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OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand some of the enormous problems and deep divisions in India and the challenges they pose to this society as it seeks to develop a more modern and prosperous way of life.
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India's Struggle to Develop

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1

This cartoon's rickety cart and oxen hint at the fact that two-thirds of this very poor nation still practice a primitive form of farming. Moreover, until the 1990s, government control and regulation of business was stricter in India than anywhere, except in the communist nations. Starting in 1991, however, it gave its businesses much more freedom and allowed more trade with other nations. India is now much more able to feed its huge population of more than one billion people. In some aspects of industry, such as computers, India is a world leader. This cartoon suggests businesses still face limits that keep them from growing as fast as they should if India is to become a truly modern nation.

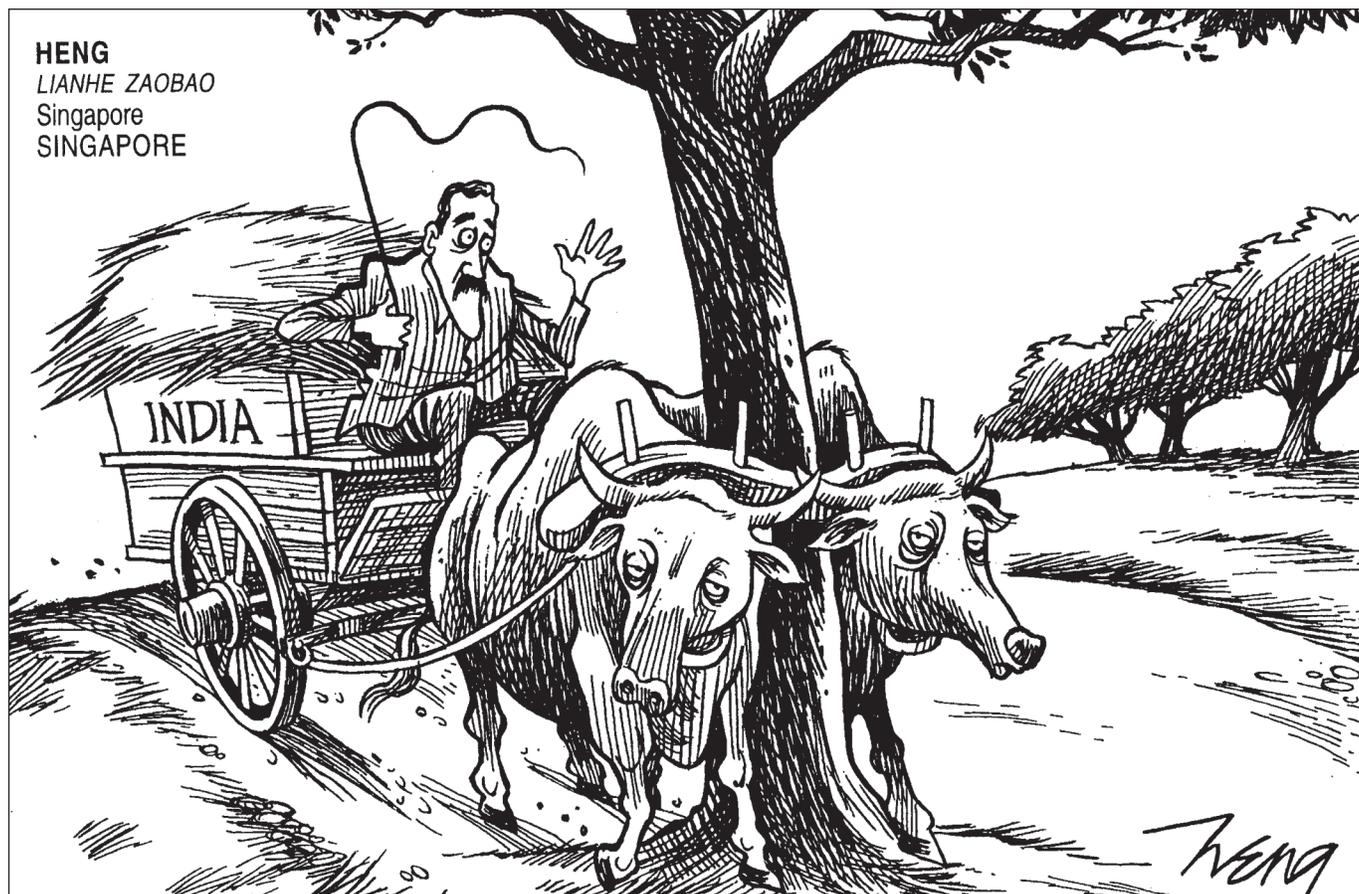
Illustration 2

For centuries, India's people were divided into castes, rigid groups that limited each individual's choices of work and place in society. Today in India, it is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of caste. Yet caste still affects millions. The Harijans are seen as below the other castes. Also called "untouchables," the Harijans do the lowest paid and most unpleasant kinds of work. This cartoon claims that a powerful caste system continues in India and continues to keep the Harijans down. Many experts say the continuing power of caste actually hurts all Indians, keeping talented people in the lower castes from contributing to the nation as much as they otherwise would.

