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Footnotes
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Teaching India

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On March 11-12, 2006 FPRI's **Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education** hosted 44 teachers from 16 states across the country for a weekend of discussion on teaching about India. The institute, held in Chattanooga, was co-sponsored by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Asia Program and the South Asia Center of the University of Pennsylvania and made possible by a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. Future history weekends include **Islam, Islamism, and Democratic Values** (Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, May 6-7, 2006) and Understanding China (to be held in Kenosha, Wisconsin in cooperation with Carthage College, Oct. 21-22, 2006). The **History Institute for Teachers** is chaired by **David Eisenhower** and **Walter A. McDougall**.

Why It's Important to Know about India

Ainslie T. Embree of Columbia University noted India's recent rise in U.S. headlines, especially with the joint statement issued after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's summer 2005 visit to Washington. The statement, pledging the U.S. to "help India become a major world power in the 21st century" and calling the two countries "natural partners," wouldn't have been dreamt of fifty years ago. But today, the U.S. needs India as a counterweight to China and to cooperate in the war on terror and economically. The two leaders (in the U.S., the statement requires congressional approval) agreed to provide for joint weapon production, cooperate in missile defense and the export of sensitive military technologies from U.S. to India, encourage U.S. investment in India, and—what aroused most interest in both countries—embark on nuclear cooperation.

While one hears a great deal about the two countries' being the world's two largest democracies, India defines "democracy" differently. The preamble to the Indian constitution (1949, as amended in 1976) is a succinct statement of India's idea of democracy. "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; . do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution." Rejecting centuries of foreign rule, the framers make no mention of God or natural rights, but instead "give to ourselves this constitution."

Where U.S. politicians can seem to refer to democracy in religious terms, as the American creed, Indians are not interested in spreading democracy. Their emphasis is on obeying the law, and their system does provide for the regular and alternating transfer of power. India is not in fact "socialist" as we know that term. What they mean in the constitution is striving for justice and equality, even if there is in fact much injustice and inequality.

As to secularity, until 1813, the East India Co. forbade missionaries into India. But that year, British evangelicals won the right to proselytize in India. Over the nineteenth century, the question was argued whether religion should have a place in the conduct of a state's business. In 1858 Queen Victoria forbade that Indian subjects be hindered in the exercise of their own religions. This proclamation held for the next ninety years, and the Indian National Congress adopted the idea during the independence movement. But by the 1970s, Hindu leaders were seeking to recognize Hinduism as synonymous with the Indian culture, and other faiths as alien intrusions. India still has far greater religious divisions than does the U.S.

Early Indian History

Richard H. Davis of Bard College suggested five "big moments" in the development of South Asia that are teachable in high school. The first was from 2600-1900 BCE, when urban civilization arose in the Indus Valley, only to be entirely lost. Hamunaptra (City of the Dead Man) was found in the 1850s when British engineers building railroad tracks in the area pillaged it for bricks. Archeologists began serious excavations there in the 1920s and realized they'd discovered a lost civilization, a complex, literate, urbanized, centrally organized society that covered an area larger than present-day Pakistan. Raw materials found there indicate that the civilization had long-distance trade with Mesopotamia. Why did it end between 1900-1700 BCE? One of the earliest hypotheses is conquest by a new group of horse-riding invaders, but no evidence of this has been found.

The years 1300-1000 BCE saw the rise of the Indo-Aryans, new groups of nomadic, pastoral, cattle-keeping people who appeared in the northwest areas of South Asia. These were not agriculturalists or city people, and they left little behind. But when urban civilizations reemerged in South Asia centuries later, these Indo-Aryans were the dominant social group. Their Rig Veda is one of earliest Hindu or religious texts in the world (veda comes from the Sanskrit root "to know"). A religious class who called themselves Brahmans developed ways of oral transmission of these.

The years 600-350 BCE saw the second urbanization of South Asia, this time centered in the Ganges river plain. By now one had an incipient caste system and the groundwork for a new urban culture. New political entities, kingdoms, had emerged, along with cults of local divinities associated with the natural world and fertility. Wandering teachers established monastic communities outside the dominant Vedic framework.

During the Asoka and Mauryan empires, 325-185 BCE, India became part of global politics. The Asokas left behind centers that formed important cultural and political links between India and the Mediterranean for the next several centuries. Asoka himself led a particularly bloody campaign against Kalinga (modern-day Eritrea) in which 100,000 were slain; subsequent generations would be told that his remorse led him to convert to Buddhism and unite India.

