Module 6: South Asia

Lecture Overview
This Module will examine the following topics:

- Introduction to the region
- Physical geography of the region
- Human geography of the region
- Geographic Diversity – Subregions
- Contemporary Geographic Issues in the region
Introduction

• Smallest region in area
• Second most populous – over 1 billion
• Imprint of many civilizations and empires
• Emergence of major religions

Physical Geography

• Mountains
  – Himalayan Mountains – world’s highest range
    – Mount Everest – world’s highest mountain peak
    – 50 other peaks over 7,500 m (25,000 ft.)
  – Forms a cultural and physical barrier
  – Result of collision of India and Eurasian plate
  – Ongoing uplift and erosion
Physical Geography

- Deep Valleys
  - Carved by glaciers and rivers
  - Khyber Pass
  - Historic invasion routes

- Hills, Plateaus, Plains
  - Western Ghats
  - Eastern Ghats
  - Deccan Plateau
    - Most of the Southern part of India
  - Ganges Plain
    - Large, fertile plain
    - Covers most of Northern & Eastern India
  - Largest population concentration

- Major River Basins
  - Indus - Pakistan
  - Ganges - India, Bangladesh
  - Brahmaputra - India, Bangladesh

- High flows
  - Himalayan snow melt / Monsoon rains

- Alluvial fans

- Huge delta at Bay of Bengal
  - Low-lying plains densely populated
  - Intensive farming
  - Flood prone
Monsoon Climates

- Due to seasonal changes:
  - Air pressure systems
  - Heating and cooling of land and water

- Dry monsoon
  - High pressure over land
  - Warm and dry

- Wet monsoon
  - Low pressure over land
  - Heavy summer rains

Monsoon Climates – Wet Monsoon

- Wet Monsoon
  - Heavy rains on Western Ghats
  - Orographic effect
  - Rain shadow in eastern part of peninsula

- Tropical cyclones in Bay of Bengal

- Northwest remains dry
  - Pakistan and Afghanistan
  - Thar Desert

Forests and Soils

- Few remaining forests:
  - Cleared for agriculture and fuel
  - Teak forests – southern India
  - Forests on Himalayan slopes

- Most fertile soils:
  - Flooded areas
  - Lava plateaus
  - Forested areas

- Problems of soil quality due to long use and overuse
Natural Resources

- Precious stones
- Mineral ores
  - Iron
  - Uranium
- Coal
- Oil and natural gas
- Water
  - Large river systems support populations

Natural Hazards

- Earthquakes
  - Plate boundaries
- Flooding
- Drought
- Rising sea levels from global warming
  - Maldives Islands
  - Coastal areas

Environmental Problems:
Air and Water Pollution

- Bhopal Incident 1984
  - Union Carbide plant
  - Toxic gas cloud
  - Exposed ½ million people
  - Killed thousands (est. 16K)

- Water Pollution
  - 40% of India’s population lives in Ganges River basin
  - Farms and factories
  - Trash dumping
  - Funeral pyres
  - Ganga Action Plan
    - Lacked funding unsuccessful
Human Geography

- Cultural Diversity
  - Ethnic religions
    - Hinduism
    - Sikhism
    - Jainism
  - Global religions
    - Buddhism
    - Islam
    - Christianity

- Originated in South Asia

Hinduism

- 80% of India's population
- Minority religion in Sri Lanka and Bhutan
- The Caste System
  - Social groupings – 4 categories
  - Membership is hereditary
  - Untouchables

Buddhism and Jainism

- Developed as a reaction to Hinduism
  - Cast System
  - Hundreds of Gods
- Spread east and north into Southeast Asia and East Asia
- Sri Lanka 70% Buddhist
- Also found in Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan
- Jainism – code of nonviolence
  - Code taken up by Mahatma Gandhi
Islam

- Introduced by Arab traders 700s AD
- Strongholds in NW and East India
  - Pakistan and Bangladesh
  - Maldives
  - Afghanistan
- Only 11% of India's population
  - Important minority (120 million people)

Sikhism

- Combines aspects of Hinduism (reincarnation) with monotheism
- Universal toleration
- Concentrated in Punjab region
  - NW along Pakistan Border
- Golden Temple at Amritsar
  - Holiest site

Languages

- India
  - Over 1600 languages
  - Hindi is national language
  - English – lingua franca
- Other languages
  - Bengali
  - Urdu
  - Pashtun
  - Sinhalese
  - Tamil
Impact of Colonialism

• Trade controlled by Arabs since 800s AD
• Great wealth attracted Europeans
  – Portuguese here first
  – Followed by Dutch and British
• British East India Company
• Introduced western education, technology, legal systems
• Changed India’s economic focus to primary product exports
  – Cotton, silk, tea, opium
• Controlled urban growth/external trade
• Introduced English language in schools
• By 1700s, India and China were world’s wealthiest areas

Rural Conditions

• Population is still largely rural
• Poverty
  – Low incomes
  – Inherited debts
  – The Dowry
• Impact of Green Revolution
  – Led to emergence of wealthier farmers
• Caste discrimination
  – Most obvious in rural areas

Urban Contrasts

• Growing gap between wealthy and poor
  – 1% Indian urban population is extremely wealthy
    • two of top ten richest are from India
    – Average Indian earns $1.60
• Expanding middle class
• Urban poor
  – Shantytown slums
  – Informal economies
  – Child labor
Subregions

