (or Harijans in Gandhi's vocabulary, and dalits in today's language) as a retrograde measure meant to produce permanent divisions within Hindu society. Gandhi earned the hostility of Ambedkar, the leader of the *untouchables*, but few doubted that Gandhi was genuinely interested in removing the serious disabilities from which they suffered, just as no one doubt that Gandhi never accepted the argument that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate elements in Indian society. These were some of the concerns most prominent in Gandhi's mind, but he was also to initiate a constructive programme for social reform. Gandhi had ideas -- mostly sound -- on every subject, from hygiene and nutrition to education and labor, and he relentlessly pursued his ideas in one of the many newspapers which he founded. Indeed, were Gandhi known for nothing else in India, he would still be remembered as one of the principal figures in the history of Indian journalism.

In early 1930, as the nationalist movement was revived, the Indian National Congress, the preeminent body of nationalist opinion, declared that it would now be satisfied with nothing short of complete independence (*purna swaraj*). Once the clarion call had been issued, it was perforce necessary to launch a movement of resistance against British rule. On March 2, Gandhi addressed a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, informing him that unless Indian demands were met, he would be compelled to break the "salt laws". Predictably, his letter was received with bewildered amusement, and accordingly Gandhi set off, on the early morning of March 12, with a small group of followers towards Dandi on the sea. They arrived there on April 5th: Gandhi picked up a small lump of natural salt, and so gave the signal to hundreds of thousands of people to similarly defy the law, since the British exercised a monopoly on the production and sale of salt. This was the beginning of the civil disobedience movement: Gandhi himself was arrested, and thousands of others were also hauled into jail. It was to break this deadlock that Irwin agreed to hold talks with Gandhi, and subsequently the British agreed to hold a Round Table Conference in London to negotiate the possible terms of Indian independence. Gandhi went to London in 1931 and met some of his admirers in Europe, but the negotiations proved inconclusive. On his return to India, he was once again arrested.

For the next few years, Gandhi would be engaged mainly in the constructive reform of Indian society. He had vowed upon undertaking the salt march that he would not return to Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, where he had made his home, if India did not attain its independence, and in the mid-1930s he established himself in a remote village, in the dead center of India, by the name of Segaon [known as Sevagram]. It is to this obscure village, which was without electricity or running water, that India's political leaders made their way to engage in discussions with Gandhi about the future of the independence movement, and it is here that he received visitors such as Margaret Sanger, the well-known American proponent of birth-control. Gandhi also continued to travel throughout the country, taking him wherever his services were required.

One such visit was to the Northwest Frontier, where he had in the imposing Pathan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (known by the endearing term of "Frontier Gandhi", and at other times as *Badshah* [King] *Khan*), a fervent disciple. At the outset of World War II, Gandhi and the Congress leadership assumed a position of neutrality: while clearly critical of fascism, they could not find it in themselves to support British imperialism. Gandhi was opposed by Subhas Chandra Bose, who had served as President of the Congress, and who took to the view that Britain's moment of weakness was India's moment of opportunity. When Bose ran for President of the Congress against Gandhi's wishes and triumphed against Gandhi's own candidate, he found that Gandhi still exercised influence over the Congress Working Committee, and that it was near impossible to run the Congress if the cooperation of Gandhi and his followers could not be procured. Bose tendered his resignation, and shortly thereafter was to make a dramatic escape from India to find support among the Japanese and the Nazis for his plans to liberate India.

In 1942, Gandhi issued the last call for independence from British rule. On the grounds of what is now known as *August Kranti Maidan*, he delivered a stirring speech, asking every Indian to lay down their life, if necessary, in the cause of freedom. He gave them this mantra: "Do or Die"; at the same time, he asked the British to 'Quit India'. The response of the British government was to place Gandhi under arrest, and virtually the entire Congress leadership was to find itself behind bars, not to be released until after the conclusion of the war.

A few months after Gandhi and Kasturba had been placed in confinement in the Aga Khan's Palace in Pune, Kasturba passed away: this was a terrible blow to Gandhi, following closely on the heels of the death of his private secretary of many years, the gifted Mahadev Desai. In the period from 1942 to 1945, the Muslim League, which represented the interest of certain Muslims and by now advocated the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims, increasingly gained the attention of the British, and supported them in their war effort. The new government that came to power in Britain

under Clement Atlee was committed to the independence of India, and negotiations for India's future began in earnest. Sensing that the political leaders were now craving for power, Gandhi largely distanced himself from the negotiations. He declared his opposition to the vivisection of India. It is generally conceded, even by his detractors, that the last years of his life were in some respects his finest. He walked from village to village in riot-torn Noakhali, where Hindus were being killed in retaliation for the killing of Muslims in Bihar, and nursed the wounded and consoled the widowed; and in Calcutta he came to constitute, in the famous words of the last viceroy, Mountbatten, a "one-man boundary force" between Hindus and Muslims. The ferocious fighting in Calcutta came to a halt, almost entirely on account of Gandhi's efforts, and even his critics were wont to speak of the Gandhi's 'miracle of Calcutta'. When the moment of freedom came, on 15 August 1947, Gandhi was nowhere to be seen in the capital, though Nehru and the entire Constituent Assembly were to salute him as the architect of Indian independence, as the 'father of the nation'.

The last few months of Gandhi's life were to be spent mainly in the capital city of Delhi. There he divided his time between the 'Bhangi colony', where the sweepers and the lowest of the low stayed, and Birla House, the residence of one of the wealthiest men in India and one of the benefactors of Gandhi's ashrams. Hindu and Sikh refugees had streamed into the capital from what had become Pakistan, and there was much resentment, which easily translated into violence, against Muslims. It was partly in an attempt to put an end to the killings in Delhi, and more generally to the bloodshed following the partition, which may have taken the lives of as many as 1 million people, besides causing the dislocation of no fewer than 11 million, that Gandhi was to commence the last fast unto death of his life. The fast was terminated when representatives of all the communities signed a statement that they were prepared to live in "perfect amity", and that the lives, property, and faith of the Muslims would be safeguarded. A few days later, a bomb exploded in Birla House where Gandhi was holding his evening prayers, but it caused no injuries. However, his assassin, a Marathi Chitpavan Brahmin by the name of Nathuram Godse, was not so easily deterred. Gandhi, quite characteristically, refused additional security, and no one could defy his wish to be allowed to move around unhindered. In the early evening hours of 30 January 1948, Gandhi met with India's Deputy Prime Minister and his close associate in the freedom struggle, Vallabhai Patel, and then proceeded to his prayers.

That evening, as Gandhi's time-piece, which hung from one of the folds of his *dhoti* [loin-cloth], was to reveal to him, he was uncharacteristically late to his prayers, and he fretted about his inability to be punctual. At 10 minutes past 5 o'clock, with one hand each on the shoulders of Abha and Manu, who were known as his 'walking sticks', Gandhi commenced his walk towards the garden where the prayer meeting was held. As he was about to mount the steps of the podium, Gandhi folded his hands and greeted his audience with a namaskar; at that moment, a young man came up to him and roughly pushed aside Manu. Nathuram Godse bent down in the gesture of an obeisance, took a revolver out of his pocket, and shot Gandhi three times in his chest. Bloodstains appeared over Gandhi's white woolen shawl; his hands still folded in a greeting, Gandhi blessed his assassin: *He Ram! He Ram!*

As Gandhi fell, his faithful time-piece struck the ground, and the hands of the watch came to a standstill. They showed, as they had done before, the precise time: 5:12 P.M. Copyright, Vinay Lal, 2001, 2012

Questions:
1. What effect did Gandhi's experiences in the UK and in South Africa have on him?
2. What were some of the key moments in Gandhi's struggle to gain Indian independence?

The Political System in India

India - with a population of around a billion and an electorate of over 700 million - is the world's largest democracy and, for all its faults and flaws, this democratic system stands in marked contrast to the democratic failures of Pakistan and Bangladesh which were part of India until 1947.

Unlike the American political system and the British political system which essentially have existed in their current form for centuries, the Indian political system is a much more recent construct dating from India's independence from Britain in 1947.

The current constitution came into force on 26 January 1950 and advocates the trinity of justice, liberty and equality for all citizens. The Constitution of India is the longest written constitution of any sovereign country in the world, containing 444 articles, 12 schedules and 98 amendments, with almost 120,000 words in its English language version.

In stark contrast with the current constitution of Japan which has remained unchanged, the constitution of India has been one of the most amended national documents in the world with almost 100 changes. Many of these amendments have resulted from a long-running dispute involving the Parliament and the Supreme Court over the rights of parliamentary sovereignty as they clash with those of judicial review of laws and constitutional amendments.

India's lower house, the Lok Sabha, is modelled on the British House of Commons, but its federal system of government borrows from the experience of the United States, Canada and Australia.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The head of state in India is the President. This is normally a ceremonial role, originally modelled on the British monarch to "advise, encourage and warn" the elected government on constitutional matters. The President can return a Parliamentary Bill once for reconsideration and, in times of crisis such as a hung Parliament, the role is pivotal. The President can declare a state of emergency which enables the Lok Sabha to extend its life beyond the normal five-year term.

As members of an electoral college, around 4,500 members of the national parliament and state legislators are eligible to vote in the election of the President. The Indian Presidency has recently attracted special attention because for the first time a woman now occupies the role: Pratibha Patil who was formerly governor of the northern Indian state of Rajasthan.

There is also the post of Vice-President who is elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of both houses of parliament. The Vice-President chairs the the upper house called the Rajya Sabh.

The head of the government is the Prime Minister who is appointed by the President on the nomination of the majority party in the lower house or Lok Sabha. Currently the Prime Minister is Manmohan Singh of the ruling United Progressive Alliance. Ministers are then appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and these ministers collectively comprise the Council of Ministers.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The lower house in the Indian political system is the Lok Sabha or House of the People. As set out in the Constitution, the maximum size of the Lok Sabha is 552 members, made up of up to 530 members representing people from the states of India, up to 20 members representing people from the Union Territories, and two members to represent the Anglo-Indian community if it does not have adequate representation in the house according to the President.