Finally, 150 BCE-300 CE, the post-Mauryan period, were the years of the great Sanskrit epics (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Buddhacharita). While often characterized as a dark age of foreign invasion, these were culturally creative and formative years. These years also saw the growth of the silk route linking China to Rome and the rise of Buddhism as the imperial religion, in competition with the incipient Hinduism.

Modern Indian History

Marc Jason Gilbert of the University of Georgia noted that the traditional view of India as a peace-loving nation perhaps once was but is no longer valid. But many Indians still feel that the standard history has some validity. The 2004 elections can be seen as a renunciation of the BJP, theocracy, and free-market capitalism without responsibility. India has long been "not this and not that," and Gilbert teaches India as the master syncretic, absorbing new, foreign ideas and making them its own.

In teaching, it's important not to present the age of exploration from 1500 onward as a single vertical cline of Western power. It actually took thee hundred years for Europe to displace China's dominance, and two hundred for the British to usurp India's place in world trade. In India, their sovereignty doesn't appear until about 1742 in Madras. The Mughul empire can be taught not as a gunpowder empire, but as a time when Europe's day had not yet come.

For a colonial connection, one can teach Lord Clive of India, who would have taken control of the British army in the Americas in 1774 had it not been for his death, which left the British army in America to the less competent Howe brothers; and the way the East India Company's financial difficulties contributed to the Boston Tea Party. From literature, one can teach, on the European side, Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell (*Shooting an Elephant*), and Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*), and on the Indian side, Prakash Tandon (*Punjabi Saga*), Premchand (*Gift of a Cow*), and Vikram Seth (*A Most Suitable Boy*). Dewitt C. Ellinwood, Jr.'s *Between Two Worlds: A Rajput Officer in the Indian Army, 1905-21* (2005) is another excellent reading.

Partition can be taught as an imperial tradition. Ireland was partitioned in 1922, India 1947, and Palestine in 1948. It had become an accepted way of dealing with a colonial people whose elites contested the future of that new society in ways the British could not resolve.

In teaching globalization, one can note that China's economy is expected to overtake the United States' in 2030, and India's in 2050. But recent tensions over labor laws favoring Bangalore, India's IT capital, over Varanasi, home of storied silk manufactures, reveal the darker side of globalization.

Domestic Indian Politics

Philip Oldenburg of Columbia University and University of Texas discussed India's domestic policies, which have been marked by resilience and the transformation of center-state relations over the nation's life. Recent years have seen an upsurge of those on the margin into full participation and the opening of India's society and social economy.

Many wonder how democracy can possibly work in such a poor, ethnically divided country, which has no common language and periodically erupts into Hindu-Muslim and other kinds of violence; with low literacy, a caste system, corruption, an entrenched strand of authoritarian rule in how the bureaucracy actually runs; and de facto marshal law and colonial rule from Kashmir to the northeast. India challenges political scientists' views—and it's not a small place.

Putting together national politics is complex in India, with coalition governments based on competition at the state level and other actors such as the judiciary, legal system, press, and social action groups. And yet somehow it works. Free and fair elections have resulted in the peaceful alternation in power of opposing political parties, the emergence of genuine federalism and a vigorous third tier of local government. In such a poor country, the public's only power is the ballot, and a remarkably high 55-65 percent of eligible voters vote. India is a country of no majority, just infinite minorities. No caste has more than 20 percent of the population, and the ethnic/caste dynamic is increasingly transforming toward class/interest politics.

Keynote: The Rise of the Indian Economy

John Williamson of the Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C., outlined why the rise of the Indian economy is one of the most important economic developments of our day. In 1947, at the time of independence, India was characterized by very low per capita income. (It always had a big GDP, but only because it had a lot of people.) In some ways it had a fully developed capitalist economy—the Bombay Stock Exchange, founded in 1875, was the oldest in Asia—but it was very thin. It had a manufacturing sector, but one of few industries. It was predominantly a subsistence economy.

During the independence struggle, Nehru and a number of his Congress colleagues drew up what has subsequently been called the Indian Congress Consensus, which stressed the need to develop, to create an industrial revolution, to grow rapidly, and to build a modern economy. This would involve moving agricultural workers to the cities, but with modernization, the country could increase output anyway.

