

SEVENTH EDITION



**GOVERNMENT  
AND  
POLITICS  
IN  
SOUTH ASIA**

**STUDENT ECONOMY EDITION**

Robert C. Oberst, Yogendra K. Malik,  
Charles H. Kennedy, Ashok Kapur, Mahendra Lawoti,  
Syedur Rahman, Ahrar Ahmad

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IN SOUTH ASIA**



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Designed by Linda Mark

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*As in the past editions, this book is dedicated to our wives:*

*Usha Malik*

*Patricia A. Poe (Kennedy)*

*Kathy Shellogg (Oberst)*

*Deepika Kapur*

*Tannaz Khosrowshahi (Rahman)*

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# CONTENTS

<i>List of Tables and Illustrations</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Preface to the Seventh Edition</i>	<i>xi</i>
1 Introduction	1
<b>I INDIA</b>	<b>11</b>
2 Political Culture and Heritage: A Changing Political Culture	13
3 State Institutions and Changing Political Dynamics	43
4 Shifting Perspectives About Political Parties and Political Leaders	84
5 Groups and Multiple Demands on the System	115
6 Conflict Management	128
7 Modernization and Development with Indian Characteristics	140
<b>II PAKISTAN</b>	<b>149</b>
8 Political Culture and Heritage	151
9 Constitutional Structure	161
10 Political Parties and Political Leaders	181
11 Conflict and Mediation	203
12 Policy Issues	217
13 Problems and Prospects	236

<b>III BANGLADESH</b>	<b>243</b>
14 Political Culture and Heritage	245
15 Government Institutions	262
16 Elections, Parties, and Interest Groups	277
17 Conflicts and Resolution	299
18 Modernization and Development: Prospects and Problems	314
<b>IV SRI LANKA</b>	<b>329</b>
19 Political Culture and Heritage	331
20 Government Structure	344
21 Political Parties and Interest Groups	359
22 Conflict Mediation: Ethnic and Political Conflict	374
23 The Search for Prosperity	382
24 Modernization and Development: Prospects and Problems	390
<b>V NEPAL</b>	<b>397</b>
25 Political Heritage and Culture	399
26 Political Institutions and Governmental Processes	415
27 Political Parties, Elections, and Leaders	435
28 Class and Identity Conflicts	459
29 Modernization and Development: Problems and Prospects	479
<b>VI SOUTH ASIA</b>	<b>487</b>
30 The Future: South Asia as a Region and a Player in the World System	489
<i>Statistical Appendix</i>	509
<i>Index</i>	511

## LIST OF TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

### TABLES

- 2.1 Religious Distribution of the Population of India (2001 Census) 32
- 3.1 Presidents of India 48
- 3.2 Prime Ministers of India 53
- 3.3 Election Results in India by State: Number of Seats Won by Largest Party or Coalition, 2008–2012 67
- 4.1 2009 Lok Sabha Election Results and Pattern of Party Coalitions 94
- 6.1 Official (Scheduled) Languages as of 2011 132
- 8.1 Major Mother Language by Province/Region, 1998 (Percentage) 154
- 10.1 General Election Results, National Assembly, 2002, Number of Seats Won 182
- 10.2 General Election, Provincial Assemblies, 2002, Number of Seats Won 183
- 10.3 General Election Results, National Assembly, 2008, Number of Seats Won 186
- 10.4 General Election, Provincial Assemblies, 2008, Number of Seats Won 187
- 10.5 Heads of State and Government Since Independence 191
- 14.1 Authoritative Works on Bengal 248
- 15.1 Heads of Government of Bangladesh 263
- 16.1 Bangladesh Parliamentary Election Results 278
- 16.2 Parliamentary Elections and Votes Cast 279
- 19.1 Voter Turnout Rates in National Elections 337

- 19.2 Ethnic Population of Sri Lanka (1981 Census) 338
- 19.3 Religious Composition of the Sri Lankan Population (1981 Census) 339
- 20.1 Results of Sri Lankan Parliamentary Elections 352
- 20.2 2010 Presidential Election Results 354
- 21.1 Heads of Government of Sri Lanka 360
- 23.1 GDP Growth Rates 383
- 25.1 Religious Diversity in Percentages, 1952/1954–2001 406
- 25.2 Population of Major Ethnic/Caste Groups, 2001 and 2011 407
- 26.1 Nineteen Prime Ministers in Twenty-Three Years, 1990–2013 424
- 27.1 Votes and Seats Received by Communist and Noncommunist Parties in the 1990s 437
- 27.2 Local Election Results (Percentage of Seats) 449
- 27.3 Seats Won in the Constituent Assembly, 2008 450
- 28.1 Nonarmed Groups' Violent (Ethnic, Religious, and Caste) Conflicts Since 1951 470

**MAPS**

- India 12
- Pakistan 150
- Bangladesh 244
- Sri Lanka 330
- Sri Lanka: Mahaweli Project Area 385
- Nepal 398
- South Asia 488

**FIGURES**

- 3.1 Organization of the Central Government of India 46
- 3.2 Dynamics of State-Center Parties at 2009 Elections 68
- 3.3 Organization of the State Governments of India 69
- 20.1 Structure of Sri Lanka's Government 347

## PREFACE TO THE SEVENTH EDITION

The seventh edition of this book marks its continued transformation since it was first published in 1987. We continue to mourn the loss of our colleague and friend Craig Baxter, who died on February 7, 2008. Without Craig this book would never have been published. His tireless effort and determination ensured that the first and later editions went to press. We have missed him dearly.

As in the sixth edition, we continue with the chapters on Nepal. Finally, the primary authorship of the Bangladesh chapters is a collaborative effort by Syedur Rahman and Ahrar Ahmad, and the Indian chapters are a collaborative effort by Ashok Kapur and Yogendra Malik.

With these changes the book continues its second generation of authors. Twenty years ago, none of us ever expected the book to last as long as it has. The original four authors believed there was a need for a book that examined all of South Asia rather than just India. Our original optimism has been reinforced by the support for the book over the first six editions. The South Asia we wrote about in 1987 no longer exists. It has been transformed by the changes sweeping across Asia. We have tried to keep up with those changes.

We wish to thank especially those at Westview Press. While we have worked with many at Westview Press over the years, we wish to thank Toby Wahl, who worked with us on this edition.

Our thanks and appreciation for the patience and encouragement of our wives is shown in the dedication of this work to them.

*Robert C. Oberst  
Yogendra K. Malik  
Charles H. Kennedy  
Ashok Kapur*

*Mahendra Lawoti  
Syedur Rahman  
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# Introduction

To most people in North America, the Indian subcontinent is an exotic land of maharajas and sadhus. It holds a special place as part of the distant Orient. However, while our stereotypes continue to dominate the way we view the subcontinent, India and its neighbors have increasingly begun to play a major role in international affairs and the international economy and are thus an important subject for study and better understanding.

The subcontinent's population makes it significant. First, with a population of over 1.6 billion, or nearly one-quarter of the people on earth, the Indian subcontinent cannot be ignored.<sup>1</sup> Second, its role in the world economy is of increasing consequence, particularly as regards the growth of the information technology industry and the subcontinent's role in manufacturing and exports. Culturally, Bollywood movies have an international audience, and the South Asian diaspora has developed a footprint in North America's economic, political, and social life. Finally, the region has become important to North American strategic interests. The events of 9/11 thrust the region into the awareness of every citizen of North America and Europe. Pakistan's remote hill territories are hiding places for US enemies; for the people of South Asia, they are a breeding ground for terrorism.

The following chapters describe the countries of South Asia and examine the reason for their successes and failures. Each of these nations is struggling to create a stable political environment that will allow for rapid economic growth and the resolution of its most serious problems.

South Asia is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations. The Harappan (or Indus Valley) civilization was one of the world's earliest cultures. Existing more than 3,500 years ago, it was a marvel among the societies of that era and laid the groundwork for the civilization that would become India. The region's geography would protect the subcontinent for nearly 2,000 years. The land routes to the west required travel across the Hindu Kush range of mountains or

across the great desert of Balochistan. To the north lay the natural wall of the Himalayas, and to the east, the narrow ranges and jungles of Burma. The seas to the south provided the easiest access and would become the preferred route of invasion for waves of Europeans.

Although Alexander the Great came to Pakistan in the fourth century BC, the first permanent colonies were created by the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, French, and British. Among them, the British would prevail and rule India for over two hundred years.

Before the Europeans, sporadic streams of invaders had come and conquered for a brief time. The residents of the subcontinent would absorb some elements of their cultures with each wave. The first Muslim invaders came in the eighth century; the Mughal Empire, established in 1504, created some of the world's most important architectural treasures, including the Taj Mahal. The Mughals would also leave a remarkable administrative legacy, which the British eventually would adopt.

When compared with other former European colonies, the subcontinent stands out as a refuge for democratic and stable political development. Although some of the countries of the region are struggling with democracy, democratic values have taken hold in most of them. Each of these countries is also evolving as a major source of scientific research and development. India and Pakistan have both exploded nuclear bombs, while their scientists have flocked to richer Western nations. The rise of information technology has opened up South Asia as no other event could have. Today, it is a center of software development and a manufacturing hub for Western companies in India.

The 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon forced the Western nations to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. The spread of a more militant version of Islam than that known in South Asia for nearly a millennium has begun to split and transform the region's 400 million Muslims. It has also generated increased concern and scrutiny among military planners in the United States and Western Europe.

Each of the South Asian states faces five critical areas of political development: nation building, state building, participation, economy building, and distribution of wealth and social benefits. Although India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka inherited fairly effective state apparatuses, they are facing different challenges.

Following this chapter's introductory discussion of the political heritage of the British era, Parts I through V examine the five largest countries of the region: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Part VI addresses the interrelationships among the states in the region and their roles in the international system and ties the themes of the book to a discussion of the political development of the region as a whole.

## European and British Expansion

The South Asian political systems and societies of the twenty-first century owe much to the influence of British colonial rule. While colonialism destroyed the right of the people to govern themselves and placed an alien ruler, located 5,000 miles away, in charge of their destinies, it did leave some positive and lasting effects.