Currently the size of the house is 545 – made up of 530 elected from the states, 13 elected from the territories, and two nominated from the Anglo-Indian community. By far the largest state representation is that of Uttar Pradesh with 80 members. At the other end of the scale, three states have only one representative each. There are certain constituencies where only candidates from scheduled casts and scheduled tribes are allowed to stand.

Each member – except the two nominated ones – represents a geographical single-member constituency as in the British model for the House of Commons. Each Lok Sabha is formed for a five year term, after which it is automatically dissolved, unless extended by a Proclamation of Emergency which may extend the term in one year increments. This has happened on three occasions: 1962-1968, 1971 and 1975-1977. Elections are a huge and complex affair which are held nationwide in five separate rounds taking a total of 28 days.

The upper house in the Indian political system is the Rajya Sabha or Council of States. As set out in the Constitution, the Rajya Sabhahas has up to 250 members. 12 of these members are chosen by the President for their expertise in specific fields of art, literature, science, and social services. These members are known as nominated members. The remainder of the house – currently comprising 238 members - is elected indirectly by the state and territorial legislatures in proportion to the unit's population. Again, of course, the largest state representation is that of Uttar Pradesh with 31 members. The method of election in the local legislatures is the single transferable vote.

Terms of office are for six years, with one third of the members facing re-election every two years. The Rajya Sabha meets in continuous session and, unlike the Lok Sabha, it is not subject to dissolution.

The two houses share legislative powers, except in the area of supply (money) where the Lok Sabha has overriding powers. In the case of conflicting legislation, a joint sitting of the two houses is held. If there is a conflict which cannot be resolved even by the joint committee of the two houses, it is solved in the joint session of the Parliament, where the will of the Lok Sabha almost always prevails, since the Lok Sabha is more than twice as large as the Rajya Sabha.

POLITICAL PARTIES

In India, political parties are either a National Party or a State Party. To be considered a National Party, a political party has to be recognised in four or more states and to be either the ruling party or in the opposition in those states.

Ever since its formation in 1885, the Indian National Congress (INC) - and its successor - has been the dominant political party in India. For its first six decades, its focus was on campaigning for Indian independence from Britain. Since independence in 1947, it has sought to be the governing party of the nation with repeated success.

As a result, for most of its democratic history, the Lok Sabha has been dominated by the Indian Congress Party which has been in power for a great deal of the time. However, since the Congress Party lost power in 1989, no single party has been able to secure an overal majority in the Lok Sabha, making coalitions inevitable. Also, unlike Japan where the Liberal Democrat Party has been in power almost continuously. Congress has had (usually short) periods out of power, between 1977-1980, 1989-1991 and 1996-2004.

The original Congress Party espoused moderate socialism and a planned, mixed economy. However, its spin-off and successor, Congress (I) - 'I' in honour of Indira Gandhi - now supports deregulation, privatisation and foreign investment.

While the Congress Party has historically dominated Indian politics, the leadership of the Congress Party in turn has been dominated by one family: Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, served for 17 years; his daughter Indira Gandhi later became Prime Minister; his grandson Rajiv Gandhi was also Prime Minister; currently the widow of Rajiv Gandhi, the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi holds the position as Congress President although she has refused to accept the post of Prime Minister; and her son Rahul Gandhi is a Member of Parliament, while her daughter Priyanka Gandhi is an active political campaigner.

The Indian Congress Party is the leading party in the Centre-Left political coalition called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) which embraces a total of 16 parties.

The other major, but more recently-established, political party in India is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Created in 1980, it represents itself as a champion of the socio-religious cultural values of the country's Hindu majority and advocates conservative social policies and strong national defence. The BJP, in alliance with several other parties, led the government between 1998-2004. The Bharatiya Janata Party is the leading party in the Right-wing political coalition called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). When it was originally founded in 1998, there were 13 parties in the coalition but currently there are eight. A Third Front is a grouping centred on the Communists.

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority in civil, criminal and constitutional cases. The court consists of up to 26 judges, including the Chief Justice of India, all of whom are appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. They serve until the age of 65.

THE STATES

India is a huge country both demographically and geographically and consequently it operates a federal system of government. Below the national level, there are 28 States and seven Union Territories. The largest of India's states is Uttar Pradesh (UP) in the north of the country. With 207 million inhabitants, UP is the most populous state in India and is also the most populous country subdivision in the world. On its own, if it was an independent nation, this state would be the world's fifth biggest country. Only China, India itself, the United States, and Indonesia have a higher population. In Indian general elections, it fills more than one-seventh of the seats in India's Parliament and, such is the state's caste-based and sometimes violent politics that, currently a quarter of UP's MPs face criminal charges.

Over the years, India has evolved from a highly centralised state dominated by one political party to an increasingly fragmented nation, more and more influenced by regional parties and more and more governed locally by unstable multi-party alliances. In the General Election of 2009, Congress and the BJP faced each other in only seven of the 28 States; elsewhere, one of the two national parties faced a regional party.

CONCLUSION

Politics in India is much rougher and much more corrupt that in the democracies of Europe and North America. Political assassination is not uncommon: the revered Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, and the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 were all killed by assassins. Communal, caste and regional tensions continue to haunt Indian politics, sometimes threatening its long-standing democratic and secular ethos.

Recent years have seen the emergence of so-called RTI activists - tens of thousands of citizens, often poor, sometimes almost illiterate, frequently highly motivated - who use the Right To Information legislation of 2005 to promote transparency and attack corruption in public institutions. In the first five years of the legislation, over a million RTI requests were filed and so threatening to authority have some of the RTI activists become that a number of have been murdered.

More recently than the RTI movement, there has been a related - if rather different in caste and class terms - movement around the demand for an anti-corruption agency (called Lokpal). This movement has been led by the hunger-striker Anna Hazare and draws most of its support from the growing Indian middle-class which feels alienated from politics since the votes are to be found in poor, rural communities while the power is to be found in rich, urban elites.

In spite of all its problems, India remains a vibrant and functioning democracy that is a beacon to democrats in many surrounding states. Written by ROGER DARLINGTON

Questions:

1. Describe the structure of the Indian government. In what ways is it similar to the Italian political system?
2. Demographically and politically India operates a Federal System of Government. What does that entail?

Social Life in India

India offers astounding variety in virtually every aspect of social life. Diversities of ethnic, linguistic, regional, economic, religious, class, and caste groups crosscut Indian society, which is also permeated with immense urban-rural differences and gender distinctions. Differences between north India and south India are particularly significant, especially in systems of kinship and marriage. Indian society is multifaceted to an extent perhaps unknown in any other of the world's great civilizations—it is more like an area as varied as Europe than any other single nation-state. Adding further variety to contemporary Indian culture are rapidly occurring changes affecting various regions and socioeconomic groups in disparate ways. Yet, amid the complexities of Indian life, widely accepted cultural themes enhance social harmony and order.

Themes In Indian Society

Hierarchy

India is a hierarchical society. Whether in north India or south India, Hindu or Muslim, urban or village, virtually all things, people, and social groups are ranked according to various essential qualities. Although India is a political democracy, notions of complete equality are seldom evident in daily life.

Societal hierarchy is evident in caste groups, amongst individuals, and in family and kinship groups. Castes are primarily associated with Hinduism, but caste-like groups also exist among Muslims, Indian, Christians, and other religious communities. Within most villages or towns, everyone knows the relative rankings of each locally represented caste, and behaviour is constantly shaped by this knowledge. Individuals are also ranked according to their wealth and power. For example, some powerful people, or "big men," sit confidently on chairs, while "little men" come before them to make requests, either standing or squatting not presuming to sit beside a man of high status as an equal.

Hierarchy plays an important role within families and kinship groupings also, where men outrank women of similar age, and senior relatives outrank junior relatives. Formal respect is accorded family members—for example, in northern India, a daughter-in-law shows deference to her husband, to all senior in-laws, and to all daughters of the household. Siblings, too, recognize age differences, with younger siblings addressing older siblings by respectful terms rather than by name.

Purity and Pollution

Many status differences in Indian society are expressed in terms of ritual purity and pollution, complex notions that vary greatly among different castes, religious groups, and regions. Generally, high status is associated with purity and low status with pollution. Some kinds of purity are inherent; for example, a member of a high-ranking Brahmin, or priestly, caste is born with more inherent purity than someone born into a low-ranking sweeper, or scavenger, caste. Other kinds of purity are more transitory—for example, a Brahmin who has just taken a bath is more ritually pure than a Brahmin who has not bathed for a day.

Purity is associated with ritual cleanliness—daily bathing in flowing water, dressing in freshly laundered clothes, eating only the foods appropriate for one's caste, and avoiding physical contact with people of significantly lower rank or with impure substances, such as the bodily wastes of another adult. Involvement with the products of death or violence is usually ritually polluting.

Social Interdependence

One of the great themes pervading Indian life is social interdependence. People are born into groups—families, clans, subcastes, castes, and religious communities—and feel a deep sense of inseparability from these groups. People are deeply involved with others, and for many, the greatest fear is the possibility of being left alone, without social support. Psychologically, family members typically experience intense emotional interdependence. Economic activities, too, are deeply imbedded in a social nexus. Through a multitude of kinship ties, each person is linked with kin in villages and towns near and far. Almost everywhere a person goes, he can find a relative from whom he can expect moral and practical support.