It was agreed that society should be based on collective action, not capitalist acquisitiveness. Consequently, for some forty years after independence, growth was slow, and the effect was the development of what became known as the License Raj—everything needed permission. The banks were nationalized by the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the economy was dominated as in many developing countries by the idea of import substitution.

After the 1966 devaluation, an attempt was made to liberalize the economy. India sought U.S. aid, but since it wouldn't support the Vietnam War, President Johnson withheld aid. Without the envisaged flow of aid, India went back to slow growth for another 15-20 years.

The educational system was very skewed, but the elites had a very good educational system, typified by the Indian Institutes of Technology and Management. The education they received has been important in the subsequent development of India's economy. After early years of slow growth—what became known as the Hindu rate of growth, just 3-4 percent per year, while the population was growing at 2.5 percent per year'something changed. By 1991 the economy had moved to a faster growth pattern, and the budget deficit increasing.

Manmohan Singh, then the finance minister, undertook a major liberalization of the economy. The macroeconomic part of the package was orthodox: cutting expenditures, raising taxes, devaluing the exchange rate, and implementing monetary restriction. On the microeconomic side, Singh swept away the controls of the License Raj and the ban on

FDI, loosened trade restrictions, began to modernize the tax system and divest the public sector of its ownership of enterprises, and implemented financial reform. One saw a substantial fall in poverty over the course of the 1990s, and in the second half of the 1990s one also began to see the rise of the IT sector. The founding of the Indian Institutes led to a flow of highly qualified manpower, many of whom found vocation in that sector. India found its niche in the world economy, not in exporting manufacturers, like the East Asian countries, but in the services sector, and IT in particular.

Singh, now prime minister, and Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram have been moving in a reform direction since coming into power two years ago. India is in good shape, with some $130 billion of reserves. The debate is how fast its economy should grow. There's also the fiscal deficit, which is around 8 percent of GNP and has been up toward 10 percent. India is growing faster than the U.S., so it can afford a deficit larger than the United States' 3-4 percent, but it still has one of the highest debt ratios in the world, and at some stage it's going to have to bring the deficit down. It also has to privatize the power sector, which continues to lose money, and address the social situation. There's still excellent education for the elite, but poor or no education at all for those at the base of the pyramid, particularly women. Also, about half of India's students are malnourished, more than even in subsaharan Africa.

In the competition with China, India has four major advantages: it is into the right things—the skill-intensive service sectors like IT and outsourcing; it has an entrepreneurial culture; it has a much younger population, so that its saving rate is going to increase in the future; and it already has better institutions and a democratic system. The outlook is therefore fairly good for India.

India's Religions Today: 19th-Century Legacies

Guy Welbon of the University of Pennsylvania noted that a new era began with the coming of the Christian Portuguese and the opening of India to Europeans at the close of the fifteenth century. The nineteenth century brought a Hindu Renaissance, catalyzed by the British administrators of the East India Company, the European "Orientalists," and Christian missionaries. This was followed by a counter-reformation (1870-1913) characterized by an increasingly reactionary defense of the faith.

The years between the arrival of Portuguese adventurers and Clive's defeat of the French in 1757 saw Islamic-linked power reach its zenith in India and then precipitously decline. But it was also a time of resistance to all foreign domination, which raised Hindu values as a rallying point. The conviction developed in the late 18th and the 19th centuries that there was "a" Hinduism. The British (and increasingly Indians, too) accepted definitions of religion modeled principally on historical Christianity and set about describing "the real Hinduism."

After 1813, when Christian missionaries began to swarm into the country, Indians were forced to identify what it meant to be a Hindu in order to respond to and defend themselves against Christian proselytism. Also, British decisions to mandate English education in India introduced many Indians to the literary and philosophical heritage of western Europe.

Engaging intellectual challenges from outsiders, some Hindu thinkers re-expressed a Hinduism in the form that large numbers of Hindus and non-Hindus now conceive it. Through the 1800s, this Hinduism matured into a dynamic, enthusiastically missionary assertiveness. The great hero in this process was Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), who began to express religious views that were more "deistic" than theistic: he opposed image worship and became an outspoken opponent of sati (widow-burning) and other social inequities. In 1828, he founded the Brahmo Samaj, a congregational, Unitarian-style association that was anti-caste, anti-ritual, anti-karma. Other, more radical groups that argued that reform from within was impossible.