Illustration 3

The word "communalism" refers to the different religious communities making up India. Most of India's people are Hindus. Many millions are Muslims. A smaller Sikh community exists, as do other religious groups. The greatest clashes in belief are between Muslims and Hindus. When India won its independence from Great Britain in 1947, many Muslims feared Hindus would be in control. Regions that were mainly Muslim were allowed to form a new nation of their own. Two areas 1,000 miles apart chose to do this, forming East and West Pakistan. Violence during this split led to hundreds of thousands killed. Such Hindu-Muslim violence inside India is still a regular and tragic feature of life there. The image of an Indian cobra here helps convey how destructive this violence is to the entire nation.

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

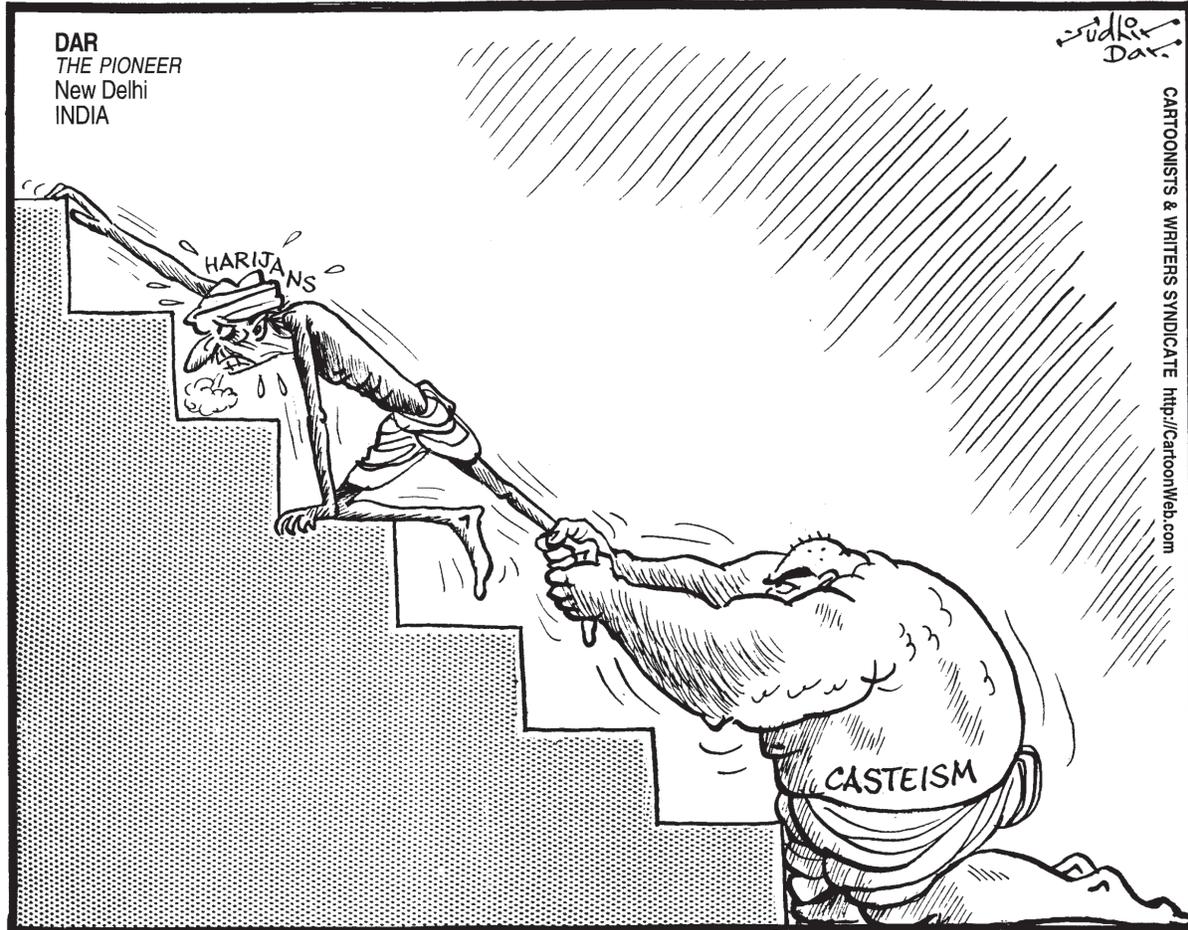
1. The rickety cart in this cartoon stands for the nation of India. How does the way India is drawn here help suggest that it is very poor?
2. Two-thirds of India's people still practice a primitive form of farming, as the cartoon also suggests. In the early 2000s, India's per-capita income was only about \$2,600.* (Other measures show it to be even lower.) Can you explain what "per-capita" income is?
3. Until the 1990s, government control and regulation of business in India was much stricter than in most other nations. Some experts say this kept India's economy from growing rapidly. Why might it do this?
4. Since 1991, India has given its businesses more freedom, and it has allowed more trade with other nations. But this cartoon suggests that these reforms have not gone far enough. How does it suggest this? What else do you know about India's economy?