In every activity, social ties can help a person and the absence of them can bring failure. Seldom do people carry out even the simplest tasks on their own. When a small child eats, his mother puts the food into his mouth with her own hand. When a girl brings water home from the well in pots on her head, someone helps her unload the pots. A student hopes that an influential relative or friend can facilitate his college admission. A young person anticipates that parents will arrange his or her marriage. Finally, a person facing death expects that relatives will conduct the proper funeral rites ensuring his

own smooth passage to the next stage of existence and reaffirming social ties among mourners. This sense of interdependence extends into the theological realm. From birth onward, a child learns that his "fate" has been "written" by divine forces and that his life is shaped by powerful deities with whom an ongoing relationship must be maintained.

Family and Kinship

Family Ideals

The essential themes of Indian cultural life are learned within the bosom of a family. The joint family is highly valued, ideally consisting of several generations residing, working, eating, and worshiping together. Such families include men related through the male line, along with their wives, children, and unmarried daughters. A wife usually lives with her husband's relatives, although she retains important bonds with her natal family. Even in rapidly modernizing India, the traditional joint household remains for most Indians the primary social force, in both ideal and practice.

Large families tend to be flexible and well suited to modern Indian life, especially for the more than two-thirds of Indians who are involved in agriculture. As in most primarily agricultural societies, cooperating kin help provide mutual economic security. The joint family is also common in cities, where kinship ties are often crucial to obtaining employment or financial assistance. Many prominent families, such as the Tatas, Birlas, and Sarabhais, retain joint family arrangements as they cooperate in controlling major financial empires.

The ancient ideal of the joint family retains its power, but today actual living arrangements vary widely. Many Indians live in nuclear families—-a couple with their unmarried children—-but belong to strong networks of beneficial kinship ties. Often, clusters of relatives live as neighbors, responding readily to their kinship obligations.

As they expand, joint families typically divide into smaller units, which gradually grow into new joint families, continuing a perpetual cycle. Today, some family members may move about to take advantage of job opportunities, typically sending money home to the larger family.

Family Authority and Harmony

In the Indian household, lines of hierarchy and authority are clearly drawn, and ideals of conduct help maintain family harmony. All family members are socialized to accept the authority of those above them in the hierarchy. The eldest male acts as family head, and his wife supervises her daughters-in-law, among whom the youngest has the least authority. Reciprocally, those in authority accept responsibility for meeting the needs of other family members.

Family loyalty is a deeply held ideal, and family unity is emphasized, especially in distinction to those outside the kinship circle. Inside the household, ties between spouses and between parents and their own children are de-emphasized to enhance a wider sense of family harmony. For example, open displays of affection between husbands and wives are considered highly improper.

Traditionally, males have controlled key family resources, such as land or businesses, especially in high-status groups. Following traditional Hindu law, women did not inherit real estate and were thus beholden to their male kin who controlled land and buildings. Under Muslim customary law, women can—and do—inherit real estate, but their shares have typically been smaller than those of males. Modern legislation allows all Indian women to inherit real estate. Traditionally, for those families who could afford it, women have controlled some wealth in the form of precious jewellery.

Veiling and the Seclusion of Women

A significant aspect of Indian family life is purdah (from Hindi parda, or "curtain"), or the veiling and seclusion of women. In much of northern and central India, particularly in rural areas, Hindu and Muslim women follow complex rules of veiling the body and avoidance of public appearance, especially before relatives linked by marriage and before strange men. Purdah practices are linked to patterns of authority and harmony within the family. Hindu and Muslim purdah observances differ in certain key ways, but female modesty and decorum as well as concepts of family honor and prestige are essential to the various forms of purdah. Purdah restrictions are generally stronger for women of conservative high-status families.

Restriction and restraint for women in virtually every aspect of life are essential to purdah, limiting women's access to power and to the control of vital resources in a male-dominated society. Sequestered women should conceal their bodies

and even their faces with modest clothing and veils before certain categories of people, avoid extramarital relations, and move about in public only with a male escort. Poor and low-status women often practice attenuated versions of veiling as they work in the fields and on construction gangs.

Hindu women of conservative families veil their faces and remain silent in the presence of older male in-laws, both at home and in the community. A young daughter-in-law even veils from her mother-in-law. These practices emphasize respect relationships, limit unapproved encounters, and enhance family lines of authority.

For Muslims, veiling is especially stressed outside the home, where a conservative woman may wear an all-enveloping black burka. Such purdah shelters women—-and the sexual inviolability of the family-—- from unrelated unknown men.

In South India, purdah has been little practiced, except in certain minority groups. In northern and central India today, purdah practices are diminishing, and among urbanites and even the rural elite, they are rapidly vanishing. Chastity and female modesty are still highly valued, but as education and employment opportunities for women increase, veiling has all but disappeared in progressive circles.

Questions:

1. Describe where hierarchy is visible in Indian society.
2. Talk about why social interdependence is so important in India.
3. What is a joint family and discuss the advantages it offers.
4. Describe the roles and authority that characterise the Indian family.
5. What is purdah and how is it linked to hierarchy and family harmony?

Castes in India

The Caste System in Brief: The origins of the caste system in India and Nepal are shrouded, but it seems to have originated some two thousand years ago. Under this system, which is associated with Hinduism, people were categorized by their occupations. Although originally caste depended upon a person's work, it soon became hereditary. Each person was born into a unalterable social status. The four primary castes are: **Brahmin**, the priests; **Kshatriya**, warriors and nobility; **Vaisya**, farmers, traders and artisans; and **Shudra**, tenant farmers and servants. Some people were born outside of (and below) the caste system. They were called "untouchables."

Theology behind the Castes: Reincarnation is one of the basic beliefs in Hinduism; after each life, a soul is reborn into a new material form. A particular soul's new form depends upon the virtuousness of its previous behavior. Thus, a truly virtuous person from the Shudra caste could be rewarded with rebirth as a Brahmin in his or her next life. Souls can move not only among different levels of human society, but also into other animals - hence the vegetarianism of many Hindus. Within a life cycle, people had little social mobility. They had to strive for virtue during their present lives in order to attain a higher station the next time around.

Daily Significance of Caste: Practices associated with caste varied through time and across India, but they had some common features. The three key areas of life dominated by caste were marriage, meals and religious worship. Marriage across caste lines was strictly forbidden; most people even married within their own sub-caste or *jati*. At meal times, anyone could accept food from the hands of a Brahmin, but a Brahmin would be polluted if he or she took certain types of food from a lower caste person. At the other extreme, if an untouchable dared to draw water from a public well, he or she polluted the water and nobody else could use it. In terms of religion, as the priestly class, Brahmins were supposed to conduct religious rituals and services. This included preparation for festivals and holidays, as well as marriages and funerals. The Kshatrya and Vaisya castes had full rights to worship, but in some places Shudras (the servant caste) were not allowed to offer sacrifices to the gods. Untouchables were barred entirely from temples, and sometimes were not even allowed to set foot on temple grounds. If the shadow of an untouchable touched a Brahmin, he/she would be polluted, so untouchables had to lay face-down at a distance when a Brahmin passed.

Thousands of Castes: Although the early Vedic sources name four primary castes, in fact there were thousands of castes, sub-castes and communities within Indian society. These *jati* were the basis of both social status and occupation. Castes or sub-castes besides the four mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita include such groups as the **Bhumihar** or landowners, **Kayastha** or scribes, and the **Rajput**, who are a northern sector of the Kshatriya or warrior caste. Some castes arose from very specific occupations, such as the **Garudi** - snake charmers - or the **Sonjhari**, who collected gold from river beds.

The Untouchables: People who violated social norms could be punished by being made "untouchables." This was not the lowest caste - they and their descendants were completely outside of the caste system. Untouchables were considered so impure that any contact with them by a caste member would contaminate the other person. The caste-person would have to bathe and wash his or her clothing immediately. Untouchables could not even eat in the same room as caste members. The untouchables did work that no-one else would do, like scavenging animal carcasses, leather-work, or killing rats and other pests. They could not be cremated when they died.

Caste among Non-Hindus: Curiously, non-Hindu populations in India sometimes organized themselves into castes as well. After the introduction of Islam on the subcontinent, for example, Muslims were divided into classes such as the Sayed, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan, and Qureshi. These castes are drawn from several sources - the Mughal and Pathan are ethnic groups, roughly speaking, while the Qureshi name comes from the Prophet Muhammad's clan in Mecca. Small numbers of Indians were Christian from c. 50 CE onward, but Christianity expanded after Portuguese arrived in the 16th century. Many Christian Indians still observed caste distinctions, however.

Origins of the Caste System: Early written evidence about the caste system appears in the Vedas, Sanskrit-language texts from as early as 1500 BCE, which form the basis of Hindu scripture. The *Rigveda*, from c. 1700-1100 BCE, rarely mentions caste distinctions, and indicates that social mobility was common. The *Bhagavad Gita*, however, from c. 200 BCE-200 CE, emphasizes the importance of caste. In addition, the "Laws of Manu" or *Manusmriti* from the same era defines the rights and duties of the four different castes or *varnas*. Thus, it seems that the Hindu caste system began to solidify sometime between 1000 and 200 BCE.

The Caste System During Classical Indian History: The caste system was not absolute during much of Indian history. For example, the renowned Gupta Dynasty, which ruled from 320 to 550 CE, were from the Vaishya caste rather than the Kshatriya. Many later rulers also were from different castes, such as the Madurai Nayaks (r. 1559-1739) who were Balijas (traders).

From the 12th century onwards, much of India was ruled by Muslims. These rulers reduced the power of the Hindu priestly caste, the Brahmins. The traditional Hindu rulers and warriors, or Kshatriyas, nearly ceased to exist in north and central India. The Vaishya and Shudra castes also virtually melded together.

Although the Muslim rulers' faith had a strong impact on the Hindu upper castes in the centers of power, anti-Muslim feeling in rural areas actually strengthened the caste system. Hindu villagers reconfirmed their identity through caste affiliation.

Nonetheless, during the six centuries of Islamic domination (c. 1150-1750), the caste system evolved considerably. For example, Brahmins began to rely on farming for their income, since the Muslim kings did not give rich gifts to Hindu temples. This practice was considered justified so long as Shudras did the actual physical labor.