While other former colonies in Asia and Africa have struggled in their efforts to create democratic governments, the South Asian nation-states have been much more successful. Although we discuss the countries of the subcontinent separately, it is important to understand their common historical experience and the influence of British colonialism. The British did not rule the region as a single colony. The countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were part of the British colony of India, while Sri Lanka was a separate Crown colony, and Nepal was never a formal colony but rather a protectorate under British control. While we discuss them individually, their common British experience has helped to shape the success these nations have experienced in nation building. Although the British influence has been important in shaping the independent nations of the region, however, the experience was not all positive. The success of the people of the subcontinent in taking advantage of the positive contributions of the British and overcoming the negative influences is a testament to the resiliency of South Asian culture and its people.<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to forget that the British were not the first Europeans to arrive on the subcontinent. Vasco da Gama visited on his voyage of discovery around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa in 1498. He left a few Portuguese representatives behind to set up a trading post. In 1503, the Portuguese would set up the first European outpost in South Asia at Cochin, in what is now the South Indian state of Kerala. The Portuguese would spend the next century expanding their control of South Asia along India's western coast and in Sri Lanka. For the next 150 years the trading language of the region would be Portuguese. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I presented a charter forming the British East India Company, with the British arriving at Surat (in present-day Gujarat) in 1612. The British would slowly establish their control of India in the face of the Portuguese who were already there and the Mughal Empire, ruled from Delhi, which challenged their ability to control the region. The Dutch East India Company, formed in 1602, also coveted the riches of South Asia and began to establish trading outposts along the coast of India and in Sri Lanka. In 1608, it would establish its headquarters on the Coromondal coast near Madras. After a series of failed attempts, the French established their first factory in India in 1668 at Surat.<sup>3</sup>

The British East India Company would be given a monopoly over all British trade with India. As the company expanded, it was forced to undertake more administrative and government functions, including maintaining an army for protection. The company would create the city of Calcutta in East India and establish its headquarters there until the British government dissolved the company and took over direct rule of India in 1862.

The first European efforts to establish economic and political control over South Asia encountered one major obstacle: the Mughal Empire. The Mughals were western and central Asians who had conquered India in 1526 and established a remarkable record of architectural, artistic, educational, and political accomplishments during their rule. The Mughals did not rule all of India, since several southern Hindu kingdoms resisted conquest. They did, however, rule from the Khyber Pass to Bengal across the north and as far south as the Deccan Plateau. The Mughals were the last of a series of Muslim dynasties that ruled India from the eleventh century onward.

Mughal rule was marked by great decentralization. The Mughals allowed a number of Hindu kingdoms to exist autonomously as long as they pledged to support the Mughal leadership. The first Europeans arrived as the Mughal Empire was founded (1526) and began establishing outposts as the empire peaked in its power and influence in the seventeenth century under the leadership of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The overthrow of Shah Jahan by his son in 1657 marked the beginning of the decline of the empire. The decline would be hastened by the Europeans, especially the British, who would make alliances with Hindu kings seeking more autonomy from the Mughal leadership. The Mughal Empire would decline in power after 1750. The last emperor was exiled to Burma in 1858 after participating in the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny against the British.

In the last years of the empire, the British and the Europeans controlled the coastal areas of the country, gradually leaving the Mughals with control of only the Gangetic Plain (modern-day Uttar Pradesh) and finally the city of Delhi. After the collapse of the Mughals, the British maintained most of the Mughal administration and gradually imposed their rule. Their piecemeal approach resulted in two forms of control over the subcontinent. Some of the territory acquired by the British East India Company was ruled directly by the British governor-general and described as British India. It comprised 60 percent of the territory of India and two-thirds of the population.

The other territories were obtained through agreements with local rulers. These areas are usually called princely states. At the time of independence in 1947, there were more than five hundred of them. The British negotiated a separate agreement with each princely state, although they usually granted them

autonomy while maintaining control over their foreign affairs, defense, and other matters.

### The Mutiny and Its Aftermath

A defining moment of British rule was the 1857 Indian or Sepoy Mutiny (which many Indian nationalists refer to as the first war of independence). The causes of the uprising are too complex to discuss in detail here; broadly speaking, it resulted from the British East India Company's arrogance in its dealings with the princely states and the Indian people. The revolt was a carefully coordinated uprising led by the sepoys, who were the foot soldiers of the British East India Company's army in India. Initially the Indians captured many important urban centers of British rule and killed many British people living in the country. Ultimately the British forces would regain control of the country, and British rule would continue.

In the end, the British East India Company was dissolved on September 1, 1858, and the British Crown assumed control of India. The British government recognized the need to be more responsive to the Indian population and began a series of reforms to avoid future rebellions.

The Indian Councils Act of 1861, passed by the British Parliament, created the Legislative Council, which would advise the Executive Council (cabinet of the viceroy). It included a number of appointed, nonofficial members, who could be Indians. While the Legislative Council did not provide effective representation to the Indian people, it was a beginning that would lead to greater demands for more representation.

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 and became an outspoken representative of the Indian people and an important force for greater Indian representation in the colonial government. Later, in 1906, the Muslim League was founded, and the two organizations worked to pressure the British to provide more representation.

In 1906, Viceroy Lord Minto endorsed a plan that would become the Government of India Act of 1909. The act, more commonly called the Morley-Minto reforms, allowed for elected representatives to the Legislative Council. It also allowed one Indian to be named to the Executive Council. However, its significance was the provision for twenty-seven elected Indian members and five appointed Indian members of the Legislative Council, in addition to the thirty-six appointed members who were almost all British. This provision provided for nearly equal representation for Indian and British members on the legislative body.

The other unique feature of the Morley-Minto reforms was the creation of separate representation for religious groups. Each seat on the council was

assigned to one of the major religious groups in India (Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims), and only the members of that group could vote for the seat. The seats were apportioned roughly on the basis of the population; thus, most went to Hindus.

The Indian National Congress opposed separate electorates for religious groups when they were first demanded in 1906. However, in 1916 both the Congress and the Muslim League held their annual meetings in Lucknow, India, at the same time. During the meetings the two groups signed an agreement (the Lucknow Agreement) in which the Congress accepted the demand for separate Muslim and Sikh representation on the Legislative Council. The agreement was negotiated by two of the most important figures during the colonial era and the march to Indian independence. The Muslim League was represented by Muhammed Ali Jinnah (1876–1948), the primary architect of the pact; among the Indian National Congress negotiators was Motilal Nehru (1861–1931), who would become president of the Congress in 1919. His son, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), granddaughter, Indira Gandhi (1917–1984), and great-grandson, Rajiv Gandhi (1944–1991), would all serve as prime ministers of independent India. Both the League and the Congress believed the British were about to grant further reforms.

While Lord Morley stated that the British had no intention of granting self-government to India, the British secretary of state for India, Edwin Montagu, told the British Parliament in 1917 that the policy of the British government was to gradually develop self-government. In consultation Viceroy Lord Chelmsford and Montagu would present what would become the Government of India Act of 1919. More commonly called the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, the act would increase Indian representation on the Legislative Council to a majority. It would also create a bicameral system, with a Council of State with 60 members and a Central Legislative Assembly with 145 members; 32 of the 60 Council of State members would be elected Indians, and 97 of the 145 Central Legislative Assembly members would be elected Indians. The Executive Council of the viceroy would now have four British and three Indian members. While the act expanded the powers of the Executive and Legislative Councils, ultimate power rested in the hands of the British viceroy, who could declare any act to be of paramount importance and override their decisions.

Administratively, the British had divided India into provinces and princely states.<sup>4</sup> The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms created councils at the provincial level. Control over nation-building departments, including agriculture, public works, health, and education, was left with the provincial legislatures. Finance, revenue, and security remained directly under the control of the British governor. This system, called dyarchy, or dual rule, would allow a substantial

amount of self-rule for the Indians—much more than the British had granted to any of its other colonies.

The Indian National Congress rejected the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms because they did not go far enough in moving India toward self-government. This rejection led to a split within the Congress movement. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), who had begun a mass movement of nonviolent resistance against the British, wanted more power granted to the Indians. His movement had broadened the Congress from its original roots of elitist British-educated intellectuals. The early leaders of the movement came from the country's British-speaking elite, who, for the most part, supported cooperation with the British. Led by Motilal Nehru, this wing of the Congress would contest the Legislative Council elections and become the largest bloc in the council. Both groups were severely affected by the Amritsar massacre of April 13, 1919, when British troops opened fire on unarmed peaceful demonstrators, killing 379 and wounding 1,200. The event galvanized both wings of the party and convinced many that independence was the only option for India.

The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms called for a review of the act to determine its effectiveness, which would lead to even greater dissatisfaction. A commission was created in 1927 to evaluate the movement toward self-government by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms but failed to include an Indian member. In anger, the Indian National Congress prepared a constitution for India. The British rejected the constitutional proposal, and the Indian National Congress, at its 1929 annual meeting, demanded complete independence from Britain.

To slow the growing dissatisfaction with their rule, the British held a roundtable conference in London in 1930. These efforts failed as differences between the Muslims and Hindus emerged, preventing the two groups from presenting a united front. The Indian nationalist leadership was beginning to sense that British rule in India was destined to end and increased its pressure on the British.

The British tried one more time to offer reforms leading to self-government. The Government of India Act of 1935 was an effort to create dyarchy at the national level and thus give the Indians more power and influence. The act also sought to make India into a federal system by giving some autonomy to the provincial (state) governments. However, the act was not implemented at the national level, and the federal provisions were blocked by the leaders of the princely states, who saw the reforms as eroding their limited autonomy.

British efforts for reform were stalled with the advent of World War II. The British restricted freedoms for the Indians and incurred the wrath of the Indian National Congress leadership. The viceroy unilaterally declared India at war without consulting the provincial or princely leaders. The Congress boycotted the government, while one nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, formed

the Indian National Army and fought with the Japanese in Burma to overthrow the British. In response, the British jailed most of the Congress leadership for the duration of the war.<sup>5</sup>

During the war, opposition to the conflict would weaken the Indian National Congress and its influence with the British. Meanwhile, the Muslim League would pledge its full support to the British war effort and gain influence with the British.

### **Independence and Partition**

At the end of World War II, the British were ready to give India its independence. They also appeared to support a united India. A British cabinet mission was sent to India in 1946 and proposed a loose federation for independent India. Under the proposal, the provinces would hold the most power, while the central government would be limited to defense, foreign affairs, currency, taxation, and communication. They also proposed that the provinces could come together into three regional groups, one of which would comprise the Punjab, Sindh, the North-West Frontier Province, and Balochistan. These provinces roughly correspond to modern-day Pakistan and would have been a Muslim-majority region. A second group would include Bengal and Assam in India's east and would also be a Muslim-majority group. The rest of India would comprise the third group and would have a Hindu majority. The plan was accepted by the Muslim League but rejected by the Congress. As a result, the proposal was abandoned.

