

## Manipur



Capital: Imphal - Population: 32.70 Lakh - Language: Manipuri/Bengali

One of the 7 sisters, Manipur, was known as "Kangleipak" in ancient times. It appears to have absorbed Bronze Age cultural traits from Thailand and Upper Burma, where an indigenous early metal age culture developed around 4000 BC. The oval-shaped state has an exotic landscape with gentle blue hills, lush valleys, lakes, plentiful rivers and deep forests. Little islands of bio mass floating on the lakes are nesting sites for water birds.

The Meitei people are the main ethnic community of the state, along with other tribal groups such as Kukis and Nagas, Christians and Hindus. The people of the state are primarily into agriculture and forest based sustainable livelihoods.

For thousands of years they lived in peace in the valleys, alongside the Hao people, who lived in the hills. They were Ancestor worshippers, performing various rites and rituals which were observed through the year.

Meitei Pangal Muslims settled in the valleys during the 16th Century. Manipur came under British rule in 1891. It was the last independent state to be incorporated into British India.

The Meiteis invented polo, a sort of hockey on horse back. Traditionally, the first match is played between the chiefs of different clans. The East India Company adopted the game and it is still played in India, U.K. and the USA. In the USA, it is sometimes played on motor bikes instead of horses.

The Second World War came to Manipur when the Japanese Air Force bombed Imphal. The first bombing on 10th May 1942, and another on 16th May, caused many civilian casualties. The Japanese were beaten back before the Allies could enter Imphal. This was one of the turning points of the war.

The Manipuri dance, also known as Jagoi, is one of the major Indian classical dance forms. The dance is a team performance, with its unique costumes and a performance that is graceful, fluid, sinuous with emphasis on hand and upper body gestures. According to tradition of the Manipuri people, the dancers are the Gandharvas - celestial musicians and dancers. Men wear a dhoti, jacket and a white turban. Women's wear is a sarong tied around the waist, a loose short-sleeved blouse and a dupatta/scarf around the shoulders. The Ima market in Imphal is run by women.

The staple diet of Manipur consists of rice, fish, large varieties of leafy vegetables. Manipuris typically raise seasonal vegetables in a kitchen garden and rear fishes in small ponds around their houses. The taste is very different from other Indian cuisines because of the use of regional aromatic herbs and roots.

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## Meghalaya



Capital : Shillong - Population : 35.30 Lakhs - Language : Khasi

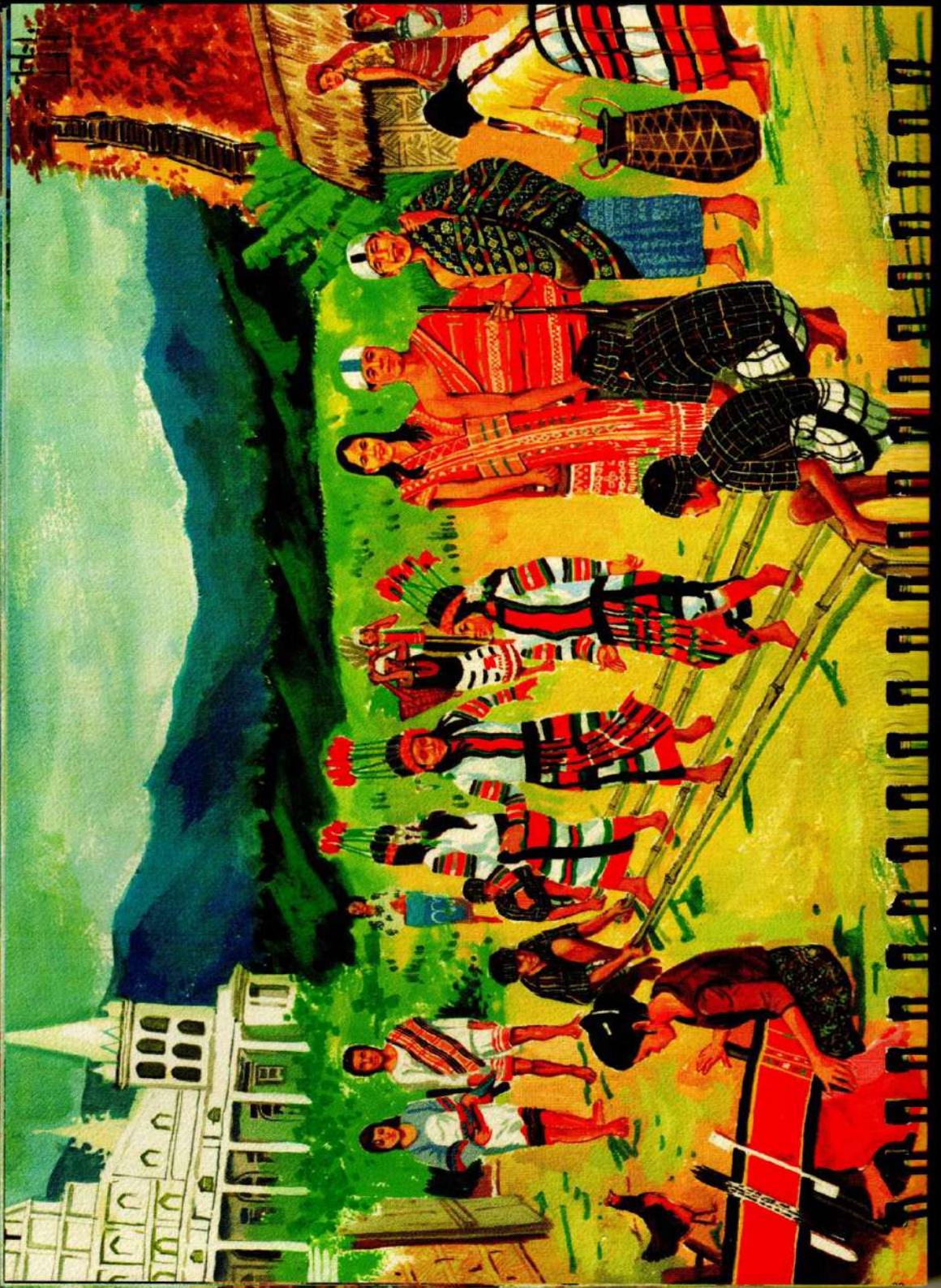
In 1970, in response to the demands of the tribals of the Meghalaya Plateau, the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills were formed into an autonomous state within Assam. Meghalaya became a separate state in 1972.

