INDIA: A LAND OF MANY VOICES

Reading Skills | Sociocultural Competence | B1–B2 | 60 min.

You are going to read the text to get acquainted with India's geographical, historical and cultural background. Pay particular attention to the country's diversity and the role of English in Indian society.

Task 1. Read the text quickly and choose the most suitable title for each paragraph. There is one extra title that you do not need to use.

A. *India's Cultural Traditions and Social Etiquette*
B. *A Country of Extraordinary Diversity*
C. *India's Geographical and Political Profile*
D. *From Ancient Civilisations to Independence*
E. *The Economic Challenges of Modern India*

1. Title:

India, officially the Republic of India, occupies much of South Asia. Often called a **subcontinent**, it is the world's seventh-largest country by area and, with more than 1.4 billion inhabitants, its most populous. Its landscapes stretch from the Himalayas to tropical coastlines, taking in deserts, fertile plains and forests. New Delhi is the capital; Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are major urban centres. India is a sovereign federal parliamentary republic: the President is head of state, while the Prime Minister leads the government. Yet its identity is shaped not only by political institutions and geography, but also by the extraordinary diversity of its people.

2. Title:

The history of the Indian subcontinent reaches back thousands of years, to ancient cities along the Indus River. Over time, kingdoms and empires left enduring architectural, religious and intellectual traditions. European trade gradually gave way to British colonial rule, known as **the British Raj** in its later period. Resistance developed into a broad independence movement, with Mahatma Gandhi becoming its best-known advocate of non-violent protest. India became independent in 1947 and a republic in 1950. Its past is visible in monuments such as the Taj Mahal, built in memory of an emperor's wife and celebrated for its Mughal architecture, as well as in ancient temples, forts and **pilgrimage** sites that continue to attract visitors.

3. Title:

India is home to many ethnic communities, faiths and linguistic groups. Hinduism is the largest religion, while Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism are also practised. The Constitution recognises 22 **scheduled languages**, among them Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu; many more languages and mother tongues are spoken locally. Hindi is an official language of the Union, and English also has official status. It is especially important in administration, higher education, business and communication across linguistic communities. Introduced and spread under British rule, English gradually took root in Indian society. Over time, local languages and cultural realities helped shape Indian English, a variety with its own identity.

4. Title:

Hence, Indian culture is a mosaic of regional traditions rather than a single set of customs. Diwali, the festival of lights, and Holi, celebrated with colours, are widely known, while music, dance, cinema and clothing reflect varied cultural heritage. Food also expresses regional identity: rice, **lentils**, spices and flatbreads such as roti are common in many communities. In social and professional settings, respect for elders and senior colleagues is often valued, and polite forms of address can help build rapport. Hospitality is essential, but customs differ between regions and households; in some homes and places of worship, visitors remove their shoes. Religion and **caste** can be sensitive subjects, so avoid assumptions about an individual's beliefs or background. Above all, successful communication requires curiosity, patience and an awareness that no single description can represent a country of such complexity.

**The presented text has been generated by means of AI, yet edited manually.*

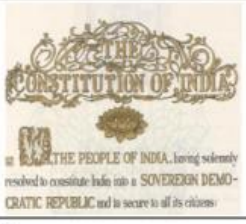
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Task 2. Read the text once again and decide if the following statements are *True (T)*, *False (F)* or *Not Stated (NS)*. Pay attention to details and avoid relying on your general knowledge. If some words in the text appear unknown to you, click on them to see the definitions.

1. India is the sixth-largest country in the world in terms of its geographical area. *T / F / NS*
2. The President of India is responsible for leading the government, while the Prime Minister acts as the head of state. *T / F / NS*
3. The British Raj refers to the period of British colonial rule in India. *T / F / NS*
4. Mahatma Gandhi's approach to the independence movement was based primarily on armed resistance. *T / F / NS*
5. Hinduism is considered to be the most ancient religion in India. *T / F / NS*
6. The Indian Constitution recognises 22 scheduled languages, although many other languages are also spoken throughout the country. *T / F / NS*
7. Indian English developed partly as a result of contact between English and India's local languages and traditions. *T / F / NS*
8. The caste system is described in the text as a social institution that has been completely abandoned in contemporary Indian society. *T / F / NS*

Task 3. Match the questions with the pictures provided below. Then, answer the questions using only one word or a word combination (including proper names) taken directly from the text.

1. What geographical term is used to describe India because of its size, geographical variety and distinct cultural identity? *Answer*: _____
2. Which prominent Indian leader became internationally recognised for his philosophy of non-violent protest? *Answer*: _____
3. What famous architectural monument is described as a symbol of love and Mughal architecture? *Answer*: _____
4. Which religion is identified as the largest in India? *Answer*: _____
5. What historical term refers to the period of British colonial domination in India? *Answer*: _____
6. Which language, alongside Hindi, plays a significant role in administration, higher education and communication between different linguistic communities? *Answer*: _____
7. What traditional social institution may be a sensitive subject in conversations about Indian society? *Answer*: _____
8. What traditional Indian flatbread is mentioned in the description of the country's culinary traditions? *Answer*: _____

A:	B:	C:	D:
			
E:	**F:**	**G:**	**H:**
			

**Source of the photos: wikipedia.org*

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Task 4. Write a short summary of approximately 150 words. Use the titles from task 1 to cover all the main aspects. To elicit the key information, use your answers from task 3. Organise your ideas logically, dividing your summary into paragraphs and using cohesive devices.

India: What Everyone Should Know

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