Support for the creation of Hindu and Muslim states gained strength after the 1946 cabinet mission collapsed. The Congress reluctantly agreed to the partition, while the Muslim League actively advocated for it. Lord Mountbatten arrived in India in 1947 as the new viceroy and on June 3, 1947, announced his partition plan. The Indian provinces were divided on the basis of their religious makeup, with two noncontiguous sections, one in the west and the other in the east, together designated as Muslim Pakistan. The other provinces would become Hindu India. The 565 princely states were given the choice of which country to join. Seventy-two days later, India was divided, and on August 15, 1947, both countries were granted independence from Great Britain.<sup>6</sup>

The partition became one of the greatest man-made tragedies in history. Fifteen million people would be displaced and forced to flee to lands where they had never lived. Hundreds of thousands would die in the violence that each side would exact against the other. The wounds caused by the division have taken many decades to heal. More importantly, as the following chapters show, the trauma from the partition has helped define the challenges faced by its three

resultant states: modern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. All three countries have sought to define their national identities and to overcome the anger and resentment left by the partition.

### **The Crown Colony of Ceylon**

Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was governed separately by the British. After the Portuguese arrived in 1505, they were forced out by the Dutch, and in 1802 the British established Ceylon as a Crown colony. Initially, the British controlled the coastal areas only. The Sri Lankan kingdom of Kandy continued to exist in the central hill country of the island and resisted efforts by each of the colonial powers to conquer it until the British finally succeeded in 1818.

Ceylon adapted more quickly to Western education and the British system of administration. As a result, the British were more willing to let the local population join the civil service of the colony. In addition, an Executive Council and a Legislative Council were created in 1833 as a result of a British-created reform commission, the Colebrooke Commission. In the 1920s, the legislative council was given a Sri Lankan majority, and both councils were given more power over finances than the Indian Legislative Council. Self-rule in Ceylon advanced more rapidly than it did in India. In 1931, a state council elected by the people took over much of the power of government. Although the governor still retained control, Ceylon was, for all practical purposes, self-governing.

As in India, a cabinet commission was sent to discuss independence in 1945. A constitution was modeled on the British Westminster system of government, and on February 4, 1948, Ceylon became an independent member of the British Commonwealth. Independence was achieved without the violence or conflict that accompanied Indian independence.

### **Nepal**

Nepal's history during the British era differed from that of the other countries of the region. The Himalayas formed a barrier that blocked British expansion into the Himalayan countries (Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan). However, the mountains did not completely eliminate British influence.

Nepal's modern era began with the conquest of the country under the king of Gurkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah, who captured the Kathmandu Valley in 1768 and established the Shah dynasty. Before the defeat of the kingdom of the Kathmandu Valley, his opponents had sought and received the assistance of the British East India Company. On his way to victory, Prithvi Narayan defeated the British in 1767.

The Nepalese went to war with the British from 1814 to 1816 over the strip of lowland at the foot of the Himalayas, the Terai region. Although the Nepalese inflicted large losses on the British, they were forced to cede large segments of the Terai to the British and to allow a British representative to be housed in Kathmandu. This increased British influence over Nepal but did not lead to British colonization of the country. In 1923, the British signed an agreement with the Nepalese accepting their independence.

The modern political systems of South Asia are a product of their past along with the events since the British left. The following chapters describe and analyze these events and reasons behind the current political affairs in the region.

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

Useful overviews of Indian history include Percival Spear, *A History of India*, Vol. 2, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1978), and Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For nearly encyclopedic coverage of the British period, see the venerable *Oxford History of India*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); this is an update of the original work by Vincent A. Smith.

For information on Ceylon (Sri Lanka), see W. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960). For Nepal, see Leo E. Rose and John T. Scholz, *Nepal: Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980).

For further discussions of specific topics in this and other chapters in this book, see Maureen L. P. Patterson, *South Asian Civilizations: A Bibliographic Synthesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), which can be supplemented by the annual *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, published by the Association for Asian Studies, now online ([www.asian-studies.org/aboutbas.htm](http://www.asian-studies.org/aboutbas.htm)).

#### NOTES

1. Data in this section is taken from World Bank, *The Complete World Development Report, 1978–2010* (New York: Oxford, 2010), and World Bank, *World Development Report 2012* (New York: Oxford, 2012).

2. For an insider's account, see Maurice Zinkin and Taya Zinkin, *Britain and India* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964). Maurice Zinkin served in India as a member of the famed Indian Civil Service.

3. The term “factory” referred to a place where traders and merchants gathered to carry on business in a foreign country.

4. The territorial divisions of British India were termed “provinces.” The term is still used in Pakistan and was used in India until the 1950 constitution was enacted. Since then, in India, the major divisions have been termed “states.”

5. See S. Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

6. See Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (New York: Avon Books, 1975); Alex von Tunzelmann, *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2007).

PART I

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INDIA



# Political Culture and Heritage: A Changing Political Culture

India's difficulties in nation building, economic development, and political stability have been strongly influenced by a host of complex factors, most prominently its geographical setting, its sociocultural history, and a pattern of continuous external interventions. India is the largest state on the South Asian subcontinent. One-third the size of the United States—about 1,266,595 square miles—it is a country of great distances. From the Himalayas in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, the distance is 2,000 miles, and it is some 1,700 miles from the western border with Pakistan to the eastern border with Burma. These distances and elevational changes mean that India has a wide variety of climates and landscapes, from snow-covered mountains and lush green forests to dry brown plains and sandy deserts.

Geographically, India is divided into three main regions, each with its own culture, traditions, and history. The various subregions add to the country's diversity of lifestyles and traditions. The first region consists of the vast plains of northern India, irrigated by the Ganges River and its tributaries. Originating in the Himalayas, the sacred Ganges runs more than 1,500 miles through several Indian states until it reaches the Bay of Bengal. The silt deposited by the river enriches the soil of the vast northern plains, where agriculture is the main livelihood of the people. In the Ganges Valley, the Hindu civilization flourished in ancient times.

The second region, the Deccan Plateau, is separated from the north by the Vindhya Mountains and from the coastal areas by the Eastern and Western Ghats, which form a kind of mountain wall. Although rich in mineral resources,

the plateau receives little rainfall; hence it is not heavily populated, in contrast to the other regions of India. In this region the people and the cultures of north and south intermingle.

The third region, farther south, near the port city of Chennai (formerly Madras), is the ancient land of the Tamils and the heartland of the Dravidian people. This southern peninsula has been free of any extended domination by invaders and has preserved the ancient traditions of Hinduism.

India's society is basically agrarian. Rapid strides in industrialization since 1947, when India became independent, have reduced the percentage of workers who make their living from agriculture to 51.1 percent, and agriculture now only contributes 16 percent of India's gross domestic product.<sup>1</sup> However, India is still an agricultural nation. The fortunes of Indian farmers, who live in thousands of tiny villages, depend on the erratic monsoon, which can cause disastrous floods or droughts. Although, with recent improvements in irrigation, varieties of seeds, and petroleum-based fertilizers, the government has succeeded in increasing the country's agricultural output, the majority of Indian farmers remain untouched by these developments. Efforts by India's political elites to raise the standard of living of the country's more than 1 billion people and to bring them into the modern age are complicated by sociocultural practices, rural poverty, and economic policies that favor industrialization, the middle class, economic growth, and rigid labor laws. The 2004 and 2009 national general elections indicated a commitment to develop the countryside and build infrastructure to help economic growth and the rural poor, but implementation of these goals has been uneven.

### **Sociocultural Plurality: Historical Roots**

Historians often divide Indian history into three distinct periods: Hindu, Muslim, and British. Each period left its impact on the cultural and sociopolitical structure of the country, leading to a composite culture enriched by these diverse sources.

#### *Ancient Hindu Heritage*

The origins of Hindu India can be traced back to the highly developed Indus Valley civilization of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, which thrived from 2000 to 1500 BC. It is now believed to be the source of many elements of Indian society and Hinduism. Archeological evidence discovered in the Indus Valley since the 1970s has challenged an earlier theory of Indian development that attributed Hinduism and Indian culture to the Aryans, who migrated to India from central Asia around 1500 BC, entering India through Afghanistan and the Hindu Kush mountains.

While the theory of the Aryan invasion attributes much of Indian culture and development to the Aryans, the archeological evidence from the Indus Valley has revealed that many of the contributions originally attributed to the Aryans existed before they arrived. In any case, the Sanskrit language developed. Philologists subsequently discovered Sanskrit to be Indo-European, or similar to the languages spoken by the people who settled in Iran and various parts of Europe. The languages spoken in present-day North India and in the western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat (along with the Sinhala language of Sri Lanka) belong to this Indo-European family of languages.

The development of Hinduism took centuries; the religion is evolutionary in nature and reflects a great deal of local and regional variation. Around 1200 BC the followers of Hinduism started composing hymns that were collected into the Vedas, the early Hindu scriptures. The Vedas are the “oldest known literature in any Indo-European language.”<sup>2</sup> Later, in the post-Vedic period, the early Indians began discussing fundamental philosophical questions and speculating about the nature of the universe and the meaning of human life. These discussions have been summed up in the Darshanas, the literature that sets forth the intellectual heritage of Hindus.

Although there is no one source of Hindu religious thought, the two great epics composed in Sanskrit, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, have profoundly influenced the religious, cultural, and literary worlds of the Hindus. These two epics describe the period between 1000 and 700 BC, and their heroes and heroines have been the subjects of writings in all Indian languages, including the languages of South India. Even today the stories in these two epics are told in Hindu families.

During the Vedic period a complex social structure developed. It is based on the caste system, in which the priests (Brahmins) and the warriors (Kshatriyas) occupied the highest positions, the traders (Vaishyas) the middle, and the menials (Sudras) the lowest. Despite repeated attacks on the caste system by subsequent reform-oriented social and religious movements, it still exists in India and has a strong impact on the sociopolitical behavior of Hindus.