* Figures based on 2003 estimates by The Economist magazine of the "purchasing power parity" of national currencies in dollars. This gives a comparison of what each nation's currency and what U.S. dollars would buy out of a comparable basket of goods.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small Group Activity:** Find articles on India's economy by looking through Encyclopedias, almanacs, or back issues of *The Economist*, *Forbes*, *Business Week*, or other news magazines. Each group member should read a different article on India's economy today and answer these questions: Based on the article you read, is the above cartoon accurate in its view of India's economy? In what ways is it most accurate? In what ways is it least accurate? As a group, discuss the articles you have read and your answers to these questions. Then share your results with the entire class.
2. Widespread famines used to be common in India. Today they are rare. Many experts say this is partly because of the so-called Green Revolution. Read more about this Green Revolution in India. Based on what you learn, write a brief essay in which you briefly describe the Green Revolution, explain its effects on India, and explain also how what you have learned affects your view of this cartoon.

Illustration 2



Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon is about the problem of caste in India. For centuries, India's people have been divided into castes. Can you explain what these castes are?
2. The great leader of India's independence movement was strongly opposed to the caste system. Can you name that famous leader? When and from whom did India win its independence?
3. Gandhi opposed the caste system. Today, India forbids segregating people by caste. Yet as this cartoon suggests, caste still affects millions of people in India—especially the Harijans. The Harijans are seen as even being below the castes and are excluded from them. The Harijans are also called “untouchables.” Can you explain why they are given that label?
4. What point does this cartoon make about the effect of the caste system on the Harijans? Many experts say the system actually harms *all* Indians. Why might the survival of the caste system harm all Indians?

Follow-up Activities

1. In the 1930s, Indian nationalist Mohandas Gandhi became a leader in the movement against the caste system. (Later, he was given the name “Mahatma,” meaning “Great Soul.”) He fought hard to improve the status of those considered lower than all the castes, the “untouchables.” He began calling these people “Harijan,” or “children of God,” the name commonly used today. How much did Gandhi succeed in reforming the caste system? What has happened to the caste system in independent India since Gandhi's time? Learn more about the caste system in India since Gandhi. To what extent does it survive? How has it been modified? Write a brief essay in which you present your findings.
2. This cartoon makes its point without a caption. Yet a caption might make it clearer to those who know little about India or its caste system. Write a short caption for this cartoon. Share the captions that you and others write in a class discussion of the cartoon and the caste system.

Illustration 3



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon is about the problem of communal violence in India. When people in India speak of “communalism,” they mainly mean the different religious communities making up India. What are India’s main religions?
2. India is made up of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and other religious groups. The greatest clashes of belief in India have been between the two largest of these religious groups. Can you name them?
3. When India won its independence in 1947, many Muslims feared that Hindus would be in control. Regions that were mainly Muslim were allowed to form a new nation of their own. Two areas one thousand miles apart did this. Can you explain?
4. Violence during this split led to hundreds of thousands of people killed. Tragically, that slaughter was by no means the end of this problem inside India. From the cartoon and from what you know about India, can you explain?

Follow-up Activities

1. Since gaining independence, Hindus and Muslims in India have often fought with each other violently. Learn more about one of these religious clashes in India’s history since 1947. Write a brief report about the episode. Describe what happened, and why. Also explain why you think India’s democratic political system was unable to keep this particular conflict from becoming violent. What might have been done instead to solve the conflict peacefully?
2. Hinduism is a complex and ancient religion. Read more about the key ideas and beliefs of Hinduism. How similar to or different from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—three monotheistic religions—are the ideas of Hinduism? Based on your reading, make two lists. One list should include Hindu ideas and practices that seem similar to those of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. The other list should include Hindu ideas and practices that seem different from those other religions. Share your lists in a class discussion.