

Countries Around the World™

India

Program Summary

Meet 12-year-old Tanya. She and her family live in Dehradun, a town north of New Delhi, India's capital city. Join Tanya as she strolls through Dehradun, starting with a visit to a park that honors Mahatma Gandhi before seeking some relief from the heat by enjoying a glass of *lassi*, an iced drink made with yogurt. Next, Tanya introduces us to some traditional, Indian garb when she tries on a sari. Experience some of the religious traditions of India when Tanya prays at a Hindu shrine in her home before making an offering at a Hindu temple and heading to the sacred site of Sahastradhara. After sharing a meal of chicken *tandoori* and *naan* with her grandmother, Tanya buys some spices at a local bazaar and pays a visit to the tomb of Ram Rai, a 17th-century Sikh guru. Finally, Tanya watches a movie with her cousins and has her hands decorated with *mehndi*.

Country Information

- **location:** South Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal; bordered by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Nepal and Pakistan
- **capital:** New Delhi
- **official languages:** Hindi is the national language and primary tongue of approximately 30% of the people, but there are 14 other official languages: Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Sanskrit
- **type of government:** federal republic
- **total area:** approximately 3,287,590 sq km
- **climate:** varies from tropical monsoon in the South to temperate in the North
- **terrain:** upland plain (Deccan Plateau) in the South, flat to rolling plain along the Ganges with deserts in the West and the Himalayas in the North
- **major bodies of water:** Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Ganges River, Brahmaputra River and Krishna River
- **natural resources:** includes coal, iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, titanium ore, chromite, natural gas, diamonds, petroleum, limestone and arable land
- **industries:** includes textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery and software
- **agricultural products:** includes rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry and fish

Vocabulary

saffron — A color that ranges from orange-yellow to orange.

dialect — A regional variety of a language.

pacifist — A person who believes that all disputes should be settled without violence.

lassi — A drink made from yogurt and water that can be flavored with spices, fruit or other ingredients.

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rupee — The currency of India.

sari — Also "saree." A traditional garment, usually worn by females, that is made from a long strip of unstitched cloth and worn draped over the body in various ways.

auto rickshaw — A three-wheeled, motorized cart that serves as a form of public transportation.

Hindu — The name for people who practice Hinduism, a family of religious traditions that are practiced by roughly 900 million people around the world.

Brahman — Also "Brahma." The supreme being in the Hindu religion. Hindus believe that Brahman can take many forms.

deity — Another name for a god or goddess.

naan — Also *nan*. A flat, leavened bread that is baked in a *tandoor*.

tandoor — A cylindrical oven that is made of clay, heated by charcoal or wood, and used for baking bread and roasting meat in India.

tandoori — Referring to a dish cooked in a tandoor.

bazaar — A market that consists of a street lined with shops and stalls.

masala — A mixture of ground spices that can be made with a wide variety of ingredients.

Sikh — The name for people who practice Sikhism, a monotheistic religion that does not recognize the Hindu caste system and forbids magic, idolatry and pilgrimages.

Ram Rai — A 17th-century Sikh guru.

mausoleum — A large, stately tomb or a building housing such a tomb or several tombs.

Mogul — Also "Moghul." Referring to any of the Mongol conquerors of India who established an empire that lasted from 1526 to 1857.

guru — A spiritual teacher or guide.

cricket — A game for two teams, of 11 members each, that is played on a field with two wickets, which are spaced 20 meters apart.

benna — A tropical plant that can be converted into a paste and used as a dye in tattoos called *mehndi*.