Although ancient Hinduism was not egalitarian—it asserted that different classes were needed to perform different social functions—it nevertheless emphasized kindness and tolerance of other human beings. The ethics of Hinduism required ritualistic sacrifices but also emphasized such personal virtues as honesty, hospitality, and “piety, in the sense of such religious acts as worship, pilgrimage, and the feeding of cows and brahmins.”<sup>3</sup>

The most important challenge to the teachings of Hinduism and its hierarchical social order in ancient India came from Buddhism and Jainism, which were founded at almost the same time by two princes born into Kshatriya families. In

the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC, Gautama Buddha (563–483 BC) turned ascetic, propounded his teachings, and established a new order of followers. These followers emphasized truthfulness, nonviolence, eschewal of hatred, purity of heart, and love for fellow human beings, irrespective of caste or class considerations. Vardhaman Mahavir (599–527 BC), the founder of Jainism, was equally emphatic regarding personal virtues as opposed to the ritualistic sacrifices practiced by Hindu Brahmins, but Mahavir placed far greater emphasis on self-discipline and nonviolence than the Buddha had done. Buddhists and Jains survive today as small religious minorities in India.

The cultural heritage of Hindus was also influenced by pre-Islamic Persia and especially by ancient Greece. Even before Alexander the Great invaded India in 326 BC, it was in touch with Greece through Persia. Many scholars find close parallels between early Greek and Indian schools of philosophy. After the Greek invasion, several Greek imperial outposts were set up in India; many were eventually absorbed into the cultural groups of North India.

Although various Hindu kingdoms were founded from time to time in both the north and the south, they never established control over the entire subcontinent of India. Most of these kingdoms were regional in nature, and their founders were unable to build a type of government that could survive the demise of the ruling dynasty.

There was a limited discussion of theoretical principles and practices in Hindu India. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a well-known treatise on statecraft, but ancient India followed certain political principles of governance:

The king was not above the law (*dharmā*); he was expected to interpret it, enforce it, and follow it and to administer his kingdom.

There was a system to raise revenue.

The village was a democratic, self-governing entity in what was called the *panchayat* system.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence suggests the existence of both monarchical and republican forms of government. In some cases monarchs were advised by a council of ministers; in others they were absolute rulers. In essence the Hindu system was authoritarian and feudalistic in structure. Even in republics the power belonged to the elders of the tribes or to the leaders of the guilds and community groups rather than to the ordinary citizens. In any case, the Hindus, who had made rich contributions to the development of civilization in India, largely failed to display a constructive ability to build stable and lasting political institutions.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the tenth century AD, Hindu civilization had lost its dynamism and creativity. Hindu society had become stagnant and rigid. The

rulers of the various Hindu kingdoms displayed no sense of nationalism or patriotism and were unable to withstand the onslaught of hardy Muslim invaders from the northwest.

### *Muslim Heritage*

The advent of Islam in India proved a different story. Broadly speaking, the interaction between Muslims and Hindus in India followed three patterns. The first was terrorism: Muslim invaders came to plunder and slaughter the native population, leaving in their wake a trail of death and destruction. Mahmud of Ghazni, a Turk by descent, typifies this early aspect of India's contact with Islam. In AD 1000, he repeatedly invaded India in order to plunder the wealth of its towns and cities, particularly the fabulous offerings of gold and cash stored in Hindu temples. A devout Muslim, Mahmud concentrated his destructive tactics on nonbelievers. His example was later followed by Tamerlane, Nadir Shah of Persia, and Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan, although they were less religiously motivated than Mahmud and discriminated little between Muslim and Hindu gentry while looting. Most of these invaders went back to their native lands and did not settle in India.

The second pattern of Muslim invasion was characterized by conquest, settlement, and founding of kingdoms in parts of West and North India. This pattern is evident, for example, in the Arab conquest of Sindh in 712 by Muhammad bin Qasim, who founded an Arab kingdom and forced the Hindus to convert to Islam. This pattern of conquest was followed from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries until the establishment of the Mughal Empire. During this period, divided Hindu kingdoms fell, one after another, to the Muslim invaders of Turkish, Persian, and Afghan origin. Although the Muslims left a majority of the resident Hindu population alone, some were subjected to humiliation and discrimination and occasionally to torture and forcible conversion to Islam. Many of these Muslim kingdoms were short-lived and ruled by transient dynasties, and most of them were unstable. The early Muslim rulers failed to build an efficient system of administration, and the organizational abilities they displayed were no better than those of their Hindu predecessors.

The founding of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century represented the third pattern of interactions. Not only did the Mughal rulers conquer most of India, but they also established a stable and centralized administration directed from Lahore, Agra, and Delhi. The founder of the Mughal Empire was Babur, who conquered Delhi in 1526. But it was Babur's grandson, Akbar, who during his long rule (1556–1605) laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in North India. During his reign and those of his three successors, India achieved political stability unmatched in the history of India.

The Mughals were not only the new rulers but also the newest settlers in India. In the process they actively integrated the Hindus into both the civil and military administrations. In addition, they tried to reach across the religious divide to create a more coherent society by making matrimonial alliances with the Hindu princely houses of Rajasthan. Many of the Mughals, especially Akbar (who was highly rationalist in his orientation), were opposed to the orthodox and dogmatic Islamic traditions. They tried to create a composite Indian culture, incorporating both Hindu and Muslim values. But Islam, unlike many other religious movements of the past, was a young, vibrant, and aggressive religious force that could not be absorbed by Hinduism.<sup>6</sup>

Some progress was made during this period in uniting Hindus and Muslims in a composite culture. A powerful part of the Bhakti (devotional) movement criticized the orthodoxies of both Hindu Brahmins and Muslim ulema (religious scholars). Nanak, Kabir, and many other saint-poets emphasized a devotee's personal relationship with his god and tried to synthesize the teachings of Islam and Hinduism. Among the Muslims, similar efforts were made by the Sufis, who were influenced by Hindu mysticism.<sup>7</sup> As a result, many places of worship were established and frequented by both Muslims and Hindus. Yet, despite these efforts, the fundamental division and a sense of latent hostility persisted between Hindus and Muslims throughout India. No religious or social movement was able to bridge the deep gulf between the two communities.

The Mughal Empire brought progress in other areas, however. In addition to building forts and beautiful palaces and mausoleums, the Persian-speaking Mughal rulers spoke Urdu, a language rich in literary traditions and written in Persian script. It was spoken by cultivated people in and around Delhi, the principal seat of the Mughal Empire. But even though both Hindus and Muslims contributed to the development of Urdu literature, a majority of Hindus considered Urdu and its literature to be symbols of Muslim culture.

In contemporary India Hindu nationalists regard the Muslim period of Indian history as one of alien rule and subjugation. For them the desecration of Hindu temples and the slaughter of innocent followers of Hinduism are too painful to be forgotten, and the defeats of Hindu kings at the hands of Muslim invaders are shameful episodes of Indian history. The religious tolerance of Akbar, they assert, was only an exception, for his successors gave up this policy. Instead, following Islamic orthodoxy, they prohibited interreligious marriages, pulled down Hindu temples, and even imposed *jizya* (poll tax) on Hindus. Hindu nationalists today have disowned Urdu language and literature and instead consider Hindi to be the language of North India.

In contrast, secularist Hindus and nationalist Indian Muslims emphasize the positive side of the Muslim rule in India. They look upon the Mughal Empire,

with its architectural achievements and Urdu literary traditions, as an important part of India's cultural heritage. For example, Jawaharlal Nehru, a leader of the freedom movement and the first prime minister of India, displayed a high regard for the Muslim contributions to Indian civilization. Nevertheless, the two contradictory attitudes toward the Muslim period persist in the contemporary politics of India.

### **British Rule and Contact with the West**

The era of British supremacy, the third period of Indian history, was firmly established in 1858, when the queen-in-council took over direct administration of India from the British East India Company. British rule brought India face-to-face with a dynamic, creative, and vibrant culture. The British displayed far better administrative and organizational skills than did any of the earlier ruling classes of India. Not only did they establish control over the country and achieve territorial integration, but they also founded a centralized administration that could not be challenged easily.

The territorial integration of the country was strengthened by the building of an extensive network of highways, railroads, and post and telegraph systems. Such a system not only enabled the British to exploit India as a vast market for the sale of its manufactured goods but also gave the Indians a mobility within their own country that they had never before experienced. Trade between different parts of India expanded rapidly, and by the time the British left, India had developed a national economy that strengthened the unity among its different regions.

The efficient administrative machinery built by the British and the merit-based system of recruitment to the bureaucracy they introduced are two of the important traditions the Indians inherited from this period. The foundation of this system of administration at the district level had been laid earlier by the Mughals, who appointed local and provincial administrators to act as agents of the central government. But the British introduced a high degree of uniformity in both the civil and the judicial administrations; in addition, the administrative system possessed objectivity and impersonality, qualities not found in the previous system of administration. Such a system established rule of law, respect for personal liberty, and the equality of all persons of Indian origin, regardless of religion. Administratively, India became one—an achievement unparalleled in the political history of India.

The Western system of education brought a slow though radical transformation of the value structure and behavior patterns of Indian intellectuals. The new system of civil and judicial administration made acquiring English language and

education a valuable avenue for achieving political influence, economic power, and social mobility. Thus it came as no surprise when thousands of Indians started flocking to the newly established institutions of higher learning that provided instruction in English. This system of education produced a new class of professionals and enlarged the size of the urban middle class; it also exposed Indian elites to the constitutional liberalism and democratic socialism propounded by English utilitarians and Fabian socialists. The democratic ideals of liberty, equality, and social justice gradually took root among the members of the intellectual establishment of the country. In short, the knowledge of English brought the upper classes of India into contact with the West, injecting a new dynamism into an ancient civilization.

The British impact, however, was not uniform throughout India. Princely India, with a few notable exceptions, remained feudal and isolated, and many regions of the country were slow to respond to the new ideas and values. In some parts of the subcontinent, the feudal order was dismantled, but in other areas it survived.

In the nation-building and modernization process, the unevenness of the British impact created problems for the elites in the postindependence period. The pace of modernization and development of a national identity has been faster in those communities that had a higher exposure to the West.

### **Quest for National Identity: The Cultural Revival and the Nationalist Movement**

One of the most remarkable developments of the British period of Indian history was the growth of Indian nationalism. Many Indian leaders had received their training in England and understood the importance of liberal values. Their negative view of British racialism and domination, however, led them to mobilize the people against British colonial rule.

The English system of education and contact with the West brought the Indian elites in touch with nationalism as an ideological force at a time when it was at its zenith in Europe. Moreover, the English language provided communication links among the urban elites, who originated from different provinces and therefore spoke different native languages. Members of this elite class rose above the ascriptive and primordial ties characteristic of traditional India and propagated a national vision of India.