The British Raj and Caste: When the British Raj began to take power in India in 1757, they exploited the caste system as a means of social control. The British allied themselves with the Brahmin caste, restoring some of its privileges that had been repealed by the Muslim rulers. However, many Indian customs concerning the lower castes seemed discriminatory to the British, and were outlawed. During the 1930s and 40s, the British government made laws to protect the "Scheduled castes" - untouchables and low-caste people.

Within Indian society in the 19th and early 20th there was a move towards the abolition of untouchability, as well. In 1928, the first temple welcomed untouchables or *Dalits* ("the crushed ones") to worship with its upper-caste members. Mohandas Gandhi advocated emancipation for the Dalits, too, coining the term *harijan* or "Children of God" to describe them.

Caste Relations in Independent India: The Republic of India became independent on August 15, 1947. India's new government instituted laws to protect the "Scheduled castes and tribes" - including both the untouchables and groups who live traditional life-styles. These laws include quota systems to ensure access to education and to government posts. Over the past sixty years, therefore, in some ways a person's caste has become more of a political category than a social or religious one.

Questions:
1. The Caste System influenced various social practices. Describe its effects on life in India.
2. Over history castes have been accepted to varying degrees as part of the social system in India. Which rulers favoured or limited the caste system and why.
3. What role does the caste system play in India today?

The Education System in India
by **Dr. V. Sasi Kumar**

In the Beginning

In ancient times, India had the Gurukula system of education in which anyone who wished to study went to a teacher's (Guru) house and requested to be taught. If accepted as a student by the guru, he would then stay at the guru's place and help in all activities at home. This not only created a strong tie between the teacher and the student, but also taught the student everything about running a house. The guru taught everything the child wanted to learn, from Sanskrit to the holy scriptures and from Mathematics to Metaphysics. The student stayed as long as she wished or until the guru felt that he had taught everything he could teach. All learning was closely linked to nature and to life, and not confined to memorizing some information.

The modern school system was brought to India, including the English language, originally by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay in the 1830s. The curriculum was confined to "modern" subjects such as science and mathematics, and subjects like metaphysics and philosophy were considered unnecessary. Teaching was confined to classrooms and the link with nature was broken, as also the close relationship between the teacher and the student.

The Uttar Pradesh (a state in India) Board of High School and Intermediate Education was the first Board set up in India in the year 1921 with jurisdiction over Rajputana, Central India and Gwalior. In 1929, the Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Rajputana, was established. Later, boards were established in some of the states. But eventually, in 1952, the constitution of the board was amended and it was renamed Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). All schools in Delhi and some other regions came under the Board. It was the function of the Board to decide on things like curriculum, textbooks and examination system for all schools affiliated to it. Today there are thousands of schools affiliated to the Board, both within India and in many other countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

Universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was a cherished dream of the new government of the Republic of India. This is evident from the fact that it is incorporated as a directive policy in article 45 of the constitution. But this objective remains far away even more than half a century later. However, in the recent past, the government appears to have taken a serious note of this lapse and has made primary education a Fundamental Right of every Indian citizen. The pressures of economic growth and the acute scarcity of skilled and trained manpower must certainly have played a role to make the government take such a step. The expenditure by the Government of India on school education in recent years comes to around 3% of the GDP, which is recognized to be very low.

In recent times, several major announcements were made for developing the poor state of affairs in education sector in India, the most notable ones being the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. The announcements are; (a) To progressively increase expenditure on education to around 6 percent of GDP. (b) To support this increase in expenditure on education, and to increase the quality of education, there would be an imposition of an education cess over all central government taxes. (c) To ensure that no one is denied of education due to economic backwardness and poverty. (d) To make right to education a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6–14 years. (e) To universalize education through its flagship programmes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Mid Day Meal."

The School System

India is divided into 28 states and 7 so-called "Union Territories". The states have their own elected governments while the Union Territories are ruled directly by the Government of India, with the President of India appointing an administrator for each Union Territory. As per the constitution of India, school education was originally a state subject — that is, the states had complete authority on deciding policies and implementing them. The role of the Government of India (GoI) was limited to coordination and deciding on the standards of higher education. This was changed with a constitutional amendment in 1976 so that education now comes in the so-called *concurrent list*. That is, school education policies and programmes are suggested at the national level by the GoI though the state governments have a lot of freedom in implementing programmes. Policies are announced at the national level periodically. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), set up in 1935, continues to play a lead role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programmes.

There is a national organization that plays a key role in developing policies and programmes, called the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) that prepares a National Curriculum Framework. Each state has its counterpart called the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT). These are the bodies that essentially propose educational strategies, curricula, pedagogical schemes and evaluation methodologies to the states' departments of education. The SCERTs generally follow guidelines established by the NCERT. But the states have considerable freedom in implementing the education system.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA) 1992 envisaged free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality for all children below 14 years before the 21st Century. The government committed to earmark 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for education, half of which would be spent on primary

education. The expenditure on Education as a percentage of GDP also rose from 0.7 per cent in 1951-52 to about 3.6 per cent in 1997-98.

The school system in India has four levels: lower primary (age 6 to 10), upper primary (11 and 12), high (13 to 15) and higher secondary (17 and 18). The lower primary school is divided into five "standards", upper primary school into two, high school into three and higher secondary into two. Students have to learn a common curriculum largely (except for regional changes in mother tongue) till the end of high school. There is some amount of specialization possible at the higher secondary level. Students throughout the country have to learn three languages (namely, English, Hindi and their mother tongue) except in regions where Hindi is the mother tongue and in some streams as discussed below.

There are mainly three streams in school education in India. Two of these are coordinated at the national level, of which one is under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and was originally meant for children of central government employees who are periodically transferred and may have to move to any place in the country. A number of "central schools" (named Kendriya Vidyalayas) have been established for the purpose in all main urban areas in the country, and they follow a common schedule so that a student going from one school to another on a particular day will hardly see any difference in what is being taught. One subject (Social Studies, consisting of History, Geography and Civics) is always taught in Hindi, and other subjects in English, in these schools. Kendriya Vidyalayas admit other children also if seats are available. All of them follow textbooks written and published by the NCERT. In addition to these government-run schools, a number of private schools in the country follow the CBSE syllabus though they may use different text books and follow different teaching schedules. They have a certain amount of freedom in what they teach in lower classes. The CBSE also has 141 affiliated schools in 21 other countries mainly catering to the needs of the Indian population there.

The second central scheme is the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). It seems that this was started as a replacement for the Cambridge School Certificate. The idea was mooted in a conference held in 1952 under the Chairmanship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Minister for Education. The main purpose of the conference was to consider the replacement of the overseas Cambridge School Certificate Examination by an All India Examination. In October 1956 at the meeting of the Inter-State Board for Anglo-Indian Education, a proposal was adopted for the setting up of an Indian Council to administer the University of Cambridge, Local Examinations Syndicate's Examination in India and to advise the Syndicate on the best way to adapt its examination to the needs of the country. The inaugural meeting of the Council was held on 3rd November, 1958. In December 1967, the Council was registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. The Council was listed in the Delhi School Education Act 1973, as a body conducting public examinations. Now a large number of schools across the country are affiliated to this Council. All these are private schools and generally cater to children from wealthy families.

Both the CBSE and the ICSE council conduct their own examinations in schools across the country that are affiliated to them at the end of 10 years of schooling (after high school) and again at the end of 12 years (after higher secondary). Admission to the 11th class is normally based on the performance in this all-India examination. Since this puts a lot of pressure on the child to perform well, there have been suggestions to remove the examination at the end of 10 years.

Exclusive Schools

In addition to the above, there are a relatively small number of schools that follow foreign curricula such as the so-called Senior Cambridge, though this was largely superseded by the ICSE stream elsewhere. Some of these schools also offer the students the opportunity to sit for the ICSE examinations. These are usually very expensive residential schools where some of the Indians working abroad send their children. They normally have fabulous infrastructure, low student-teacher ratio and very few students. Many of them have teachers from abroad. There are also other exclusive schools such as the Doon School in Dehradun that take in a small number of students and charge exorbitant fees.

Apart from all of these, there are a handful of schools around the country, such as the Rishi Valley school in Andhra Pradesh, that try to break away from the normal education system that promotes rote learning and implement innovative systems such as the Montessori method. Most such schools are expensive, have high teacher-student ratios and provide a learning environment in which each child can learn at his/her own pace. It would be interesting and instructive to do a study on what impact the kind of school has had on the life of their alumni.

State Schools

Each state in the country has its own Department of Education that runs its own school system with its own textbooks and evaluation system. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation method are largely decided by the SCERT in the state, following the national guidelines prescribed by the NCERT.

Each state has three kinds of schools that follow the state curriculum. The government runs its own schools in land and buildings owned by the government and paying the staff from its own resources. These are generally known as *government schools*. The fees are quite low in such schools. Then there are privately owned schools with their own land and buildings. Here the fees are high and the teachers are paid by the management. Such schools mostly cater to the urban middle class families. The third kind consists of schools that are provided grant-in-aid by the government, though the

school was started by a private agency in their own land and buildings. The grant-in-aid is meant to help reduce the fees and make it possible for poor families to send their children. In some states like Kerala, these schools are very similar to government schools since the teachers are paid by the government and the fees are the same as in government schools.

The Case of Kerala

The state of Kerala, a small state in the South Western coast of India, has been different from the rest of the country in many ways for the last few decades. It has, for instance, the highest literacy rate among all states, and was declared the first fully literate state about a decade back. Life expectancy, both male and female, is very high, close to that of the developed world. Other parameters such as fertility rate, infant and child mortality are among the best in the country, if not the best. The total fertility rate has been below the replacement rate of 2.1 for the last two decades. Probably as a side-effect of economic and social development, suicide rates and alcoholism are also very high. Government policies also have been very different from the rest of the country, leading to the development model followed in Kerala, with high expenditure in education and welfare, coming to be known as the "Kerala Model" among economists.