- India
- Bangladesh & Pakistan
- Mountain & Island Rim
  - North
    - Afghanistan
    - Nepal
    - Bhutan
  - South
    - Sri Lanka
    - The Maldives

India

- Dominates the region
- World’s second largest population – 1.1 billion
- Independent since 1947
- A federation
  - 29 states
  - 6 territories
- World’s largest democracy
India - Economy

- Food production has quadrupled since 1950s
  - Green Revolution
  - Uneven benefits
- Growing manufacturing sector
  - Small-scale industries
  - Steel industries
  - Hi tech
- Service industries – 60% of GDP
- Need to improve transportation infrastructure

Bangladesh and Pakistan

- Creation in 1947 based on Muslim majorities
- Divided into East and West Pakistan
- 1971 Civil War
  - Bangladesh became independent secular republic
  - Pakistan – an Islamic republic
- U.S. sanctions dropped after Pakistan supported antiterrorist coalition in 2001
  - Sanctions imposed after 1998 nuclear tests

Bangladesh and Pakistan-Economy

- Among world's poorest countries
- Agriculture is the economic base
  - Over 50% employed in farming
  - Pakistan - cotton is main crop
  - Bangladesh - jute, rice, tea, sugarcane
- Limited manufacturing
  - Pakistan - textiles
  - Bangladesh - Garment exports
- Service industries – produce 50% GDP
  - Healthcare, Education
Bangladesh and Pakistan - Human Development

- HPI about 50%
- Dependent on outside aid
- **Bangladesh**
  - Overpopulation
  - Less than 50% has access to sanitation or electricity
- **Pakistan**
  - Inequitable distribution of wealth
  - Low levels of female literacy
  - High infant mortality rates

Northern Mountains and Island Rim

- Northern Mts.
  - Afghanistan
  - Nepal
  - Bhutan
- Island Rim
  - Sri Lanka
  - Maldives
- Isolation
- Internal strife - tribal rivalries
- Poverty

Afghanistan

- Created as buffer state between British and Russians
  - Late 1800's
- Soviet occupation 1979-1992
  - Mujahedeen
    - Local warlords supplied with US Weapons
    - Fought each other after Soviet withdrawal
- Taliban
  - Took control in 1990's
  - Sunni
  - Opposed by other internal groups
- New government established 2004
- Opium poppy cultivation
Nepal and Bhutan

- Nepal
  - Hindu kingdom
  - Close ties with British
  - Maoist insurgency
- Bhutan
  - Tiny Buddhist kingdom
  - Buffer state between India and China
  - Limits tourists and outside influences

Sri Lanka

- Formerly called Ceylon
  - Portuguese and British Colony
- Plantation economy
  - Tea, rubber, coconuts
- Civil War
  - Majority Sinhalese vs. minority Tamils
  - 60,000 deaths

The Maldives

- Over 1,000 islands
- Fishing and tourism main economic activities
  - Tourism – 80%
- Coastal pollution problems
- Tourism industry affected by 2004 tsunami
Contemporary Geographic Issues
Population

- 1.4 billion in S. Asia
- 2 billion by 2025
- India
  - 1.12 billion (2006)
  - Higher growth rate than China
  - Large numbers of people of childbearing age
- High growth rates in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Contemporary Geographic Issues
Population

- High Concentrations:
  - River lowlands
  - Coastal Sri Lanka
- Low concentrations:
  - Mountains, Deserts, Swampy areas
- Indian diaspora
- Brain drain

Contemporary Geographic Issues
Population

- Attitudes towards birth control
- Gender imbalance – more males than females
  - Female infanticide
  - Sex-selective abortions
  - Dowry pressures
  - Bride burning
- HIV/AIDS
  - 1% of India affected – 5 million people
  - Highest rates in south and large cities
Contemporary Geographic Issues

Urbanization

- 5 of world’s 20 largest cities in this region
  - 37 cities with over 1 million people
  - By 2015, 3 of largest 10 in the world
- Rural-to-urban migration
  - Better job opportunities
  - Better access to health and education services
- Industrial areas within most big cities
  - Steelworks, textiles, chemicals
- Increasing suburbs and shantytowns
- Pollution problems

Rise of High Tech Cities

- India one of fastest growing economies today
- Growth of hi tech industries due to:
  - Large population of young people
  - Scientific and technical skills
  - English-speaking population
  - Good legal systems
- Bengaluru (Bangalore)
  - 3M, AT&T, HP, IBM, Motorola

Ethnic Conflicts

- A shatter belt
- Intra-State and Inter-State
  - Significant religious and language differences
- Hindu-Muslim conflicts
  - Kashmir
    - 2008 Mumbai Massacre
- Maoist insurgency-Nepal
  - Control many rural areas
- Islamic extremism- Bangladesh
- Civil War in Sri Lanka
Contemporary Geographic Issues

Ethnic Conflicts – The Kashmir Dispute

• At independence, Kashmir chose to join India
  – Hindu ruler
  – Muslim state
• 1947 Pakistan invasion
• 1948 Cease-fire
• Continuing wars
• Line of Control
• Two nuclear powers

Contemporary Geographic Issues

Environmental Problems

• Rapid population growth and industrialization have taken toll on the environment
• Water Use
  – Critical for agricultural/industrial development
  – Importance of monsoon rains
  – Problems of water management
    • Salinization
    • International disputes over water use
    • Dams and wells
  – Narmada Valley Project
    • One of the largest hydroelectric projects in the world
    • Series of 3000+ dams along Narmada River
    • Significant domestic and international opposition