Nationalism as a movement was preceded by cultural revivalism and a social-reform movement. Contact with the West through the British forced Indians, especially Hindus, to examine critically the structure of Hindu society. Through this process of self-examination, Hindu elites became painfully aware

of the deficiencies of Hindu society, which was permeated with social customs that could not be justified on rational or even religious grounds. The elites saw Hindu society as dominated by superstitions, idolatry, magical myths, and many reprehensible social customs. If Hinduism was to save itself from the onslaught of Western culture and proselytizing Christian missions supported by the British Empire, it needed not only to rid itself of social evils but also to reorganize its structure on a more rational basis. Consequently, an upsurge of social-reform movements occurred in different parts of the country. Some reformers sought a synthesis of Hinduism, Western liberalism, and select principles of Christianity, while others emphasized the glories of Hindu India and hoped to restore to it the essential Vedic values they felt had been lost in the course of Hindu subjugation during Muslim rule. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774–1833), a Bengali thinker and reformer, exemplified the first group of reformers. A learned person who had studied the scriptures of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism and knew many languages, including Sanskrit, Arabic, English, Hebrew, and Persian, he was deeply influenced by the rationalist philosophies of the West. He strongly disapproved of idol worship, the caste system, the inferior status of women, untouchability, and other social evils of Hinduism. In order to propagate his reformist views, he founded the Brahmo Samaj, an organization that contributed a great deal to social reform and to the stimulation of cultural and intellectual activities in Bengal and several other parts of India.

The second type of social-reform movement, seeking social reforms coupled with Hindu revivalism, was reflected in the writings and activities of Swami Dayanand (1824–1883), a Gujarati Brahmin who sought to legitimize the reform of Hindu society on the basis of a reinterpretation of the Vedas. These ancient Hindu scriptures, Dayanand felt, not only contained sacred knowledge but were the source of all philosophical and scientific thought as well. He glorified the Hindu past and sought to purify contemporary Hinduism by getting rid of the caste system, untouchability, idol worship, and other superstitions. Such evil social practices, he stressed, were introduced into Hinduism by selfish Brahmins, who used them to perpetuate their dominance of Hindu society. In his quest to create a sense of pride among Hindus, he virulently attacked both Islam and Christianity. Dayanand was a staunch nationalist who thought social reform should precede *swarajya* (self-rule).

The Arya Samaj, a social-reform movement founded by Dayanand in 1875, became closely associated with educational activities, especially with the spread of English education through the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) College movement in northwestern India. In subsequent years many leaders of the Arya Samaj movement joined hands with the proponents of Hindu nationalism.

In South India, the Theosophical Society became instrumental in both cultural revival and social reform among Hindus. The society worked to establish the superiority of Hindu philosophy over Western philosophy. Annie Besant (1847–1933), an Englishwoman deeply influenced by Hindu philosophy, became a major spokesperson for the society; she helped popularize its teachings and create a high degree of cultural pride among middle-class Hindus of South India.

But another group of reformers consisted of intellectuals and professionals who were deeply influenced by the rationalist thinking of the West. Although committed to preserving the basic institutions of Hindu society and its value system, they believed that it needed reform and reorganization in order to face the challenge of modern times. They held that patience, endurance, and understanding were needed to accomplish such changes, not a frontal assault on the traditional Hindu leadership. They sought these gradual changes by founding educational institutions, cultural organizations, research foundations, scientific and religious study groups, reading rooms, libraries, and so on. Justice M. G. Ranade (1842–1901) in Maharashtra and Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) in Bengal represented this more secular route to social reform among Hindus.

Originally, contact with the West had created a sense of cultural inferiority among the English-educated Hindus. Swami Vivekanand (1863–1902) and his associates sought to counter this image by comparing Hinduism and Western culture. A powerful speaker and charismatic personality, Vivekanand called on Hindus to take pride in their spiritual heritage and attacked Western culture as inferior. For him, “the backbone, the foundation and the bedrock of India’s national life was India’s spiritual genius,” which the West did not possess.<sup>8</sup>

The overall consequence was an unprecedented cultural revival among Hindus. Interest in classical Sanskrit writings and Hindu art and philosophy was stimulated by an outpouring of European scholarship in praise of India’s cultural heritage. It was not surprising, therefore, that the glorification of Indian history became a staple of writings in various regional languages of India. In addition, literary elites and political leaders used Hindu religious symbols to arouse patriotism. They identified Indian nationalism with Hinduism and deified the motherland. Recollection of the glories of the past was essential to the creation of a sense of national respect and a new national identity.

But in this process of cultural revival and resurgence of Hindu nationalism, Muslims were left out. Initially, the Indian Muslims reacted to British rule by withdrawing into the shell of their own community and isolating themselves from the new ideas that British rule generated in Indian society. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) brought the Muslims into the modern world by es-

establishing in 1875 the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh (now known as Aligarh Muslim University). Syed Ahmad Khan strongly emphasized revival of Muslims' pride in their heritage, preservation of the Muslim subnational identity, and reconciliation of Muslim interests with British rule in India. Aligarh produced the main elements of the Western-educated Muslim intelligentsia, who became the vanguard of Muslim separatism in Indian politics.

In a politically and administratively united India, the cultural revitalization movement, as in other parts of South Asia, especially in Sri Lanka, led to the rise of a well-organized nationalist movement. The impetus for the organization of a national association that would speak on behalf of all Indians was provided, ironically, by the racially motivated policies of the British government, which discriminated against Indians in their own land. Even though, for instance, recruitment of Indians into the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the most prestigious bureaucratic organization in British India, was promised as early as 1858, all efforts were made to block the Indians' entry into such services. When an Indian such as Surendranath Banerjea (1848–1926) was successful in entering the ICS, he was dismissed on flimsy grounds. Indians faced further humiliation when Englishmen living in India were successful in withdrawing the Ilbert Bill of 1883, which had permitted the trial of a European in a court presided over by an Indian judge. Events such as this forced Indians to seek a national forum not only to articulate their demands and to protest against this discrimination but also to consolidate their ranks to force the British Government of India's attention to their needs. The result was the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

From its very inception, the Indian National Congress became intertwined with the nationalist movement in the country. This movement underwent several phases, however, and revealed considerable tension among its various leaders and factions with respect to both the ultimate goals of the movement and the methods to achieve them. Fortunately for India, its struggle for freedom was spread over a long period; the leaders of the movement were thus permitted the opportunity to debate openly the kind of society and polity to build once India achieved independence. By contrast, the Pakistan movement was not only single-issue oriented but dominated by a single powerful leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who displayed little tolerance for dissent within his ranks. Not surprisingly, then, the Indian political elites at the time of India's independence were much better prepared to tackle the issues of institution building and economic development than were the leaders of Pakistan.

The first phase of the nationalist movement was dominated by the well-to-do segment of Indian society. The leaders representing this segment were steeped in British traditions and education and depended on the British sense

of justice; they sought to ameliorate the conditions of Indians through an appeal to the British sense of fairness. Their main objective was to seek greater representation of educated Indians in the civil services and to introduce representative institutions at the provincial and local levels. They did not entertain the hope of complete independence from British rule; rather, they believed that continued association with the British Empire was in the interests of Indians. Surendranath Banerjea, who was twice elected president of the Indian National Congress, asserted that English civilization was the “noblest the world has ever seen, a civilization fraught with unspeakable blessings to the people of India.”<sup>9</sup> These nationalists took pride in their citizenship in the British Empire and sought to propagate values of British liberalism throughout the country. During this period such men as Justice M. G. Ranade (1842–1901), Dadabhai Nauroji (1825–1917), and Pherozshah Mehta (1845–1915), all products of the British system of education, led the Indian National Congress and pressured the British government to address the problems. The British tried to defuse this pressure by passing the Government of India Act of 1909, which expanded political participation and electoral representation at both the provincial and central government levels. Representatives to the provincial legislative councils were to be elected by voters holding property or having high educational qualifications. This measure also introduced separate representation for Muslims, who were to elect their representatives from within their own community.

In the second nationalist phase, starting in 1905, the struggle for control of the Indian National Congress was divided between the moderates, led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), and the extremists, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920). These two leaders, both Maharashtrian Brahmins, differed not only in personality and ideological orientation but also in their approach to achieving self-rule for the country. Gokhale was a disciple of Ranade, a moderate, and even though he was much more vocal in his criticism of British government than Ranade, he believed in constitutional methods. He did not hesitate to work with British rulers, and he tried to represent Indians in the Imperial Legislative Council, where he was a member.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his extremist associates, on the other hand, did not trust the British government. Tilak was a Hindu nationalist and an ardent believer in the superiority of Hindu culture over Western culture. In his opposition to the moderates, Tilak was supported by Lala Lajpat Rai of the Punjab and Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose of Bengal, militant extremists who provided philosophical justification for the use of violence against the alien rulers of India. Unlike the moderates, the extremists asserted that political freedom could be won only by waging war against the enemy. Whereas the moderates believed that they would be able to achieve self-government with the

blessings of British rulers, the extremist Tilak declared, “Swaraj [self-rule] is my birthright and I will have it.” Also, unlike Gokhale and his associates, the extremists openly used Hindu religious symbols and traditions to stimulate nationalist sentiments among the masses. They never stopped attacking the moderates for their subservience to Western culture.

In 1907 the extremists lost out to Gokhale and his moderate associates in their struggle to control the Congress organization. But British suppression, Tilak’s confinement in Mandalay, the arrests of Pal and Ghose, and the political exile of Lala Lajpat Rai turned the extremists into popular heroes. By 1915, the two factions had reconciled, and Tilak and his associates once again became active within the Congress Party. The united nationalist leadership of the Indian National Congress demanded, and was promised by the British, a large measure of self-government at the end of World War I.

This second nationalist phase also witnessed the rise of self-assertiveness among the minorities. The emergence of the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress onto center stage in Indian politics and the fear that Hindus would become the rulers of the country owing to their overwhelming majority in the population spurred the Muslims into political activity, resulting in the organization of the All-India Muslim League in 1906. The Muslims demanded separate representation and allied themselves with the British, seeking their favor and protection against what the Muslims perceived as the aggressiveness of the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress. Given the pluralistic structure of Indian society, the rise of such particularistic movements was not surprising. However, the leaders of the nationalist movement underestimated the strength of these subcultural and regional movements in perceiving the problem of national integration to be primarily a political one.