Kerala has also always shown interest in trying out ways of improving its school education system. Every time the NCERT came up with new ideas, it was Kerala that tried it out first. The state experimented with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) with gusto, though there was opposition to it from various quarters, and even took it beyond primary classes. The state was the first in the country to move from the traditional behaviorist way of teaching to a social constructivist paradigm. It was mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework of NCERT in the year 2000, and Kerala started trying it out the next year. The transaction in the classroom and the evaluation methodology were changed. Instead of direct questions that could be answered only through memorizing the lessons, indirect questions and open ended questions were included so that the student needed to think before answering, and the answers could be subjective to some extent. This meant that the students had to digest what they studied and had to be able to use their knowledge in a specific situation to answer the questions. At the same time, the new method took away a lot of pressure and the children began to find examinations interesting and enjoyable instead of being stressful. A Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE) system was introduced along with this, which took into consideration the overall personality of the student and reduced the dependence on a single final examination for deciding promotion to the next class. At present, the CBSE also has implemented CCE, but in a more flexible manner.

Kerala was also the first state in the country to introduce Information Technology as a subject of study at the High School level. It was started in class 8 with the textbook introducing Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office. But within one year the government was forced to include Free Software also in the curriculum by protests from Free Software enthusiasts and a favourable stance taken by a school teachers association that had the majority of government teachers as its members. Eventually, from the year 2007, only GNU/Linux was taught in the schools, and all computers in schools had only GNU/Linux installed. At that time, perhaps even today, this was the largest installation of GNU/Linux in schools, and made headlines even in other countries. Every year, from 2007 onwards, about 500,000 children pass out of the schools learning the concepts behind Free Software and the GNU/Linux operating system and applications. The state is now moving towards IT Enabled Education. Eventually, IT will not be taught as a separate subject. Instead, all subjects will be taught with the help of IT so that the children will, on the one hand, learn IT skills and, on the other, make use of educational applications (such as those mentioned below) and resources in the Internet (such as textual material from sites like Wikipedia, images, animations and videos) to study their subjects and to do exercises. Teachers and students have already started using applications such as Dr. Geo, GeoGebra, and KtechLab for studying geometry and electronics. Applications like Sunclock, Kalzium and Ghemical are also popular among teachers and students.

The initiative taken by Kerala is now influencing other states and even the policies of the Government of India. States like Karnataka and Gujarat are now planning to introduce Free Software in their schools, and some other states like Maharashtra are examining the option. The new education policy of the Government of India speaks about constructivism, IT enabled education, Free Software and sharing educational resources. Once a few of the larger states successfully migrate to Free Software, it is hoped that the entire country would follow suit in a relatively short time. When that happens, India could have the largest user base of GNU/Linux and Free Software in general.

Questions:
1. Describe how Education evolved in India.
2. What are some of the important acronyms in Indian education?
3. What are the education alternatives in India and who uses them?
4. Why is the State of Kerala important to India's educational experience?

Indian languages

The Indian subcontinent consists of a number of separate linguistic communities, each of which shares a common language and culture. The people of India speak many languages and dialects, which are mostly varieties of about 15 principal languages.

Some Indian languages have a long literary history – Sanskrit literature is more than 5,000 years old and Tamil 3,000. India also has some languages that do not have written forms. There are 18 officially recognized languages in India (Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were added in 1992) and each has produced a literature of great vitality and richness. Though distinctive in parts, all stand for a homogeneous culture that is the essence of the great Indian literature. This is an evolution in a land of myriad dialects. The number of people speaking each language varies greatly. For example, Hindi has more than 250 million speakers, but relatively few people speak Andamanese.

Although some of the languages are called 'tribal' or 'aboriginal', their populations may be larger than those that speak some European languages. For example, Bhili and Santali, both tribal languages, each have more than 4 million speakers. Gondi is spoken by nearly 2 million people. India's schools teach 58 different languages. The nation has newspapers in 87 languages, radio programmes in 71, and films in 15.

The Indian languages belong to four language families: Indo-European, Dravidian, Mon-Khmer, and Sino-Tibetan. Indo-European and Dravidian languages are used by a large majority of India's population. The language families divide roughly into geographic groups. Languages of the Indo-European group are spoken mainly in northern and central regions.

The languages of southern India are mainly of the Dravidian group. Some ethnic groups in Assam and other parts of eastern India speak languages of the Mon-Khmer group. People in the northern Himalayan region and near the Burmese border speak Sino-Tibetan languages.Speakers of 54 different languages of the Indo-European family make up about three-quarters of India's population. Twenty Dravidian languages are spoken by nearly a quarter of the people. Speakers of 20 Mon-Khmer languages and 98 Sino-Tibetan languages together make up about 2 per cent of the population.

Sanskrit
The old Sanskrit, called Vedic or Vedic Sanskrit, was more complex than the later form of the language, called classical Sanskrit. The Vedic language became simplified as it changed into classical Sanskrit. In the fifth century B.C. the grammarian Panini wrote a detailed description of classical Sanskrit. This stopped the literary (written) language from changing any further. Sanskrit represents the highest achievements of Indo-Aryan languages. Although hardly spoken nowadays, Sanskrit has been listed as a nationally accepted language in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. Sanskrit is the oldest literary language of India and the basis of many modern Indian languages, including Hindi and Urdu. Its earliest dialect form, Vedic, was spoken by the Aryans. Sanskrit died out as a living language by about 100 B.C. However, Sanskrit continued, like Latin in the West, as a language of courtly poetry and drama. It also served as the learned language for science, philosophy, and religious texts. Even today, some scholars in India teach, speak, and write in Sanskrit.

The name Sanskrit means 'refined' or 'polished'. The term contrasts with the designation Prakrit, meaning 'common' or 'vulgar', which is applied to the popular languages that developed from Sanskrit over a period of several hundred years. These languages, in turn, are the source of such modern languages of India as Bengali, Hindi, and Punjabi. Sanskrit contains a rich selection of sounds. Though simpler than Vedic Sanskrit, classical Sanskrit is more complex than modern languages. The language has 10 simple vowels and 4 diphthongs (paired vowel sounds pronounced as a single syllable). It also has 25 basic consonants, 4 semivowels (letters, such as y, that sound like vowels but take the place of consonants), and 3 sibilants, which produce hissing sounds. In addition, it has two breathing sounds, and a nasalizing sound.

Sanskrit has a complex grammar. For example, nouns and adjectives have three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter). They are inflected for three grammatical numbers (singular, dual, and plural). They also have eight cases (nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive, locative, and vocative). The verbal system is equally complex. Thus, it has eight grammatical cases (inflected forms of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives). It also has three 'numbers' – that is, singular, plural, and dual (a class of noun, adjective, and verb form used when referring to two people or things). There is also an important spelling system called sandhi, in which a word ending varies according to its neighbouring sound.

Dravidian
The languages of southern India make up the Dravidian family. Speakers of Dravidian languages also group together in parts of India where northern languages predominate. About 250 million of India's people speak Dravidian languages. The Dravidian languages form a group by themselves, and unlike the Aryan, Austric or Sino-Tibetan speeches, have no relation outside the Indian subcontinent – that is, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Dravidian family is the second

largest group in India, covering about 25% of the total Indian population. It can be split into three branches in the Indian subcontinent –

The northern branch, comprising Brahui, spoken in Baluchistan and Kurukh, and Malto, spoken in Bengal and Orissa.
The second branch is composed of Telugu and a number of dialects spoken in Central India.
The southern branch is made up of Tamil, Kannada, Malayalama, Tulu, Badaga, Toda, Kota and Kodagu.
The outstanding languages of the Dravidian group are:
Telugu, the state language of Andhra Pradesh, numerically the largest of the Dravidian languages.
Tamil, the state language of Tamil Nadu, apparently the oldest and purest branch of the Dravidian family.
Kannada (also called Canarese), the state language of Karnataka, another ancient Dravidian language that has developed individually.
Malayalam, the state language of Kerala, the smallest and youngest of the Dravidian family.
The Dravidian languages form a completely separate group from the Indo-European languages, although they too have borrowed many words from Sanskrit. The four main Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, are among India's official languages. Dravidians have lived in the area for at least 4,500 years, and the Dravidian languages have a recorded history of more than 2,000 years. Speakers of Dravidian languages feel a strong sense of cultural unity.

Indo-Aryan
Language experts have traced three main stages in the development of Indo-Aryan languages. The first stage was the Sanskrit language. Migrant peoples from the northwest used Sanskrit in northern India some time before 1000 B.C.
In the next stage, Prakrit evolved from Sanskrit by 250 B.C. Pali was another language of those times that derived from Sanskrit. From about A.D. 1000, later forms of Prakrit, collectively termed Apabhramsha, gave birth to the various regional languages in common use today.

The main modern languages to evolve from the various regional forms of Apabhramsha are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Konkani, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Rajasthani, and Sindhi. These languages began to emerge after A.D. 1000. As they evolved, they borrowed words from Sanskrit and also from Persian (one of the languages of India's Muslim dynasties). These northern Indian languages are now major regional languages, each spoken by several million people.

Nepali, a close relative of Hindi, is the national language of Nepal. Bengali is the national language of Bangladesh, as well as being the language of West Bengal. Modern Hindi, which is based on a Delhi dialect but borrows many words from Sanskrit, is India's majority language. Hindi's sister language, Urdu, has the same grammar but borrows many words from Persian and Arabic. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan.

Apart from Persian and Arabic loan words, modern Indo-Aryan languages have borrowed many words from English and other European languages. The main modern languages to evolve from the various regional forms of Apabhramsha are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Urdu and Sindhi.
The main modern languages to evolve from the various regional forms of Apabhramsha are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Urdu and Sindhi.
Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language, is the official language of Assam state. Assamese developed as a literary language from the 13th century.

