

Governments

TERMS & NAMES

Taliban

martial law

Dalit

Indira Gandhi

panchayat

MAIN IDEA

The countries of South Asia have different types of governments, but all face the challenges of economic growth and poverty.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

As the nations of the world grow more and more connected, any individual nation's success becomes important to all.

DATELINE

NEW DELHI, INDIA, AUGUST 15, 1947— Jawaharal Nehru, India's first prime minister, has today solemnly declared India a free and independent nation. At 8:30 A.M. the new government was sworn in. Prime Minister Nehru then unfurled India's flag, the Tricolor, which flew for the first time from the Council House against a free sky.

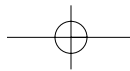
In February, the British government had announced its willingness to grant India its independence. On June 3, Lord Mountbatten, viceroy of India, took to the airwaves to explain the method by which power would be transferred from one government to another. Yesterday, the nation waited breathlessly for midnight to arrive. After 300 years of colonial rule, India has won her freedom at last.



Place • Indians celebrate independence in the streets of Calcutta and other cities and towns throughout India. ▲

South Asia's Governments

Since independence, the nations of South Asia have chosen different forms of government. Some are republics. In a republic, the people elect leaders to represent them. Some countries, such as India, chose a parliamentary form of government. Others chose to be constitutional monarchies. In a constitutional monarchy, the king or queen serves a mostly ceremonial role, while the prime minister and cabinet actually run the government.



Afghanistan In 1964, a new constitution established a constitutional monarchy for Afghanistan. The monarchy collapsed in 1973 as the result of a coup. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and established a Communist government. A UN agreement forced Soviet troops to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving behind an Afghani Communist government. This government was overturned and an Islamic republic was declared, but it did not have support from enough people and was too weak to maintain power.

A group of fundamentalist Muslims, the **Taliban**, took control of the government. Under the Taliban, people must follow strict rules. Women cannot go to school or hold jobs, nor can they go out in public without a male relative. Punishment for breaking rules includes being whipped or even executed.

The Taliban has been at war with opposing Muslim groups for many years. Although the Taliban has received help from a few other nations, such as Pakistan, most of the world has spoken out against the Taliban government. In 2001, the Taliban was accused of harboring terrorists responsible for the attacks on the United States made on September 11 of that year.

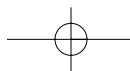
Culture • Bhutan
is ruled by a king.
This is King Jigme
Singye Wangchuk
(JIHG•may SING•
yay WAHNG•
chuk), in 1998. ▼

Bangladesh Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in 1971 and adopted its constitution in 1972. The constitution gives Bangladesh a parliamentary form of government, with a prime minister and a president. However, in 1975, and several times since, the military has taken over the government.



Bhutan For three centuries, Bhutan was ruled jointly by two types of leaders—one spiritual and the other political. In 1907, the spiritual ruler withdrew from public life, and since then Bhutan has had a king only. In 1953, an assembly was formed, which meets twice a year to pass laws. Then, in 1968, a Council of Ministers was created to advise the king. The king appoints ministers, but the assembly must approve them.

The Maldives In 1965, the Maldives gained independence from Great Britain and became a republic three years later. The Citizens' Council has 48 members, 40 elected by the people and 8 appointed by the president. The president also appoints the judges, who follow Islamic law in making their judgments.



Nepal For centuries, Nepal was ruled exclusively by kings. Prime ministers replaced kings as the country's ruling office. In 1962, Nepal became a constitutional monarchy and all political parties were banned. In the 1990s, the king allowed the formation of political parties. Soon, some had gained enough power to force a change in the government. The Nepalese wrote a new constitution and established a new parliamentary system.

Pakistan Pakistan gained independence from Great Britain in 1947. The constitution of 1947 gave Pakistan a parliamentary government. However, in 1958, **martial law** was declared. The military took control of the government and maintained power until 1988. Today, Pakistan is a republic, with a prime minister and a president, both of whom must be Muslim.