mehndi — Also *bina*. The application of henna tattoos to the skin, often done in preparation for special occasions, such as weddings.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Engage students in a discussion about the modes of transportation that they use. How do you normally get to where you're going? What do you think is the main form of transportation in the United States? In other countries? How do different forms of transportation fit people's travel needs? How are modes of transportation related to the geographic layout of a region? Can you think of a place where the vehicles you use for transport wouldn't be very effective because of the geography or population density? Inform students to watch for the types of transportation used in the program, and after viewing, have students compare the modes of transportation used by the host with the ones they use.
- Ask students about their favorite foods. Questions to ask include: What is it about your favorite food that makes you like it so much? From where does your favorite food originate? Is your favorite food synonymous with a particular place, state or country? Is there any type of cultural significance to your favorite food? Why do we eat certain foods on certain occasions, like Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch for examples of Indian food.
- Lead a discussion about how climate affects where and how people live. Begin by having students talk about how the weather in their area affects their lives. Expand the conversation with questions, such as: How would you have to adapt your lifestyle if you lived in a place that is really hot? What about a place that is really cold? How do people who live in such extreme conditions adapt to the climate? Would you like to live in a place like that? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch for references to how climate affects people living in India.

Follow-up Activities

- Students can read stories from the Panchatantra, a collection of Indian animal fables, by visiting www.panchatantra.org/. Then, have students recreate one of these tales in the classroom by acting it out. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. Divide the students into small groups and have each one prepare its own production by choosing a format and thinking about the story's elements of character, setting and plot. After each performance, conduct a question and answer session in which students explain why they chose to retell the stories in the ways that they did. As a culmination, have students write, illustrate and share their own folktales based on the Panchatantra. As an extension, have students compare and contrast the stories of the Panchatantra to other animal tales, like Aesop's Fables, Native-American trickster tales or even Rudyard Kipling's short story, *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* (Harper Collins, 2004).
- From the majestic Indian elephant to the fierce Bengal tiger, India boasts a wide variety of animal life. Invite students to learn about the different types of wildlife found in India. Students can choose a particular animal and, using the information they gather, create informational booklets. For an interactive tool for making a booklet, visit www.readwritethink.org/materials/animal-inquiry/. Students can take turns sharing their booklets with the class. As an extension, students can collect pictures of their animals and create a classroom collage dedicated to the wildlife of India. Information about India's wildlife can be found at www.india.wildlife.org/.
- A champion of the independence movement of the early 20th century in India, Mahatma Gandhi continues to inspire people around the world due to the bravery and conviction that defined his life. Engage students in a study of Gandhi. Working in small groups, students can find facts about Gandhi, and from the information they gather, they can work together to build a classroom display dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. The display can feature fact sheets, posters, time lines, pictures and illustrations. As a resource, students may enjoy reading Philip Wilkinson's *Gandhi: The Young Protestor Who Founded a Nation* (National Geographic, 2005).
- Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with an outline map of India. Have students label the capital, other major cities, landforms and bodies of water. Then, each group can choose another characteristic of the country, such as average yearly temperatures, annual rainfall, terrain regions or population density, and use different colors and symbols to mark its map. Each group can make a puzzle out of its map and exchange it with another group, seeing who can put the puzzles together the quickest. After each group reassembles its puzzle, students can take turns teaching their classmates about the specifics of their maps.
- A system of spiritual and philosophical disciplines that originated in India thousands of years ago, yoga is commonly known today as a popular form of exercise characterized by holding poses and breathing techniques. Teach the class some yoga poses by sharing Ellen Schwartz's *I Love Yoga: A Guide for Kids and Teens* (Tundra, 2003). If space in the classroom is an issue, modify the poses so students can do them at their desks. Then, students can create "yoga pose cards" that feature drawings of yoga poses, the names of the poses and instructions on how to perform them. Students can even use their yoga pose cards to create classroom games and exercise routines, especially for those rainy-day recesses. As an extension, students may enjoy reading Uma Krishnaswami's *The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story* (Lee & Low Books, 2005), the story of a young girl who overcomes her apprehensions about appearing in school play by taking yoga classes.
- National symbols, like the flag and the national anthem, can tell a lot about a country's history and identity. Have students investigate the national symbols of India and discuss what the symbols say about India and its people. For information about India's national symbols, visit india.gov.in/knowindia/national_symbols.php. Students can create booklets about the Indian national symbols that contain pictures or illustrations and information, including how they were chosen and their significance. As an extension, discuss the similarities and differences between India's national symbols and those of the United States. (Continued)