The end of World War I brought about a radical transformation in the political expectations and aspirations of Indians. The British government responded by enacting the Government of India Act of 1919. This act introduced partial responsible government in the provinces; increased the number of elected representatives in the Central Legislative Assembly; gave separate representation to the Sikhs, the Europeans settled in India, and the Anglo-Indians (Eurasians); and extended voting rights to almost 10 percent of the adult population of the country. Even though these steps provided opportunities for Indians to learn about parliamentary government, to organize voters for electoral purposes, and to gain experience in self-government, they did not satisfy the political aspirations of the nationalist leaders. Their alienation from the British rulers in India increased due to continuation of the repressive policies that the government had adopted during the war. The British government still possessed enormous powers to restrict civil liberties, imprison politically active

Indians, and declare martial law. Increased protests against such repressive measures after World War I resulted in a declaration of martial law and the Amritsar tragedy. This brutal action shocked the Indian nationalists, but the House of Lords, ignoring Indian sentiments, passed a resolution in 1920 in appreciation of General Reginald Dyer's services to the empire.

The conflict between the Indian extremists and the British left the moderates outside the mainstream of the nationalist movement. As the extremist faction led by Tilak took over the Congress organization in 1917, the moderates withdrew from the party and founded their own organization, the Indian Liberal Federation. Tilak then became the undisputed leader of the nationalists. After Tilak's death in 1920, the leadership passed into the hands of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), who rejected both the moderates' gradualist approach to political reforms and the extremists' philosophical justification of violence. His nonviolent approach, using mass mobilization and peaceful defiance of British authority, radicalized Indian politics far beyond the expectations of Tilak's followers.

During his twenty years in South Africa practicing law among Indian settlers, Gandhi developed his concept of *satyagraha* (loosely translated as "soul force") and the technique of civil disobedience. On his return to India, before he plunged into Indian politics, Gandhi traveled widely throughout the country, observing the culture, traditions, and living conditions of the people. He felt the leaders of the nationalist movement were out of touch with the people who lived in India's many villages. He realized that in order to win freedom from Britain, the nationalist movement required a mass base; it needed to involve the people living in the countryside. Accordingly, Gandhi not only established his headquarters in rural India but also sent the nationalist leaders and party workers to live in the villages, to undertake social services, and to lead simple and austere lives. He enforced strict discipline, emphasized nonviolence, and demanded sacrifices from his followers. This pacifist approach, austere and rigorous life, and complete identification with the common man earned Gandhi the saintly title of Mahatma (great soul).

Gandhi called for peaceful breaching of unjust laws; protesting through strikes, fasts, and noncooperation with the authorities; and boycotting not only imported goods but also British educational institutions. But he insisted on peaceful defiance of authority, seeking arrest by breaking laws. Soon, thanks to his charismatic personality and simple and saintly lifestyle, Gandhi had built a formidable nationwide following for both himself and the Indian National Congress. Under his leadership the elitist nationalist movement became a mass movement. Although the top leaders of the Congress organization were still English-educated, upper-class Indians, they were nevertheless able to identify

with the plight of the common man. In addition, the second tier of leadership at the provincial and local levels was more attuned to the sensitivities of the masses than any other group in the country. A well-organized vernacular press and an articulate vernacular-speaking intelligentsia established strong links between these national leaders at the center of Indian politics and the mass of Indians living on the periphery.

Thus began the third phase of the nationalist movement, in which the nationalist leadership, with an expanded mass base, started to press for complete independence. During its Lahore session in 1929, the Indian National Congress, no longer willing to accept dominion status and membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, adopted a resolution demanding complete independence for India. During this phase of the nationalistic movement, Gandhi launched several mass drives: the noncooperation movement of 1921, the breaking of salt laws (the Salt March) in 1930, and the civil disobedience of 1933. Each of these movements succeeded in enhancing mass political consciousness and demonstrated Gandhi's ability to mobilize the country, and many young and leftist leaders criticized their sudden suspension. The British government responded to them by passing the Government of India Act of 1935, which established complete provincial autonomy and proposed partial responsible government at the center. These concessions were no doubt a substantial improvement on the institutional setup created by the Government of India Act of 1919, but they were too little and too late. The nationalist movement had planted deep roots in Indian soil, and Gandhi's Indian National Congress had captured the imagination of the masses. The popularity of the Congress became evident when, in the elections of 1937, it won the majority of legislative seats in six provinces; it had become the single largest party and formed the government in eight of eleven provinces in British rule. For the next twenty-eight months (1937–1939), when the party's leadership ran the provincial governments, it not only gained administrative experience but also made substantial progress in social and economic programs for the masses.

It should be noted, however, that while the Indian National Congress represented the nationalist aspirations of a majority of Indians, several smaller movements represented the aspirations of religious and regional minorities that could not be absorbed by the nationalist group led by Mahatma Gandhi. The Muslim League, for example, under the able leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, became a powerful rival of the Indian National Congress, claiming to be the sole representative of the Indian Muslims. Similarly, in Kashmir, the National Conference, under the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, and in the Punjab, the Akali Dal, led by Master Tara Singh, represented the Kashmiri Muslims and the Punjabi Sikhs, respectively. During the 1940s the

subnationalist movements gained momentum and became a major challenge to the nationalist goals of the leaders of the Indian National Congress.

The final phase of the nationalist movement (1940–1947) was dominated by the Congress leaders' two concerns: complete independence from British rule and preservation of the territorial unity of India through accommodation of the aspirations of these subnationalist movements, especially the leaders of the Muslim League.

By 1942 it had become evident to the leaders of the Indian National Congress that the British government was in no mood to meet its demands for independence despite the Congress' offer to support the British war efforts against Japan and Germany. In August 1942, therefore, Mahatma Gandhi planned to launch a massive "Quit India" movement. But before the leaders could organize it, the British government arrested many of the leaders of the Indian National Congress, including Gandhi. The British were always baffled by the success of Gandhi's methods of nonviolence and uncertain as to how to deal with them. However, a preemptive strike by the government in August 1942 saved it from the unpleasant task of brutalizing Gandhi's nonviolent soldiers. Despite some disruption of the administration, order was restored in a short time.

While the Congress leaders were in jail, the leaders of such subnationalist parties as the Muslim League and the Akali Party of the Sikhs were able to consolidate their positions within their respective communities. Toward the end of World War II, it became evident to the British government that it would not be able to keep India under control and would have to reach an agreement with the nationalist leaders. Hence, in 1944 Gandhi and many of his associates were released.

Once out of jail, the nationalist leaders confronted not only the prospect of independence but also the possibility that the country might become divided on a religious basis. In 1940 the Muslim League had demanded the creation of a Muslim-majority state out of British India consisting of provinces in which the Muslims formed a majority. The Sikhs, for their part, sought the creation of a Sikh homeland in Punjab, where the Sikh religion had originated. The leaders of the Indian National Congress were ill prepared to face the challenges of rival nationalist groups based on religion; their nationalist ideology, in fact, sought to downgrade the importance of religious divisions within the Indian population.

During the 1945–1946 elections, the Muslim League emerged as the representative body of the Muslims of India, capturing 446 of 496 provincial seats in the Muslim-majority provinces of the country. In addition, the Muslim League launched a massive campaign to press its demand for the division of the country. This action resulted in widespread Hindu-Muslim rioting; indeed,

there emerged a real threat of civil war in India. Ultimately, the Congress leaders agreed in 1947 to a division of the country on the basis of religion. The demand for Pakistan was conceded, Punjab and Bengal were divided, Muslim-majority areas went to Pakistan, and the rest became parts of India. Such religious and ethnic minorities as the Sikhs were not able at the time to manage sovereign states for themselves. On August 15, 1947, India became independent from Britain. However, the division of the country was accompanied by massive Hindu-Muslim rioting and migration in which an estimated half million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs perished.

### **Quest for Institution Building and Modernization: The Development of New Goals**

Even before independence, Indian elites frequently discussed questions regarding the future setup of an independent India. The dominant sector of the Indian National Congress, the modernists, agreed on the form of government they wanted. Their experience with representative government during British rule and their observation of the parliamentary system in the United Kingdom fixed their choice on the Westminster model of government.

The elites were convinced that if people could participate in the political process on a secular basis, national unity would be consolidated, and the national identity that the cultural revival and nationalist movement had nourished would be strengthened. The establishment of a liberal democracy in India thus became the modernists' new goal. Freedom of speech and expression was also to become an essential attribute. Conscious of the social and economic disparities in Indian society, the leaders believed that the ideals of democratic socialism would help them achieve some degree of social and economic equality in the society, with the state actively helping the poor, the backward, and the helpless. In subsequent chapters we assess their success or failure in fulfilling these ideals.

With independence, India needed modernization and economic development. The nationalist leaders inherited from the British rulers a primarily agricultural economy; an overwhelming majority (80 percent) of the population depended on the land to earn a living. Furthermore, Indian agriculture was one of the most inefficient and backward systems in the world. Indians were hardly able to feed themselves. The land was tormented by frequent droughts, famines, floods, and pestilence. Most of the industries the British had set up were established merely to meet consumers' need for cotton textiles, tea, sugar, and jute. Despite India's possession of certain strategic raw materials, such as iron ore, coal, mica, bauxite, magnesite, chromite, titanium, and refractory

materials, the country lacked a significant capital goods industry. It was heavily dependent on Great Britain and other industrialized countries of the West for its machinery and engineering goods.

The elites differed as to the approach they should undertake to raise the living standards of the people. There were two main viewpoints—one advocated by Gandhi and his followers, the other by a more modernist and secular-minded group. Gandhi's approach was the product of his moral and religious orientations. He strongly disapproved of the profit motive, favored strict limits on private property, and opposed the tyranny of machines and the ruthless competition of a market economy. He also favored the development of agricultural and consumers' cooperatives. According to Gandhi, India needed to maintain its agricultural, rural-based economy, while redeveloping and expanding its traditional cottage and small-scale industries, which would once again make the village society self-sufficient. His vision of India also recognized the need for low consumption of resources and development of indigenous technologies suitable for the local environment and culture. Gandhi's strategy of economic development would have resulted in a higher investment of resources in rural India. Such a vision of India, however, was incompatible with the quest to develop a modern industrial state.

