

Table Talk India

Weigh In

New Delhi, India's capital, is the second most-populated city in the world with its 32 million residents. Canada's most-populated city is Toronto with 2.8 million residents.

According to the Hindu religion, the cow is considered a sacred animal. Because killing this animal or consuming its meat is considered a sin, several states have banned their slaughter by law.

India has a highly layered, traditional social structure known as the "caste" system. It classifies individuals into four categories: *brahmin* (priesthood), *kshatriya* (nobility), *vaishya* (merchant) and *shudra* (artisan or labourer). As a result, an Indian person's social status is set by birth and very difficult to change.

A nation's symbols are intrinsic to one's identity and heritage. India's national symbols include the endangered Bengal tiger, the peacock and the lotus flower.

- Do some research to find out the area (square kilometres) of both cities. How many Canadians live per square kilometre compared to Indians in their respective cities? How would you feel living in such close quarters with that many people?

- What types of food do Indians typically consume? Find a recipe and prepare it.

- While the caste system is no longer legally enforced, it still influences certain aspects of Indian life, like arranged marriages. Jesus Christ came into the world to give each of us salvation regardless of our ancestry. How does knowing Jesus change our social situation? Read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:17.

- Compare India's national symbols to Canada's. What does the variety of animals and plants say about the countries' ecosystems?

One Way

Hinduism combines varied systems of philosophy, belief and ritual. A key concept of Hinduism is "karma," which means the way people have behaved in their past lives affects their position in this life. The belief is that, when people die, they "reincarnate" (come back to life again as another person or even an animal). Karma places its followers in a constant state of doubt, as there is ongoing uncertainty that their good deeds will outweigh their bad ones.

Our loving God does not deal with us in such an arbitrary way. We can know with assurance that He is always caring for us, as referenced in Romans 8:28. We are also not without hope of our position in Christ and eternal destination. Jesus broke the cycle of fear and doubt by His sacrifice on the cross. When we place our trust in His ultimate act of love, we will obtain the wonderful gift of eternal life – a covenant or agreement that is final and settled!

Way Out

India, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, has one of the largest populations. Yet, so many Indians are in need of Jesus as their Saviour. The country's customs and beliefs, which are thousands of years old, make it challenging to share the Gospel. As there are Hindu-nationalist informants living in nearly every village, reporting on the activities relating to Christianity, dedicated followers of Christ risk attacks and arrests. When these Christians are attacked, they often drop the charges against their persecutors to extend forgiveness as witnesses of Christ. To assist believers, VOMC has a number of ongoing ministry projects in India. One aids orphans whose parents were killed for their faith in Jesus. Another operates a phone hotline so Christians who are targeted can report the violence perpetrated against them and seek needed assistance, ensuring appropriate legal support is given. Visit vomcanada.com to find out more about these projects.

Recommended Reads

Thomas: God's Courageous Missionary by The Voice of the Martyrs (ages 6-12);
Amy Carmichael: Rescuer of Precious Gems by Janet and Geoff Benge (ages 8-adult);
The Stone Crusher's Daughter by David Lundy (teen/adult); *God's Global Grace Movement* by David Witt (teen/adult).

Word spiral solutions: 1. Hindi 2. Indira Gandhi 3. Indian 4. New Delhi 5. Iconic 6. Caste 7. Exported 8. Diamond 9. Democratic 10. Cows 11. Spices

Sources:
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