- Hinduism and Sikhism are two of the dominant religions in India, and while they share several traits in common, they diverge from each other in various ways. Engage students in a comparative study of Hinduism and Sikhism. Begin by dividing the class in half and assigning each half a religion to cover. Within the two large groups, further subdivide the students and assign them different topics to cover as they relate to their assigned religion (e.g., deities, festivals, history, belief systems, etc.). Each group can collect facts and plan and give presentations on Hinduism and Sikhism. Instruct students to include visual aids in their presentations. For information about Hinduism, direct students to www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/hinduism.htm. Information on Sikhism can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/. After the presentations, students can discuss the similarities and differences between Hinduism and Sikhism. Encourage any Hindu and/or Sikh students in your class to be classroom leaders and to provide more insight and detail about these religions.
- Prepare and serve some *lassi* for the class. Explain to students that *lassi* can be made with different ingredients and have students brainstorm a list of ingredients that they would like to try in some *lassi*. After preparing and serving few different types of *lassi*, conduct a poll among the students as to the most popular flavor. Students can convert the poll results into fractions, decimals and percentages, and rank the *lassi* flavors according to popularity.
- The Ganges River is one of the largest rivers India and is held sacred by Hindus, who commonly refer to the river as "Ganga Ma" (Mother Ganges). Have students find facts about the Ganges River. Based on the information that they find, students can build dioramas that depict aspects of the Ganges River, such as the wildlife that lives there, the spirituality associated with it and the pollution that threatens its ecosystem. Students can write fact sheets to accompany their dioramas. As a resource, students may enjoy reading Ted Lewin's *Sacred River: The Ganges of India* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003).
- Students can trace their hands on pieces of paper and then, using crayons, markers, colored pencils or paint, design and draw their own mehndi tattoo designs on the outlines. Since mehndi are traditionally used for special occasions, encourage students to incorporate imagery in their designs that have significance for them. Students can take turns sharing their designs with the class.
- Have you ever wanted to visit India's famed Taj Mahal, but didn't have time to fly halfway around the world to see it? Students can see the Taj Mahal, without ever leaving the classroom, by visiting www.world-heritage-tour.org/asia/in/agraTajMahal/map.html for a 3-D, virtual tour of the famous mausoleum. After exploring the Taj Mahal, students can find facts about the structure. Then, have students write journal entries that create a narrative about visiting the Taj Mahal and include information about the building (e.g., "Here I am at the famed *charbagh* garden of the Taj Mahal, and each section of this garden is supposed to represent one of the four flowing rivers of paradise.").

Suggested Internet Resources

- india.gov.in/
This site, assembled by the Indian government, features detailed information about the history, culture, government and economy of India.
- www.historyforkids.org/learn/india/index.htm
Learn more about ancient India. This site, by History for Kids!, features information on the history, culture, geography, people and art of ancient India.
- www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,214513,00.html
Discover India and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about India's famous sites, history, culture and language. Also includes a quiz.

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• library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/india.html

Learn about the culture and customs of India from the perspective of a child who lives there! The students of Roosevelt School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin present this award-winning site to teach people about different cultures.

• www.cia.gov

The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on India and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Bhargava, Neirah, Mahendra Jani and Vandana Jani. *What You Will See Inside a Hindu Temple*. Skylight Paths Publishing, Woodstock, VT; 2005.
- Ganeri, Anita. *Exploration into India*. Chelsea House Publications, New York, NY; 2000.
- Heine, Theresa. *Elephant Dance: Memories of India*. Barefoot Books, Cambridge, MA; 2004. This is a fiction text in which a grandfather tells his grandchildren about life in India.
- Locricchio, Matthew. *The Cooking of India*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2004.

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