

India and its Culture

Overview of the talk by Thayumanasamy Somasundaram; 11-12 Noon, Sept. 30, 2006.
Ten Thousand Villages, Market Square, Tallahassee, FL 32312.

- ◆ Traditional family unit
 - Joint families
 - Patriarchal with family-centered
 - Individual freedom and choices limited
- ◆ Villages
 - 70/30 Rural/Urban (Opposite of USA)
 - Recent years there has been movement toward metropolis
 - High population density
 - Highly scattered around the country
- ◆ Geography & Climate
 - Surrounded by the Himalayas and Indian Ocean
 - Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, China, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
 - Monsoon brings the rain and India doesn't become very cold in winter
- ◆ Western view
 - More familiar with North India
 - Taj Mahal, New Delhi, Bombay and now Bangalore are familiar
 - Different flavors represent North and the South
- ◆ Government
 - Similar to British parliament
 - Federal (Central) and State Governments
 - Several States and Union Territories
 - Governor and President figure heads
 - Prime Minister and Chief Minister are executive heads
 - No princely states
 - Corruption and nepotism are prevalent
- ◆ Legacy of British
 - United many princely states to one nation
 - English language
 - Exposed the weakness and the strength of Indians
- ◆ Music
 - Indus valley civilization 2500-1700 BCE
 - Music is traceable to the Vedas
 - Both classical and movie songs represent consumer music in India
 - Subtle but distinct difference between North & South Indian music
 - Religious and romantic themes described in the lyrics
- ◆ Dance
 - Every region has distinctive dance forms
 - Sub-class of people perform dance and consider their occupation
 - Religious and romantic themes are depicted in dance forms
 - Majority of Indians watch rather than participate in dance
- ◆ Movies
 - India makes the most movies in the world

- Hindi (20%) movies are made in Mumbai (Bombay): Bollywood
- Tamil, Telugu, and others (60%) made in Chennai: Kollywood
- A favorite entertainment; TV has now taken over the movies
- ◆ Languages
 - There are 17 official languages including English
 - Hindi is spoken widely in North India
 - Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada are spoken in the South
 - Different languages are spoken in different states
- ◆ Sculpture
 - Temples represent the pinnacle of Indian sculpture
 - Suffered destruction during Mogul rule
 - Artisans from the South are still master carvers and is a thriving business
- ◆ Education
 - Until High-school medium of instruction is the local language
 - In majority of colleges the medium of instruction is English
 - Education is subsidized; privately funded education on the rise
- ◆ Religion
 - 80% are Hindus; 12% Muslim; 5% Christians; Sikhs, Buddhists, etc.,
 - Hindus do not have preachers
 - Hinduism is family practiced and is intricately mixed with daily life
 - Most Indians are religiously tolerant; but there are occasional out bursts
- ◆ Women
 - Center of the family unit
 - Have lot of responsibilities but have less choices
 - Now women are both emotionally and economically independent
 - Still there is need for progress