Jawaharlal Nehru and his modernist associates, influenced by socialist thought, disagreed with the Gandhian approach to the economic development of India. Nehru looked to science and technology and investment in capital goods industries as the key elements in the transformation of the character of Indian society. These modernists attributed underdevelopment of societies such as that of India to the insufficiency of technological development. They believed centralized planning, increased output of technically skilled labor, and importation of technical know-how would ultimately make India a technologically self-sufficient country. In such a system the state would play a key role; it would set the development priorities. Although no wholesale takeover of industries and businesses would occur, and although private initiative and investment would be allowed, the private sector of the economy was to be subservient to public needs, which the government alone was capable of defining.

Of these two ideological approaches to India's economic and industrial development, the political elites preferred Nehru's to Gandhi's. As a result, the new goal became the development of an extensive scientific and technological infrastructure based on the model of advanced industrialized societies.

In sum, India's sociocultural background, history, and geographic and demographic diversity made the task of nation building and modernization extremely difficult for its leaders. Reflecting the religious division of the country, India's political leaders—in contrast to those of Pakistan—refused to adopt the

religion of the majority as the state religion. Instead, they opted to build a modern nation-state on the twin principles of democracy and socialism. The development of Indian socialism during the Nehru years (1947–1964) and thereafter produced a pattern of extensive state intervention in India's economic life and a system of bureaucratic and political controls that impeded private-sector development and India's participation in the global economy. India took the path of economic reforms in the early 1990s, a decade after China did, and resistance to reforms by Indian leftists inhibited the process. This shows the role of ideology in India's economic-development policies since 1947.

### Social Structure and Political Culture

The stability of a political system depends on the support it enjoys from its citizens. In a society divided by religion, language, region, and competing economic, social, and political interests and demands, pressure from below continuously affects the political behavior of Indian leaders and the government. A description of India's social structure and the nature of its political culture can help us understand the conditions under which the country operates.

India is an ancient civilization but a new nation in the making; the values and attitudes of its citizens, the nature of its political culture, and its political processes are influenced by both its traditional past and its contemporary experiences.

Through a complex network of primary and secondary structures, the people of India have successfully transmitted several key elements of their cultural and political structure from generation to generation. It is through this process of socialization that India has developed its distinct political culture.

#### *The Dominant Cultural Pattern: The Hindu Worldview*

Despite the confluence of the various cultures that have affected the Indian people, the Hindu worldview constitutes the dominant cultural force in the society. The religious teachings of Hinduism and its belief system deeply influence the social behavior and political attitudes of its followers.

Hindus have often been described as otherworldly and fatalistic, because Hinduism teaches that an individual is bound by the cycle of birth and death. Karma (one's actions in life) determines the nature of one's next life. In order to escape the earthly cycles of birth and death, an individual needs salvation through an ultimate union of his soul (*atman*) with the Supreme Reality (*paramatman*).

Even though acquisition of material wealth and a desire for enjoyment and reproduction are important for human survival, spiritual salvation through this union of the soul with the Supreme Reality is superior to all other life goals.

**TABLE 2.1 Religious Distribution of the Population of India (2001 Census)**

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,244	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Others	6,367,214	0.7

*Source:* Census of India, 2001, "Religious Composition," [www.censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2011/India\\_at\\_glance/religion.aspx](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2011/India_at_glance/religion.aspx) (retrieved February 26, 2008).

NOTE: The Census of India, 2011, has not at time of writing (November 2012) released data about Indian religions. For general information about the 2011 census, see <http://censusindia.gov.in>.

Therefore, to Hindus the quest for political power and secular activities ought to be secondary to spiritual affairs. In actual life, however, there is a considerable gap between religious prescriptions and an individual's behavior. Thus, despite their emphasis on spiritual values, Hindus continue to pursue vigorously material goals in their lives.

Hinduism, however, is known for its flexibility. Because there is no organized church or clerical authority among the Hindus as there is among the Christians, there is no uniform enforcement of the rules among Hindus. God may be perceived and worshiped in many ways. Not only may individuals choose different paths to reach the Supreme Reality, but they are also free to worship deities of their own choosing. Hindus are therefore divided into numerous sects, each with its own deity, temples, and rituals. This kind of flexibility is nowhere more evident than in the villages of India, where the majority of Indians live. Their belief system enables Hindus to live side by side with the followers of such other religions as Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity, often without friction. (For distribution of population by religion, see Table 2.1.) Peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims, however, has been difficult to achieve.

### *The Caste System*

India's traditional social order divides Hindus into a hierarchical structure consisting of four classifications, or *varna*: the Brahmins (priests and custodians of sacred knowledge), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (traders), and Sudras (manual laborers and menial workers). In this order the Brahmins occupy the top position and the Sudras the lowest. In the past a person born into a particular caste rarely had an opportunity to change status within the society, re-

ardless of his or her talents or achievements. In rural India the system created a highly segregated residential pattern in which the Sudras lived on the outskirts of the villages and towns, away from the high-caste neighborhoods. Some sections of Sudras were treated as “untouchable” by the members of the upper castes because their hereditary occupations (such as scavenging and leather working) were considered unclean. Even after the legal abolition of untouchability in postindependence India, it is still recognized and prevalent in many sections of Hindu society, especially in rural India. Although in theory Hinduism may be one of the most tolerant and flexible religions in the world, in its social order it displays a high degree of rigidity. Still, India’s Dalits (formerly “untouchables”) have gained political power and social mobility in significant ways. Dalits have served as chief ministers and federal government ministers and as a major-political-party president, a president of India, and a chief justice of the Supreme Court. They are influential now in university administrations. India’s caste system is not static. It is a dynamic force in Indian politics and society.<sup>10</sup>

The Hindu caste system does not adhere to this simple fourfold division. The four *varna* are actually formal names for an organizational structure consisting of 3,000 castes into which the present Hindu society is divided. In rural India, where the caste system is most pervasive, a close interrelationship exists among social status, economic power, and occupational divisions. In the thousands of villages, the landowners traditionally make up the upper castes—the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins. In South India the situation is different in that non-Brahmins constitute the landowning castes. Money lending, banking, and trading are done mostly by the Banias, a term used almost interchangeably with Vaishyas. Landholding and well-to-do castes are traditionally expected to look after the well-being of the members of lower castes, who in turn perform services for the upper castes. In this kind of *jajmani* (superordinate-subordinate) relationship, both the upper and lower castes have rights and obligations vis-à-vis each other. Both the caste obligations and occupational differentiations have religious sanctions. In this way each caste group is obligated to fulfill its role in the society, whatever its status and the nature of the work it is obliged to perform.

The status, functions, and organizations of the castes (*jatis*) vary considerably from one region of the country to another. Many of the castes are confined to a subregion of the country and others to a locality or village. Yet, despite these variations, the caste system is deeply embedded in the subconscious of the individual Hindu. Indeed, caste affiliations influence and often determine the social and political behavior of all citizens.

Organization of the members of a caste to protect and promote their common sociopolitical interests has been a frequent phenomenon. Caste group activity has long been in evidence, even since before the introduction of

representative institutions in India. Since independence in 1947, some castes have become highly politicized. Whether the castes infiltrate the parties or the parties use existing caste associations to mobilize voters is debatable, but there is little doubt that candidates for public office, regardless of their ideological orientations and party affiliations, are attuned to the sensitivities of caste groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the selection of candidates for political offices, the parties are deeply influenced by the caste composition of the population of an electoral district.

In recent years electoral politics has enhanced caste consciousness among the voters and led to the formation of political parties that represent a group of castes with common interests. Such particularistic parties have come to play an important role both in state and national politics.

Castes and subcastes are important instruments of political socialization. In the formation of the political attitudes of young adults and children, the caste affiliation plays an important role. Empirical evidence suggests that persons originating from the upper castes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas) have a higher sense of personal efficacy and interpersonal trust; they also seem to have a stronger commitment to the operation of democracy than do the members of the Jats (an agriculturist subcaste) and the low castes. There is a clear tendency on the part of children and young adults to identify themselves with the national political leaders originating from their own caste rather than with those from other castes. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, is a political hero more favored by the members of his own caste, the Vaishya, than, say, by the Jats.

### *Family and Kinship*

Indians' sociopolitical and economic behavior is likely to be influenced not only by caste but by family and kinship group. The basic unit of Hindu society in particular, and of religious communities of India in general, is not the individual but the extended or joint family, which may consist of three generations living under the same roof.

### *Minority Religions and Subgroup Identities*

Although Hinduism is the religion of the majority of Indians, important religious minorities, such as Muslims and Sikhs, have been able to preserve their group identities.

Religion and aspects of cultural life, such as language, art, literature, and social institutions, become intertwined and lead to the development of powerful group identities that often inhibit the development of a cohesive national political community.

*Ideology of Nationalism: Various Versions*

There are two dominant versions of the pan-Indian ideology of nationalism: Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism. Indian nationalism is a vital element of the ideology on which the Indian state was founded. Basically liberal and humanitarian, it recognizes the pluralistic nature of the society and rejects the idea of homogenizing the society by eliminating religious and cultural diversities. Its founders recognized that individuals in India belong to a variety of communities based on caste, religion, occupation, region, and a host of other factors. They were, furthermore, aware that such communities enjoyed a great degree of autonomy. The founders held that even though a majority of the country's population was Hindu, the Hindus have a tradition of tolerance and the capacity to absorb the ideas, values, and norms of behavior of other groups. Hindu religious traditions not only allow a wide range of sectarian diversity but also teach respect for all religions. These traditions enabled such minority religions as Islam and Christianity and such cultures as Greek, Turkish, Iranian, and others to contribute to the development of the composite culture of the country.

Because it was deeply influenced by European liberal-rationalist thought, Indian nationalism was committed to the reform and rationalization of the structure and organization of the society. It held that the state authority could be used to reform a traditional society. Middle-class elites, exponents of Indian nationalism, were wedded to the ideals of modern science, industrialization of the country, distributive justice, protection of the rights and cultures of ethnic and religious minorities, and development of a secular democratic polity based on the British system of parliamentary government.

Starting in the 1980s, however, many of the vital elements of Indian nationalism, developed and nurtured both before and after India's independence, came to be challenged by Hindu nationalists on both practical and intellectual bases. Although Hindu nationalism originated in the Hindu cultural revival movement of the nineteenth century and developed as a reaction against Indian nationalism, only in the recent past has it emerged as a major ideological force in the politics of the country. Hindu nationalists advocate a single, homogeneous national identity for the whole country, rejecting the idea that India is a multicultural and multinational state. To them, the term "Hindu" has a geocultural, not a religious, connotation. For Hindu nationalists the political-territorial concept of nationalism without its Hindu cultural content, as advocated by Nehru and his associates, is incapable of maintaining the unity of the country. For them the secular concept of Indian national identity, based

on an alien ideology of socialism, is limited to the state and lacks those psychic elements that bind the people as a nation. They argue that common economic interests do not give birth to a nation; people's love for their land is based on common traditions and culture. For the Hindu nationalists, Bharat, or India, is not only their motherland; it is also their holy land. They believe that all Indians, irrespective of their religion, should take pride in India's ancient cultural heritage.