What distinguishes neo-Hinduism and traditionalism are the different ways they interrelate the indigenous and the foreign, and their different receptivity to the West. Neo-Hindus reinterpret first by adopting foreign values and then seeking them out in the indigenous tradition. Roy was not yet a neo-Hindu. He only started to pave the way for a Hindu nationalism.

Born in 1817, Debendranath Tagore reinvigorated the Brahmo Samaj from the 1840s, posing questions about the authority of the Hindu holy texts. A critic of the Brahmos, Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86) insisted that one could see truth in all religions. Adding Jesus to a diverse set of cult forms posed no problem. His was an open inclusivism. Svami

Vivekananda (1863-1902) made Ramakrishna's “message” the call to a new, aggressive Hinduism, representing Ramakrishna as the epitome of Hindu tradition and the readiness to lead the West to fulfillment.

Key to India's modern political, social, and ethical development was the religious theorizing of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a towering figure of the twentieth century who, perhaps more than Gandhi and Nehru, shaped and expressed the new Hindu view of our time, championing a new kind of universalism in tradition's name.

India-Pakistan Relations

Sumit Ganguly of Indiana University stressed the need to understand the significance of partition in order to understand the evolution of Indo-Pakistani relations. The experience of partition has shaped the foreign policy of both India and Pakistan, particularly as far as each other are concerned.

The Indo-Pakistani conflict is really about competing notions of state-building. Pakistan was created as the putative homeland of the Muslims of South Asia when the British left the subcontinent; beyond that, the framers of the Pakistani state had given little thought to precisely what would constitute the state. India, on the other hand, was created at least constitutionally as a secular state. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of the Pakistani state, successfully built upon Muslims' fears and anxieties to push for a state where membership in a religious community would be the basis of state-building. This was dealt a blow in 1971, when Pakistan unraveled. Various factors contributed to the secessionist movement that arose in east Pakistan, which subsequently became Bangladesh. It was not simply economic exploitation and asymmetries, but also linguistic subnationalism, that contributed to the break-up of Pakistan.

An entire generation was scarred by the memories of partition, when you were forced to leave hearth and home whether you were Muslim or Hindu, even if you were sick. A million people perished, and 6 or 7 million people—some argue that it goes even higher—were uprooted in what was one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century.

The most vexed issue is the question of Kashmir. Kashmir at the time of independence was one of 562 princely states that between 1857 and 1947 had been nominally independent as long as they recognized the paramouncy of the British crown. At the time of independence and partition, Lord Mountbatten decreed that the states were free to join either India or Pakistan, if (1) they were geographically contiguous, (2) they met demographic (Muslim vs. Hindu) requirements, and (3) the monarch made the final decision. These principles were hardly congruent.

Kashmir posed a peculiar problem. It abutted both of what would become India and Pakistan, and it had a Hindu monarch and a predominantly Muslim population. It was also very important for both the Indians and the Pakistanis. Pakistanis pointed out that Pakistan is incomplete without Kashmir (the “k” in Pakistan stands for Kashmir), while for India it was important to get Kashmir as a way of demonstrating its secular credentials.

Ultimately, the maharaja vacillated on the question of accession, and a rebellion broke out in the southern reaches of the state. Faced with a rebel onslaught, the maharaja panicked and appealed to India for assistance. India sent in troops, but not before one-third of the state had been occupied by the rebels, who were now assisted by Pakistani regular troops. After the Indian Army stopped the advance, the maharaja chose to accede to India, but with an important proviso: that at some point a plebiscite would be held to determine the wishes of the Kashmiris.

Accordingly, Prime Minister Nehru, on the advice of Lord Mountbatten, sent the Kashmir case to the UN Security Council for adjudication, where the desire to maintain an Anglo-American presence in Pakistan and Cold War concerns about Soviet expansion formed a fairly pro-Pakistani attitude. The UN decided that Pakistan had to vacate its aggression, India reduce its troops, and a plebiscite be held to determine the wishes of the Kashmiris. None of these things have occurred, and after about 1960, the UN basically withdrew from this conflict.