Bengali, one of the leading Indo-Aryan languages, is the official language of West Bengal. It is spoken by nearly 200 million people; the majority of them are now in Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan. It is now one of the most advanced languages of India.

Gujarati, a member of the Indo-Aryan family, is the official language of the state of Gujarat. It started out as an independent language around A.D. 1200.

Hindi, numerically the largest of the Indo-Aryan family, is the official language of India. Among the various dialects in Hindi, the dialect chosen as official Hindi is the standard Khariboli, written in Devanagari script. Hindi has produced two great literatures, Urdu and Hindi (high). Both have the same grammar and the same basic vocabulary. They differ, however, in script and higher vocabulary. Urdu uses the Perso-Arabic script. Hindi uses the Nagari script and has a preference for purely Indian words, in contrast to the numerous Persian and Arabic words borrowed by Urdu.

Kashmiri, a language of the Indo-Aryan group, is often mistakenly called the state language of Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, Urdu is the state language of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiri literature goes back to A.D. 1200. It is a comparatively developed language.

Marathi, belonging to the Indo-Aryan stock, is the official language of Maharashtra. Although its literary career began only in the 13th century, it has today a fully developed literature of the modern type.

Oriya is the official language of the state of Orissa. Oriya is found recorded as far back as the 10th century. But its literary career began only in the 14th century.

Punjabi, a language of the Indo-Aryan group, is the official language of the state of Punjab. Punjabi, though a very ancient language, turned literary only in the 15th century. It is written in the Gurumukhi script.

Rajasthani, a tributary of the Indo-Aryan group, is the official language of the state of Rajasthan.
Sindhi is a branch of Indo-Aryan family. It is spoken by some 16 million people, of whom 6 million live in Sind (Pakistan), and the rest mostly in India. Sindhi uses the Perso-Arabic script in Pakistan. Speakers in India use mainly the Devanagari script.

Urdu, the state language of Jammu & Kashmir, is spoken by about 20 million people in India.

Scripts and Sounds
Many features of pronunciation are shared by all languages of southern Asia. An important example is the distinction between one form of t, made with the tongue against the top teeth, and another form of t, made with the tip of the tongue curling back against the roof of the mouth. Another feature is the use of a consonant pronounced with a release of breath. In English script this is shown by adding h (in such words as Sikh).

India has different ways of writing its languages. Most of these written forms, or scripts, are derived from an ancient Indian script called Brahmi. Most regional languages have their own script, which helps give each region a sense of its own identity. The scripts run from left to right. There is no equivalent to capital letters. The script generally used for Sanskrit, which is called Devanagari or Nagari, is also used for Hindi, Marathi, and Nepali. The Roman script used for European languages has the individual letter as its basic unit. In Indian scripts, however, the basic unit is the whole syllable – a consonant plus a vowel.

The numerals in Indian scripts are the origin of the 'Arabic' numerals used in European writing systems. This is because Arabic numerals, borrowed by Europeans, were themselves borrowed from India by the Arabs.
The scripts used for most northern Indian languages are closely related to Devanagari. South Indian scripts generally have a much rounder shape. This is probably because they were originally written on palm leaves, and straight horizontal lines were avoided because they would cut into the fibre of the leaf. The script used for Urdu is the Persian script introduced by the Turks and Afghans. It runs from right to left. It has been slightly modified to accommodate some Indian sounds.

English in the Indian Subcontinent[1]
Just as in the Caribbean, the English language arrived in South Asia as a result of colonisation. Unlike its history in the Caribbean, however, English has always co-existed in the Indian subcontinent alongside thousands of local languages. So for most of the population, it has only ever been a second language.

The British first arrived in India in the early 1600s and soon established trading posts in a number of cities under the control of The East India Company. By 1765 the Company's influence had grown to such an extent that the British were effectively controlling most parts of the country. This date is often taken as the start of what is referred to as The Raj — a period of British rule in India that lasted until Independence in 1947.

Initially English was only taught to the local population through the work of Christian missionaries — there were no official attempts to force the language on the masses. But by the 1700s, English had firmly established itself as the language of administration and many educated Indians were demanding instruction in English as a means of social advancement. By 1857 universities had opened in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. English was increasingly accepted as the language of government, of the social elite, and of the national press.

After Independence, India became a nation state, and it was intended that English would gradually be phased out as the language of administration. But there was no simple solution as to which language should replace it. At first Hindi, the most widely spoken language, seemed the obvious choice, but following violent protests in 1963 in the state of Tamil Nadu against the imposition of Hindi as a national language, opinion has remained divided. In a country with over 900 million people and more than a thousand languages, it is difficult to choose a single national language, as mother tongue speakers of that language would automatically enjoy greater social status and have easier access to positions of power and influence. Even Ghandi, a proponent of a native variety as a national language, accepted that his message was most widely understood if expressed in English. So, although English is not an indigenous language, it remains as an 'Associate Language' in India, alongside Hindi, the 'Official Language of the Union of India' and eighteen 'National Languages', such as Bengali, Gujurati and Urdu, that have a special status in certain individual states.

---

[1] This section © The British Library Board

Despite continued pressure from nationalists, English remains at the heart of Indian society. It is widely used in the media, in Higher Education and government and therefore remains a common means of communication, both among the ruling classes, and between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages. According to recent surveys, approximately 4% of the Indian population use English. That figure might seem insignificant, but out of the total population this represents 35 million speakers – the largest English-speaking community outside the USA and the UK. In addition there are speakers of English in other parts of South Asia, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where English plays a similar role. English is virtually a mother tongue for many educated South Asians, but for the vast majority it remains a second language. This means there are speakers whose spoken English is heavily influenced by speech patterns of their ethnic language, alongside those whose speech reveals nothing of their racial background and some who are ranged somewhere in between.

There are a number of elements that characterise the more 'extreme' forms of South Asian English. In terms of pronunciation, many speakers do not differentiate between the sounds <v> and <w>. They might also replace <th> in words like think and this with a <t> and <d> sound, as no Indian languages contain these consonants. Under the influence of traditional Hindi grammar, speakers often use progressive tenses in statements, such as I am believing you or she is liking music. Anyone who has experience of speech in the UK's Asian communities will also have encountered the phenomenon of code-switching – mixing words, phrases or even whole sentences from two different languages within the same conversation. The occasional or even frequent use of a Hindi (or Urdu, Punjabi, Gujurati etc.) word or expression within an English sentence can communicate a great sense of shared identity or solidarity with other speakers. This characteristic feature of Asian speech has led commentators to coin popular terms, such as Hinglish (i.e. Hindi English) or Pinglish (i.e. Pakistani English).

Indian Cinema

By N. Lay

India has one of the oldest film industries in the world. Though the first film advertisement in India appeared in the Times of India on 7 July 1896, inviting people to witness the Lumiere Brothers' moving pictures, "the wonder of the world", it was not until early 1913 that an Indian film received a public screening. *Rajah Harischandra* was an extraordinary commercial success: its director, Dadasaheb Phalke, who is now remembered through a life-time achievement award bestowed by the film industry in his name, went on to make a number of other films drawing upon themes derived from the Indian epics. Phalke could not find a woman to play the female roles, being turned down in this endeavor not only by 'respectable' women but by prostitutes, and had to resort to the expedient of choosing a young man, A. Salunke, to play the female roles in his early films. Among the middle classes, that association of acting with the loss of virtue, female modesty, and respectability has only recently been put into question, whatever degree of emulation actresses might appear to receive from an adoring public.

While a number of other film-makers, working in several Indian languages, pioneered the growth and development of Indian cinema, the studio system was beginning to emerge in the early 1930s. Its most successful initial product was the film *Devdas* (1935), whose director, P.C. Barua, also appeared in the lead; the Hindi re-make of the original Bengali film, also directed by Barua, was to establish the legendary career of Kundanlal Saigal. The Tamil version of this New Theatres release appeared in 1936. "To some extent", note the authors of Indian Film, "Devdas was a film of social protest. It carried an implied indictment of arranged marriage and undoubtedly gave some satisfaction on this score to those who hate this institution" (p. 81). The Prabhat Film Company, established by V. G. Damle, Shantaram, S. Fatehlal, and two other men in 1929, was also achieving its first successes around this time. Damle and Fatehlal's *Sant Tukaram* (1936), made in Marathi, was the first Indian film to gain international recognition, winning an award at Venice. The social films of V. Shantaram, more than anything else, paved the way for an entire set of directors who took it upon themselves to interrogate not only the institutions of marriage, dowry, and widowhood, but the grave inequities created by caste and class distinctions. Some of these problems received perhaps their most explicit expression in *Achhut Kanya* ("Untouchable Girl", 1936), a film directed by Himanshu Rai of Bombay Talkies. The film portrays the travails of a Harijan girl, played by Devika Rani, and a Brahmin boy, played by Ashok Kumar, whose love for each other cannot merely be consummated but must have a tragic end.

The next significant phase of Hindi cinema is associated with such figures as Raj Kapoor, Bimal Roy, and Guru Dutt. The son of Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor created some of the most popular and memorable films in Hindi cinema. *Awaara* (The Vagabond, 1951), *Shri 420* (1955), and *Jagte Raho* (1957) were both commercial and critical successes. Many of his films explore, in a rather benign way, the class fissures in Indian society. Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* ("Two Acres of Land", 1954), which shows the influence of Italian neo-realism, explored the difficult life of the rural peasantry under the most oppressive conditions; his film *Devdas* (1955), with Dilip Kumar playing the title role in a re-make of Barua's film, was a testimony to the near impossibility of the fulfillment of 'love' under Indian social conditions, while *Sujata* (1959) pointed to the problems posed by marriages arranged by parents without the consent of their children. Meanwhile, the Hindi cinema had seen the rise of its first undisputed genius, Guru Dutt, whose films critiqued the conventions of society and deplored the conditions which compel artists to forgo their inspiration. From Barua's *Devdas* (1935) to Guru Dutt's *Sahib, Bibi aur Gulam* (with Guru Dutt and Meena Kumari),the motif of "doomed love" looms large: to many critics, a maudlin sentimentality characterizes even the best of the Hindi cinema before the advent of the new or alternative Indian cinema in the 1970s.