Hindu nationalists are also influenced by British ideologies that emphasize equality before the law, a uniform civil code, democracy, universal suffrage, and the system of representative government. Contrary to Indian nationalists, Hindu nationalists are opposed to providing special rights or protections for minorities. Hindu nationalism has been blamed in the Hindu-Muslim killings (e.g., Gujrat, 2002), but in some instances, such as the Mumbai railway blasts (2006) and the terrorist attack in 2008 in Mumbai, the two communities have helped each other.

### *New Status Symbols and the Role of Political Power in Social Mobility*

Despite the persistence of traditional values, caste stratification, and belief in the superiority of the sacred over the secular, new secular values and status symbols are becoming increasingly important. The criterion for measuring a person's success has become the amount of money that person has rather than his or her social origin. Higher social origin may help in establishing contacts for material advancement, but social origin alone does not always guarantee higher status and success. Persons of lower social origin who are successful in accumulating wealth may actually be able to earn the respect of their fellow citizens now that social origin is somewhat less significant.

The ongoing industrial and agricultural revolutions and the introduction of the electoral process based on universal suffrage have increased the opportunities for social and economic mobility as well as political participation. Education, knowledge of the English language, political power, material wealth, and higher social status have become interdependent. Higher education, as in other modern societies, is considered a primary means of achieving upward social mobility. In India an understanding of English and proficiency in writing and speaking it give a person a head start. Although many people might criticize a westernized Indian, in urban areas they can hardly disguise their eagerness to accept him as their role model. If they cannot adopt his values and lifestyle in their own lives, they would like their children to emulate him. Moreover, the image of such an Indian as an ideal to emulate has been reinforced by television, movies, magazines, and newspapers. Both the politically influential and

the nouveaux rich send their children to the exclusive private schools that provide education in English.

With the diversification of political activity in India, the competition for elective positions has increased immensely. Naturally this process has enhanced the demand for people who are politically ambitious and who possess organizational abilities. The older generation of leaders who commanded authority because of their age and contributions to the independence movement has almost disappeared, and now there is demand for a new political leader who is willing to use all means to acquire power.

The postindependence period has also witnessed the emergence of a middle class. It includes members of the business community, the managerial-political elites, and the powerful, wealthy, and influential farmers of the countryside. In urban areas, the members of this class have embraced the materialism and consumerism of Western societies and are comfortable with the challenges and opportunities presented by advancement in a globalizing world economy. This growing middle class provides political support for political parties at the national and regional levels. They participate in the development of political, commercial, and social linkages within India. As a result of India's economic boom since the 1990s, India's middle class has grown. Estimates of the size of India's middle class vary; McKinsey and Company puts it at 50 million people, reaching 600 million by 2030; Deutsche Research estimates it to be 300 million.<sup>11</sup>

India's Planning Commission's estimates show a decline in poverty in India: 27.5 percent of the population was below the poverty line in 2004–2005, compared with 51.3 percent in 1977–1978 and 36 percent in 1993–1994.<sup>12</sup>

Despite India's impressive overall growth rate since the 1990s, the level of growth and development varies among Indian states. Gujrat, Haryana, and Delhi, for instance, enjoy higher rates than Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa.

### *Changes in India's Political Culture*

Given the enormous complexity of India's sociocultural structure and a power-hungry and competitive system of politics among political parties, it is not surprising that Indian political values and norms of behavior often give contradictory signals. There is considerable intermingling of modern and traditional values. For example, one may find hero worship verging on idolatry along with an expression of strong democratic impulses, supersensitive nationalism along with strong parochialism, egalitarianism along with the existence of a hierarchical social order, a high degree of tolerance and passivity along with occasional outbursts of violence, and so on. These contradictory tendencies may be attributed to the vast size of the country and its diversity, as well as to the uneven levels of exposure to modern values in the different segments of the population.

The introduction of democratic institutions in India, as is well known, was not the result of an internal groundswell. The ordinary person in India has little awareness of the advantages of a democracy. It was the Western-educated and Anglicized elites who deliberately chose democracy over other forms of government. John Osgood Field puts it well: "Indians struggled against Englishmen for the right to run a British system in India."<sup>13</sup> The political elites believed that through the introduction of universal suffrage and the mass political participation that would follow, a traditional society based on an ascriptive oligarchic structure would transform itself into an egalitarian and open society. In addition, the spread of mass media and industrialization would help to internalize democratic values and lead to the development of an egalitarian political culture. To an extent these values are becoming increasingly integrated into the personality structure of the newer generations of Indians. However, values of caste, ethnicity, and minority politics exist as well. Says Mark Tully, "India has shown that democracy alone is not enough—nor, incidentally, is economic growth. What are required are politics and a political system which are relevant for India's past traditions and present circumstances."<sup>14</sup>

The frequent elections held at the state and national levels on the basis of adult franchise have broken the traditional isolation in which most of the villagers of India formerly lived. Many of the groups in the village society have developed political awareness and are learning to use their political power, and the members of the so-called backward (lower) castes and former untouchables (now called Dalits) are becoming increasingly restive and challenging the domination of the landowning upper castes. Consequently, electoral participation and voter turnout are impressive. India's Election Commission has a reputation of conducting free and fair elections.

Even though the degree of politicization is higher in urban than in rural areas, issue awareness among the rural poor has increased. Average citizens, though often illiterate and relatively ill informed, are not ignorant. In fact, they tend to display sound common sense in politics. They may or may not always be aware of the national issues involved in the elections, but pocketbook issues have a strong impact on their voting behavior. Moreover, they have penalized politicians and the parties for their high-handedness and insensitivity toward the people in national and state elections.

Despite the divisions within Indian society, Indians on the whole display a positive attitude toward the system and its accomplishments. They express pride in the creation and operation of its democratic political institutions; indeed, India's achievements in her external affairs and the growth of her soft power are symbols of political pride. India's technological, scientific, and industrial achievements in nuclear science, space, information technology, manu-

facturing, and military capability evoke positive responses among the elite and nonelite segments of the population. There is growing confidence among Indians about the country's future and individual well-being as a result of several developments: impressive economic gains, assertiveness in the military and nuclear spheres, the growth of power-projection capabilities in space and at sea, growing strategic partnerships with traditional players (Russia, United Kingdom, France, and Germany) and with nontraditional partners (United States, Israel, Japan, and Australia), an ability to manage relations with traditional rivals (Pakistan and China), and the lingering problem of foreign-aided and homegrown terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India. Following the growth of global terrorism after September 2001, the value of India as a stabilizing element in the region became apparent to international observers.<sup>15</sup>

Traditionally, Indians have emphasized consensus, conciliation, compromise, and accommodation. In particular, community and caste leaders have widely used conflict management through consensus or arbitration. Gandhi employed this method to resolve intraparty disputes as well as a variety of conflicts arising in national politics. Most successful Indian leaders have been conciliators and consensus builders who were able to balance conflicting political interests based on religious, linguistic, and cultural diversities. It is widely believed that India's unity and integrity have been preserved primarily through the practice of the politics of consensus and conciliation as opposed to the politics of confrontation and partisan divisions.

Another dominant trait of Indian political culture, shaped by its religious traditions and literature, as well as by the behavior of such political leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, is a negative attitude toward the assumption of dictatorial powers (as in the case of Indira Gandhi during the Emergency in 1975) and toward abuse of power by elected leaders and public servants. Indian civil society groups have grown in numbers and involvement with a variety of social, environmental, legal, and political questions. Indian ethics emphasize self-negation—that is, renunciation of desire for power, money, and status. According to the ancient Hindu ordering of personal virtues, *satogun* (purity of heart and absence of desire for power and wealth) ranks higher than *rajogun* (the desire to acquire power or wealth); a *sanyasi* (a person who has renounced such desires and devotes himself entirely to social service) is superior to a king. Indians therefore tend to revere those who seek to influence politics and public policy without seeking political power. Hence, India has witnessed the introduction of what W. H. Morris-Jones has called the “language of saintly politics,” a kind of politics that “is important as a language of comment rather than of description of practical behavior.”<sup>16</sup> It sets very high standards of public behavior, with the Mahatma as the role model.

However, starting with the Nehru years (1947–1964), while Indian practitioners have talked in Gandhian terms, in reality traditional Indian utopian and moral principles, including Gandhian ones, have been marginalized, if not rendered irrelevant, in Indian political behavior. Change in Indian politics and policy making reflects the primacy of entrenched government rules and regulations, ad hocism, consensus building, and satisfactory official behavior as a basis of governance. As politics has become an important avenue of social mobility, and political ambition is playing an increasingly important role in the acquisition of political power, Indian politics has become what could be termed “amoral politics.” This brand of politics is characterized by a decline of the political values associated with democratic institutions and political leaders during the early stages of independent India. For example, both the elected officials and the people know that the high-sounding moral phrases of politics serve rhetorical purposes only; they are not likely to be put into practice. In addition, the giving and accepting of bribes is a normal practice in political life; elected officials frequently seek and receive monetary rewards for the services they render, and persons hoping to acquire elective positions frequently purchase votes and distribute gifts to uneducated voters on or before polling days. Indeed, there is the widespread belief in India that with money and political influence, rules can be bent, and laws can be broken. Many politicians and their children are in league with black marketeers or other criminal elements, yet are rarely penalized for their transgressions. Such politicians are considered to be free looters interested only in plunder and power. Many in India look on the power-hungry professional politicians as a new breed of pundits, careerists, and dream merchants who have fooled many people often in the name of democracy and public service, but whose motive is self-aggrandizement more than public welfare. Moreover, corruption and the flow of black money (undeclared income) are widespread among Indian political parties, businesses, and official circles. In this respect the politicians and political representatives in India are not much different from those characteristic of the early stages of political development in many Western societies. Indeed, the politics based on representation rather than coercion tend in general to develop patron-client relationships rooted in amoral politics. As James Scott has noted, “Self-interest thus provides the necessary political cement when neither a traditional governing elite nor a ruling group based upon ideological or class interest is available.”<sup>17</sup>

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## NOTES

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