The Indo-Pakistani wars of 1947-48, 1965, and 1971 were marked by low levels of violence, largely because people had limited firepower, these being relatively poor countries. Also, there were set-piece battle tactics. The military on both sides had belonged to the same British regiments and gone to the same schools. They could almost predict what each other was going to do. Related to this—and accounting for why 1999 was and future wars will be different—there were intrawar restraints. Cities were not bombed, military bases were. Finally, there was adherence to international

norms and conventions. The wars began with formal declarations, ended with formal ceasefires, and abided by the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs. These factors won't exist in the future. We had a glimpse into the future in the 1999 Kargil conflict, where both sides used much greater firepower. The soldiers and officers on both sides had no prior contact with each other, and any contact they might have had was hostile. Consequently, even future conventional wars will be much more sanguinary.

However, the prospects of full-scale war in the subcontinent are slim, barring inadvertent or unauthorized usage of nuclear weapons, given the mutual nuclear deterrent. Thus, in 1999, India had two full reserve formations waiting along the Rajasthan border in the desert but chose not to mobilize them. This was not the case in 1965, when within one week of the attack on Kashmir India had crossed not just the Line of Control in Kashmir but the international border and threatened the city of Lahore.

There is still considerable resentment against the Indian state in Kashmir among significant segments of the Sunni population, but the resilience of the Indian-state camp should not be underestimated. After three wars, Pakistan is no closer than ever to its goal of integrating Kashmir, while its moral claim to Kashmir disappeared in 1971. If Islam alone couldn't be the basis of state-building, then what claim does Pakistan have on Kashmir? Meanwhile, Pakistan's transition to democracy leaves a great deal to be desired, while free and fair elections have been held in Kashmir. For all these reasons, the best solution would be settling on the LOC, which has been the virtually unchanged border since 1947-48, with certain provisions.

Panel Discussion

Donald Johnson of New York University summarized the history of teaching India. In the nineteenth century, the dominant themes of teaching America's role in the world were the ideas of America as a new Jerusalem, of republican virtue, and of Greco-Roman romanticism appended to Christian mission. India was thought to have taken only the earliest steps in civilization, and Hinduism was conflated with Indian civilization. These ideas were joined by Aryan supremacy and scientific racism, the idea that culture is in the genes. This remained dominant until 1919, when Western Civilization was created at Columbia. Only the West was credited with a history. Asia was said to have played no part in world history until imperialism. We had “civilization”; others had “culture.” By the 1960s-70s, modernization theory held that Hinduism held back development. India came into the schools with the new focus on area studies, one unintended consequence of which was different regions' having to compete in the curriculum. India, with less state or foundation money to promote itself, practically vanished from the classroom by the 1980s-90s. Its neglect can be remedied by teaching it under history (e.g., first urban centers, migrations, trade, math, metallurgy). President Bush's visit could help raise its visibility, just as President Nixon's China trip did.

Jean Johnson of the Asia Society proposed India's efforts at achieving unity among diverse peoples as an interesting theme for American students. India's history has if nothing else been marked by a willingness to debate these issues. Indian contributions can also be taught as part of science, math, art history and women's studies curricula, as well as via literature (the epics already mentioned, and also the Pancha-Tantra animal stories for younger students, and twentieth-century novels such as A Bend in the Ganges, Train to Pakistan, and The Death of Vishnu, for older students).

William Harman of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga noted that students are often unable to grasp the role of Indian deities in worship, that Indians worship not to idols, but to images that become real through worship. Polytheism is also hard to communicate, but one can liken the concept to the limited powers and separate domains of saints. Ritual can be presented as a universal way to pace life. Moreover, the ritual vow-the idea that one can dialogue with and make promises to deities—is a unifying factor among Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs.

Yasmeen Mohiuddin of the University of the South offered thoughts on what she would want students to know, based on her experiences of traveling with them to India and Bangladesh. What impresses them is India’s economic power and sheer size. The U.S. now has 40 million college graduates, compared to 47 million in India, which has 3 times the population. But outside of cities such as Hyderabad, what students generally see is abject poverty. Students should be aware of the regional differences in, for instance, gender issues. As Bina Agarwal points out (*A Field of One's Own*, 1995), women's status is much different in North India, Bangladesh, Pakistan than in South India and Sri Lanka different. One can also show how Hinduism and Islam have borrowed from each other over time in terms of restraining women. But South Asia is also a pioneer in microfinance and in women's heading government.