It is doubtless under the influence of the Bengali film-makers Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen, however, that Indian cinema, and not only in Hindi, also began to take a somewhat different turn in the 1970s against the tide of commercial cinema, which was now characterized by song-and-dance routines, trivial plots, and family dramas. No Indian director has had a greater international reputation than Ray, which almost every one of his films, except in the last years of his life, did a great deal to consolidate from the time that he produced *Pather Panchali* ("Song of the Road", 1955). Ghatak has had more of a 'cult' following: his oeuvre was quite small (six feature films), but Ghatak went on to serve as Director of the Film and Television School at Pune, from where the first generation of a new breed of Indian film-makers and actors -- Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, and Om Puri among the latter -- was to emerge. These film-makers, such as Shyam Benegal, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani, and Saeed Mirza, exhibited a different aesthetic and political sensibility and were inclined to explore the caste and class contradictions of Indian society, the nature of oppression suffered by women, the dislocations created by industrialism and the migration from rural to urban areas, the problem of landlessness, the impotency of ordinary democratic and constitutional procedures of redress, and so on.

Mainstream commercial releases, however, continue to dominate the market, and not only in India, but wherever Indian cinema has a large following, whether in much of the British Caribbean, Fiji, East and South Africa, the U.K., United States, Canada, or the Middle East. The popular Hindi cinema is characterized by significant changes too numerous to receive more than the slightest mention. The song-and-dance routine is now more systematized, more regular in its patterns; the 'other', whether in the shape of the terrorist or the irredeemable villain, has a more ominous presence; the nation-state is more obsessive in its demands on our loyalties and obeisance; the Indian diaspora is a larger presence in the Indian imagination (witness *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*); and so on.

Satyajit Ray

Satyajit Ray was India's first internationally recognized film-maker and, several years after his death, still remains the most well-known Indian director on the world stage. Ray has written that he became captivated by the cinema as a young college student, and he was self-taught, his film education consisting largely of repeated viewings of film classics by de Sica, Fellini, John Ford, Orson Welles, and other eminent directors. With the release in 1955 of his first film *Pather Panchali* ("Song of the Road"), whose financing presented Ray with immense monetary problems, compelling him even to pawn his wife's jewelry, he brought the neo-realist movement in film to India. Little could anyone have imagined that this first film would launch Ray on one of the most brilliant careers in the history of cinema, leading eventually not only to dozens of international awards, India's highest honor, and a lifetime achievement Oscar from Hollywood, but the unusual accolade of being voted by members of the British Film Institute as one of the three greatest directors in world cinema.

Satyajit Ray was born into an illustrious family in Calcutta in 1921. His grandfather, Upendra Kishore Ray-Chaudhary, was a publisher, musician and the creator of children's literature in Bengali. His father, Sukumar Ray, was a noted satirist and India's first writer of nonsense rhymes, akin to the nonsense verse of Edward Lear. Later in life, Satyajit Ray made a documentary of his father's life. His film, *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, was based on a story published by his grandfather in 1914, but even other films, such as *Hirok Rajah Deshe*, "The Kingdom of Diamonds", clearly drew upon his interest in children's poetry and nonsense rhymes.

Pather Panchali, based on a novel by Bibhutibhusan Banerji [Bandopadhyay], documents a family's struggle for existence in the face of a famine and the growth of the boy Apu. Ray later wrote, "I chose *Pather Panchali* for the qualities that made it a great book; its humanism; its lyricism; and its ring of truth . . . . The script had to retain some of the rambling quality of the novel because that in itself contained a clue to the feel of authenticity; life in a poor Bengali village does ramble." Ray went on to make two more movies on Apu (*Aparajito* in 1957, followed by *Apur Sansar* in 1960) to complete his famous Apu trilogy, though he had no thoughts of a trilogy when he embarked on the first film. The latter two movies trace the life of a young man [Apu] in Calcutta, his early marriage to a village girl, his conflict with his father, and their final reconciliation. Contemporaneous with these films were two staggering films, *Devi* ("The Goddess") and *Jalsaghar* ("The Music Room"), on the ways of the landed aristocracy in Bengal and its decline. In *Devi*, an elderly man has a vision that his young daughter-in-law is a goddess, and she is compelled to bear the burden of divinity; when her husband returns home from a trip, he finds his wife installed as a deity. The zeal with which a zamindar pursued his passion for music, though his estate lay crumbling around him, was the subject of *Jalsaghar*.

Ray's later films treated more contemporary themes like the new urban culture (*Nayak* in 1966, *Pratidwandi* in 1970, *Seemabaddha* in 1971, *Jana Aranya* in 1975). With his film *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* ("The Chess Players", 1977), based on a short story by the famous Hindi writer Premchand, Ray broke new ground. Here he ventured into the terrain of mid-nineteenth century India, the expansion of British rule, and what (to use a cliché) might be termed the 'clash of cultures'. This film made brilliant use of color, animation, and narration; it was also Ray's maiden attempt at making a non-Bengali feature film. (His only other film in Hindi was *Sadgati*, produced for Indian television.) To a small extent, *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* drew him to the attention of the mainstream Indian film-going audience. After *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*, he returned to themes set in his native state of Bengal, though in *Ghare Bhaire* ("The Home and the World"), inspired by Tagore's novel of the same name, Ray returned in part to the theme of British colonial rule. Ray's films were characterized by a low budget, outdoor or locating shooting, authentic settings, detailed historical research, and a superb cast of actors and actresses who rose to eminent distinction under Ray's direction. The greatest names in Bengali cinema worked for Ray, and Soumitra Chatterji, who appeared in half of Ray's films, has himself recently been the subject of a long documentary film. Few of his films were commercially successful, and the greater majority were never screened outside Bengal, except at international festivals, in film clubs, and in Bangladesh. The movie he created for children, *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, was his first market success and soon gained a cult following in Bengal. Ray himself never showed much interest in the popular Hindi cinema

Satyajit Ray remained a strong presence on the Bengali cultural scene all throughout his life. In 1947 he had founded the Calcutta Film Society with Chidananda Das Gupta. Though in the West he is known only as a film-maker, his reputation

in his native Bengal extends to a great many other spheres. Ray was a prolific short story writer, with over a dozen volumes to his credit; and he contributed regularly to the children's journal "Sandesh", which he also edited. The exploits of his fictional character Feluda, first introduced in a series of detective stories, were avidly followed by the public, and the much-beloved Feluda was later featured in a couple of his movies. Ray, who had first worked in the advertising industry, was a major graphic designer, and designed hundreds of book jackets; he also illustrated his own books, besides those of many others. He virtually pioneered, in the Indian context, the genre of science fiction stories, and it is alleged that the script for Steven Spielberg's immensely successful *E.T.* was based, though unacknowledged by Spielberg, on a script that Ray had sent to him many years ago. Ray wrote a number of essays on film, some of them collected in a volume entitled *Our Films, Their Films*, and his films were based on the most meticulous research. He can, not unreasonably, be considered as having chronicled phases of Bengal's history from the late nineteenth century onwards, the life of urban Calcutta, and the rural landscapes of Bengal. It is also remarkable that Ray did much of the work for his own films – the screenplays were almost invariably his own, and he personally supervised, though assisted by an extraordinary crew, virtually every detail of lighting, art direction, and so on. He scored the music for some of his films (though the music for the Apu Trilogy was composed by Ravi Shankar, and for *Jalsaghar* by the incomparable Vilayat Khan). Not surprisingly, then, his fellow Bengalis at least thought of him as a "Renaissance Man", and he was hailed as the successor of Rabindranath Tagore.

As Ray moved from one critical success to another, championed by film critics overseas, and showered with awards at Venice, Cannes, Locarno, and Berlin, it became habitual to look upon him as the great hope of Indian cinema. His films were closely studied in film schools, and watched repeatedly by hopeful film-makers. Prominent Indian directors such as Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and Shyam Benegal clearly showed the influence of Ray in their work.

1. What are some of the more common themes in Indian cinema?

2. What are some of the features of popular Hindi cinema?

3. Discuss some of the contributions made by Satyajit Ray to Indian culture.

A Passage to India

Excerpts from S. Sinha, "Quest for Human Harmony in Forster's *A Passage to India*", in *E.M. Forster's* <u>*A Passage to India*</u> (R. Mitra, ed.)

A Passage to India is a rich, multilayered novel, highly complex in both form and argument and is indeed one of the most critically discussed novels within the canon. An elegant evocation of British India, *A Passage to India*, however, does not simply explore the path to a greater understanding of India, but explores man's quest for the ultimate truth. The novel is deliberately and consciously polyphonic and symphonic in design, raising various perspectives and revealing Forster as an anti-imperialist, a humanist and a critic of Victorian middle class attitudes and colonial era racism. As a British colonialist in India himself, Forster saw first-hand the impossibility of friendship across racial divides, of the unification of India into a single nation and of the duration of the British Raj. Like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Forster's novel is a beautiful example of literature about the Empire, of sensitive literature at its best, studying the racial tensions and striving to explore the cultural clash but never sounding dogmatic.

The title of the novel is drawn from Walt Whitman's poem, 'Passage to India', as Forster himself has acknowledged. Just as the poem stresses the need to combine the successes of Western civilization with a new exploration of spiritual experiences and welcomes the opening of the Suez Canal as a step in this direction, so Forster's novel relates the ideas of human harmony to the secrets of the inner life and the mystery of the whole Universe. Both speak of a similar quest but whereas Whitman's poem celebrates the opening of the Suez Canal as bringing together East and West, *A Passage to India* begins and ends with the question -- Can the English and Indian races be friends? -- and, at the end of the novel the answer appears to be "No, not yet."