Reading Social Studies

A. Recognizing Important Details What two attitudes do Pakistanis have about the role of Islam in their government?

People in Pakistan have differing views about the role of Islam in the government. Some think Islam is what holds the people together as one nation. Others feel that Islam does not meet the needs of all the groups in the country and that it has actually pulled people apart.

Sri Lanka In 1948, Sri Lanka gained independence from Great Britain. Today, it is a democracy with a president as its leader. As in the United States, two political parties struggle for power in the government.



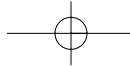
Culture • President Chandrika Kumaratunga (chan•DREE•kah kum•ruh•TUNG•ah), of Sri Lanka, opens the country's new Parliament in November 2000. ▲

The World's Largest Democracy

India is the world's largest democracy. Approximately 370 million Indians voted in the 1999 elections. The country's official head of state is the president. However, India's prime minister actually runs the government.

Place • The prime minister of Pakistan works in the Offices of Government in Islamabad, the capital. ►





India's constitution went into effect in 1950, protecting Indians from being treated unfairly. According to the constitution, all Indians are assured the same basic rights. These include the rights of free speech and religion, which are protected in the courts.

The Changing Caste System India's new constitution stated that even the lowest and poorest classes could vote. The poor are also represented in the government. Special programs reserve jobs for people of the lower castes and secure places for them in schools. The **Dalits** (formerly called "untouchables") have gained political power. They were outside the caste system and considered even lower than the lowest caste. Today, they vote for leaders, though more changes are needed to ensure the Dalits have equal rights in the government and the economy.

Women in India After independence from Britain, Indian women gained many new rights. Finally, all women were granted the right to vote. It is now against the law in India to discriminate on the basis of gender.

Indian women began working at jobs that had been held only by men. Women became teachers and doctors. They were elected to public office. **Indira Gandhi** became India's first woman prime minister in 1966.

Village Life and Grass-roots Democracy

Since ancient times, small rural Indian villages have governed themselves. Today they are governed by the *panchayat* system. A *panchayat* is a village council. India's constitution allows these councils to govern themselves. The *panchayat* collects taxes for maintaining schools and hospitals. It builds roads and digs wells for drinking water. The councils also take care of primary school education in India.



Culture • An Indian woman has her finger marked before voting in a 1999 election in Gujarat. ▲



Nonviolence The Jain (JYN) religion was founded in India in the sixth century B.C. Its followers believe that people should never harm a living being, including the smallest insect. The Jain belief in nonviolence led to its use as a powerful political weapon.

Instead of leading an armed revolt, Gandhi used nonviolence as a tactic to drive the British out of India. The idea of nonviolence inspired American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. (shown at left below with his wife and Prime Minister Nehru). King used nonviolent methods, including marches and demonstrations, to fight against the discrimination of African Americans in the United States.



Culture •

Traditionally, the *panchayat* meets under a banyan tree like this one. ►



Reading Social Studies

B. Contrasting
How are the three levels of *panchayats* different from one another?

Three Levels The *panchayat* works on three levels. The first level represents a village or a group of small villages. The second level is made up of *panchayat* chiefs from 100 villages. The third level represents an entire district. Some districts have as many as ten million people.

Today, there are over 3 million *panchayat* representatives in India. By law, one-third of them must be women. The constitution also makes room for the Dalits and other minorities to participate in the *panchayat* system.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

1. Identify: (a) Taliban (b) martial law (c) Dalit (d) Indira Gandhi (e) *panchayat*

Taking Notes

2. Use a chart like the one below to list the countries of South Asia and the features of their governments.

Country	Features of Government

Main Ideas

- 3. (a)** Name three kinds of government found in South Asia.
(b) What kind of government does India have?
(c) Describe the responsibilities of the *panchayat*.

Critical Thinking

4. Synthesizing

How did India's 1950 constitution change the lives of women and members of the lower castes?

Think About

- ♦ the treatment of the lower castes and women before 1950
- ♦ what it means to live in a democracy

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Choose one of the following nations: Bhutan, Nepal, or Sri Lanka. Use the Internet to find a recent news story about it. **Summarize** the story for your class.