Chapter 20 Section 3: South Asia Today

Key Ideas:

1. South Asia has a rich mix of cultures.

2. Political conflict and border disputes threaten peace in the region.

3. Although it has many problems, the region is playing a greater role in the global economy.

4. Religious and ethnic divisions within countries create tensions in the region.

- Problems and Promise
  - Has most populated and poorest countries in the world.
  - Suffers from conflicts, political instability, and terrorism.
  - Natural disaster and rising sea levels threaten countries.
  - Democracy thrives in India, which has pockets of prosperity and growing middle class.
  - Economic programs help many people out of poverty.
  - Technical and scientific skills in worldwide demand.
  - Art is influential

- South Asian Culture Today
  - Arts of literature and epics with gods and heroes define the value of Hindu culture—values of courage, gentleness, love, and faithfulness; many same values expressed in films from “Bollywood” (which were films from Bombay, which is now known as Mumbai).
  - India and Nepal are mostly Hindu with a large minority of Muslims; Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh are Muslim; Punjab has Sikhism; Buddhism strongest in Himalayan countries of Nepal and Bhutan and island of Sri Lanka.
  - Food flavored with spices; typical meal is rice and vegetables and sometimes meat, but Hindu food rules ban eating beef and Islam forbids eating pork.

- Population and Environment
  - 1.5 Billion People; dense population and high birthrates
  - Population Growth is expected to be 1.7 billion by 2050 and overtake China as most populous country; In Pakistan, a woman can be expected to have an average of 4 children; birthrate in Afghanistan fastest—average 7 children per woman.
  - Leads to not enough food to eat, and food available is not very nutritious; Bangladesh-30% of population undernourished.
  - Clean water is scarce b/c rivers are dammed and water pumped out of ground for irrigation; not much for drinking!
  - Pollution is bad because industries dump chemical and other waste into rivers and raw sewage from villages and cities also go into the rivers; Ganges is one of the most heavily polluted rivers in the world, but people wash clothes, bathe, and drink from it!
  - Air pollution from factories, power plants, vehicles, and deforestation; called “Asian Brown Cloud”, reflects light and cools the land below and warms air in mountains; scientists believe adds to climate change.

- Social Problems
  - Caught between tradition and demands of modern world.
  - Traditionally there was a caste system that Gandhi and other South Asian leaders wanted to get rid of; the constitutions of India and Pakistan forbid discrimination based on caste; although illegal,
women face unequal treatment and in some rural areas, girls are prevented from attending school and women’s social and political roles are limited.

- Unemployment high; industry is not growing fast enough for workers; worst in Afghanistan where 40% of workers don’t have jobs.

- Conflicts in South Asia
  - Political and ethnic conflicts often have a religious aspect in South Asia.
  - India, Hindus and Muslims rival.
  - Afghanistan-gov’t under threat from Taliban (a religious group that follows fundamentalist form of Islam)
  - Tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir (Indian state with large Muslim population) and Pakistan will back Kashmiri groups fighting for independence.

- Governments and Economies
  - South Asia has a mix of governments.
  - India is representative democracy-people elect all members of India’s parliament and 1 member is chosen as prime minister; it is also a secular democracy (democracy not based on religion)
  - Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have democratic rule, but don’t have as many rights as other countries.
  - Nepal is now a democratic republic.
  - Bhutan holds democratic elections.
  - Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Maldives are Islamic republics.
  - Bangladesh is the poorest country, but has strong textile industry.
  - India has one of fastest growing economies because of trade agreements; the government began building software technology parks where workers created computer software for worldwide export; many companies save money by outsourcing computer related tasks to India.