As an anti-imperialist, Forster effectively brings out the relations between the colonizer and the colonized and his criticism of imperialism is liberal. He approaches the Anglo-Indian imperialism in terms of public school attitude: the prejudice, snobbery, priggishness, complacency, censoriousness and narrow-mindedness. His works abound with highly satirical portraits of the English middle-class culture and point towards something deficient with the English national character. As Forster remarks, "For it is not that the Englishman can't feel--it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow, or even to open his mouth too wide when he talks -- his pipe might fall out if he did. He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasion." Forster's portrait of the Raj is very convincing, as he was thoroughly familiar with the realities of the Raj. Having spent two years in India, in 1912 and again in 1921-22, he was closely involved in Indian affairs, supported Gandhi's Non Cooperation Movement of the early 1920's and remained a commentator in the inter-war period; hence his account of India is culturally and historically specific.

The novel has a tripartite musical form -- Mosque, Caves and Temple -- constituting a triangle of forces which keeps the plot well balanced. Reduced to the barest terms, the structure of *A Passage to India* has the "rhythmic rise --fall -- rise" that Forster found in what has been for him the greatest of novels, *War and Peace*.

The first part, 'Mosque', determines the background and unfolds the plot. The opening character does much more than to introduce us to the Indian city of Chandrapore. It establishes a striking contrast between the disordered chaotic life of the city and the rationally ordered but sterile life at the English Civil Station. The book's first passage the reader learns about is that of Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore to visit Ronny Heaslop, who is the city magistrate. We are made acutely conscious of the deficiences and the dull routine, the added meaningless ritual of life at the Civil Station through the disappointment and boredom of the two newcomers -- Mrs. Moore, Ronny Heaslop's mother and Adela Quested, his fiancée. The first key meeting of the novel is Mrs. Moore's encounter with the Muslim doctor, Aziz, the novel's Indian protagonist, at a Mosque by the Ganges. When Aziz and Mrs. Moore meet in the Mosque, both are seeking to escape from an alien environment. For Aziz, the beauty of the Mosque is a release from the Anglo-Indian incubus, for Mrs. Moore an escape from the pseudo-metropolitan atmosphere sedulously imitated by paltry production of Cousin Kate. Nothing that happens later in the novel wholly invalidates the understanding achieved by these two dissimilar people. With her wonderful openness to life and her capacity to accept people and events without prior rationalization, Mrs. Moore in her intuitive understanding of people transcends the limitation of liberal rationalism. Her intimacy with Aziz deepens further at the party arranged at the Government College by Fielding, the Principal, and this party stands in stark contrast to the Bridge party organised by Mr. Turton, the Collector of Chandrapore, which signalled the inevitable failure of all formal attempts to facilitate a better understanding between the two races. The volatile but likeable young Indian doctor, Aziz, invites them to a picnic at the Marabar Caves and thus, the next musical motif is introduced.

 The slightly heightened style with which the section, 'Caves', opens declares unmistakably that the story has entered a new phase. The visions of harmony with which 'Mosque' ended are dispelled by the poetic evocations of primeval India. In bringing his characters to the Caves, Forster is confronting them at a symbolic level with a part of India which eludes Western religion and philosophy of life. In the very first cave that Mrs. Moore visits she has a horrible experience. Besides

the crush and stench, there is a terrifying echo in the cave. The echo has the effect of undermining and disintegrating Mrs. Moore's hold on life, and ultimately of destroying. We are presented with a nightmare vision of evil and negation that is a challenge to Christianity and pretensionsn of the Western, liberal minds. The symbolic structure requires that Adela, like Mrs. Moore should be confronted with the unknown; in Adela's case, the unknown is the universe within her own nature. Her experience is even more traumatic than Mrs. Moore's. The simplest interpretation of Adela's belief that she has been attacked by Aziz is to say that it is only an objectification of intense emotional assault on her reason that she has tried vainly to surpass. She has tried to live by the mind and is ashamed that animal desires have brought her and Ronny together. The imagined assault is a reflection of her deeply divided being, of the unresolved battles of forces, within her, and also of her lack of self-knowledge. We may think of the entry into the Caves as perhaps representing a descent into the subconscious. Everything Adela stands for -- British common sense, repression of emotions, instinct for compromise is wrought up against an overwhelming force with which it cannot come to terms. The incident provokes the sharpest conflict between East and West -- Aziz is immediately placed under arrest. Reason is thrown to the winds by both sides, and only Fielding keeps proportion. The last section is a partial reconciliation of the major discords of the novel. Forster ends *A Passage to India* with a bittersweet reconciliation between Aziz and Fielding but also with the realization that the two cannot be friends under the contemporary conditions. Thus, Forster ends the novel as a tragic but platonic love story between the two friends, separated by different cultures and political climates. Forster does not express any definitive political standpoint on the sovereignty of India. Field suggests that British rule over India, if relinquished, would be replaced by a different sovereign that would be perhaps worse than the English. Aziz, however, does make the point that it is British rule in India that prevents the two men from remaining friends; Forster, thus, indicates that British rule in India creates significant problems for the country and is unable to offer an easy or concrete solution to these problems.

1. Discuss Forster's opinion on British rule in India and how he conveys this in "A Passage to India".

2. Describe two of the characters in "A Passage to India".

Taj Mahal: The Jewel of India
Jessie Szalay

The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 and 1653.
Credit: saiko3p | Shutterstock
View full size image

The Taj Mahal is a white marble mausoleum in Agra, India. It is widely considered to be a premier example of Mughal architecture, which combines elements of Indian, Persian, and Islamic styles, and is one of India's top tourist attractions. It is commonly referred to as the Jewel of India. It is also arguably the world's greatest monument of love.

History: In the 1630s, the northern Indian city of Agra was the seat of the Muslim Mughal Empire. The emperor, Shah Jahan, married Mumtaz Mahal (originally Arjumand Bano Begum) when she was 14 years old, and she became his most beloved wife. When she died giving birth to their 14th child in 1631, the emperor was grief-stricken. According to legend, with her dying breath Mumtaz asked for her husband to build her a mausoleum more beautiful than any in the world. Six months later, the foundation was laid for the Taj, and the devastated emperor sought to preserve his wife's memory through construction of the elaborate tomb.

Architectural wonder: Though the 145-foot-tall domed marble mausoleum is the most iconic element of the Taj Mahal, the site is actually a complex of structures located on the right bank of the Yamuna River. The complex covers nearly 42 acres, incorporating gardens and a red sandstone guesthouse, mosque, and gates. The red sandstone on the lesser buildings and white marble on mausoleum corresponds with the traditional Indian caste system, in which Brahmins had white buildings and the warrior caste had red. This aligned the Mughals with the two powerful castes.
The Taj Mahal is an aesthetic wonder of symmetry and balance created from solids and voids, lights and darks, domes and arches. The domed mausoleum features uniform shapes that are perfectly symmetrical, including twin domes astride the primary onion dome, arches and four minarets from which calls to prayer can be heard. Inside, the octagonal tomb is surrounded by portal halls and four corner rooms, with the pattern repeating on the floor above. The tomb's placement at end of a long pool is, according to UNESCO, genius: "Placing the tomb at one end of the quadripartite garden rather than in the exact centre, [adds] rich depth and perspective to the distant view of the monument."

The Red Gate, main gateway to the Taj Mahal.
Credit: jo Crebbin | Shutterstock
View full size image

Color and decoration: Though at a distance it appears to be smooth marble, the Taj Mahal's exterior is actually rife with intricate carvings and inlays. Motifs include vegetative designs, herringbone and other abstract patterns, and calligraphy of Persian poetry and the Quran. The interior of the mausoleum features delicate inlays in floral and geometric patterns made with precious stones. Inside the octagonal tomb are two cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan, which are inlaid with precious stones in floral designs. An octagonal marble lattice screen of exquisite craftsmanship encircles the cenotaphs. While the buildings' clean proportions suggest Persian influence, the style of embellishment is Hindu. The garden design and floral motifs symbolize a beautiful paradise, as well as reference Hindu images such as the "vase of plenty."

Construction

About 22,000 laborers and 1,000 elephants worked to complete the central mausoleum in 1648. The identity of the Taj Mahal's architect remains unknown, though historians speculate that Ustad Ahmad played a primary role, based on a claim in a seventeenth-century manuscript. Other men credited include Mukrimat Khan and Mir Abdul Karim, the chief supervisors and administrators, and Ismail Afandi, the designer of the main dome. According to historian Milo Beach in the PBS series "Treasures of the World," it is thought that Shah Jahan also had a large hand in the Taj Mahal's design, because the emperor was interested in architecture and obsessed with the building's perfection.

Masons, inlayers, carvers, painters, stonecutters and other artisans were brought from all over the empire, as well as central Asia and Iran, to build the Taj. To house all the workers, the city of Mumtazabad grew up around the grounds. A 10-mile ramp ran through Agra and was used for transporting materials to the top of the dome. Materials were brought from every corner of the empire and beyond, including marble from Rajasthan and more than 40 types of gems from Tibet, Baghdad, Turkestan and other locations.

A gigantic brick scaffold supported the dome during assembly, and it was estimated that five years would be required to disassemble it. According to legend, when Shah Jahan heard this he decreed that anyone who helped remove the bricks could keep them. The scaffold was dismantled overnight.
The Taj Mahal became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983. In 2007, it was voted one of the New 7 Wonders of the World in the New7Wonders Foundation's worldwide poll.

Questions:
1. Talk about why the Taj Mahal is considered one of the New 7 Wonders of the World.
2. Describe the artistic and architectural features that make up the Taj Mahal.