Neolithic sites discovered, so far, are located in Khasi and Garo Hills and in neighbouring states. Neolithic shifting cultivation is practiced even today.

Meghalaya's forests host 660 species of birds, including the peacock pheasant. Its forests support a vast diversity of flora. Two of the most important tree varieties are sal and teak. Meghalaya is also famous for its variety of orchids. Around 325 species have been catalogued. It also hosts a large variety of mammals, reptiles and insects. Besides elephants and bears, there are red pandas, civets, gaur, wild buffalo, deer, wild boar and the hoolock gibbon. The limestone caves in Meghalaya are home to the nation's rarest bat species. These are found in all districts of Meghalaya. Bio mass makes little floating islands on the lakes, where water birds can make their nests. Besides lizards, crocodiles and tortoises, Meghalaya also has a large variety of snakes, including the python, copperhead, green tree racer, Indian cobra, king cobra, coral snake and vipers. Except for the python, all these are deadly. Meghalaya is also home to over 250 species of butterflies, nearly a quarter of all butterfly species found in India.

Christian missionaries arrived with the British. They set up schools which taught English and converted the tribals. Today, they still speak English and their mother-tongue.

Jadoh is basically red rice, cooked with generous amounts of pork, chicken or fish. Nakhmam Bitchi is a popular soup, made with dried fish and flavoured with lots of chillies and pepper. Pumaloi (powdered rice, which has been steamed) is a favorite rice dish of Meghalayan cuisine.



## Mizoram



Capital : Aizawl - Population : 15.80 Lakhs - Language : Mizo

Geologically, the Mizo Hills form a part of the Rakhine (or Arakan) mountains. After Indian independence, it was called the Lushai Hills district under the Government of Assam. In 1972 the district was declared a union territory and was given a more culturally inclusive name, Mizoram. Ultimately Mizoram became a full-fledged federal state of Indian Union in 1986. The head of the village, the Chief, or Lal, allocates lands for cultivation, settled all disputes in the villages, feeds and cares for the poor and offers shelter to anyone seeking refuge. The Mizo history in the 18th and 19th centuries is marked by many instances of tribal raids and retaliatory expeditions.

More than three-fourths of the land area of Mizoram is forested. Thick, evergreen forests contain valuable timber trees. The woodlands also provide habitats for many animals, including elephants, tigers, bears, deer, monkeys, gibbons and serows which are wild goat-like mammals. These animals are protected in a number of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

The residents of Mizoram consist almost entirely of Scheduled Tribes, loosely called Mizo, One tribe, the Chakma, speaks an Indo-Aryan language, but Mizo and English are the principal languages. Having no script of its own, Mizo uses the Roman alphabet. They worshipped all sorts of objects and natural phenomena.

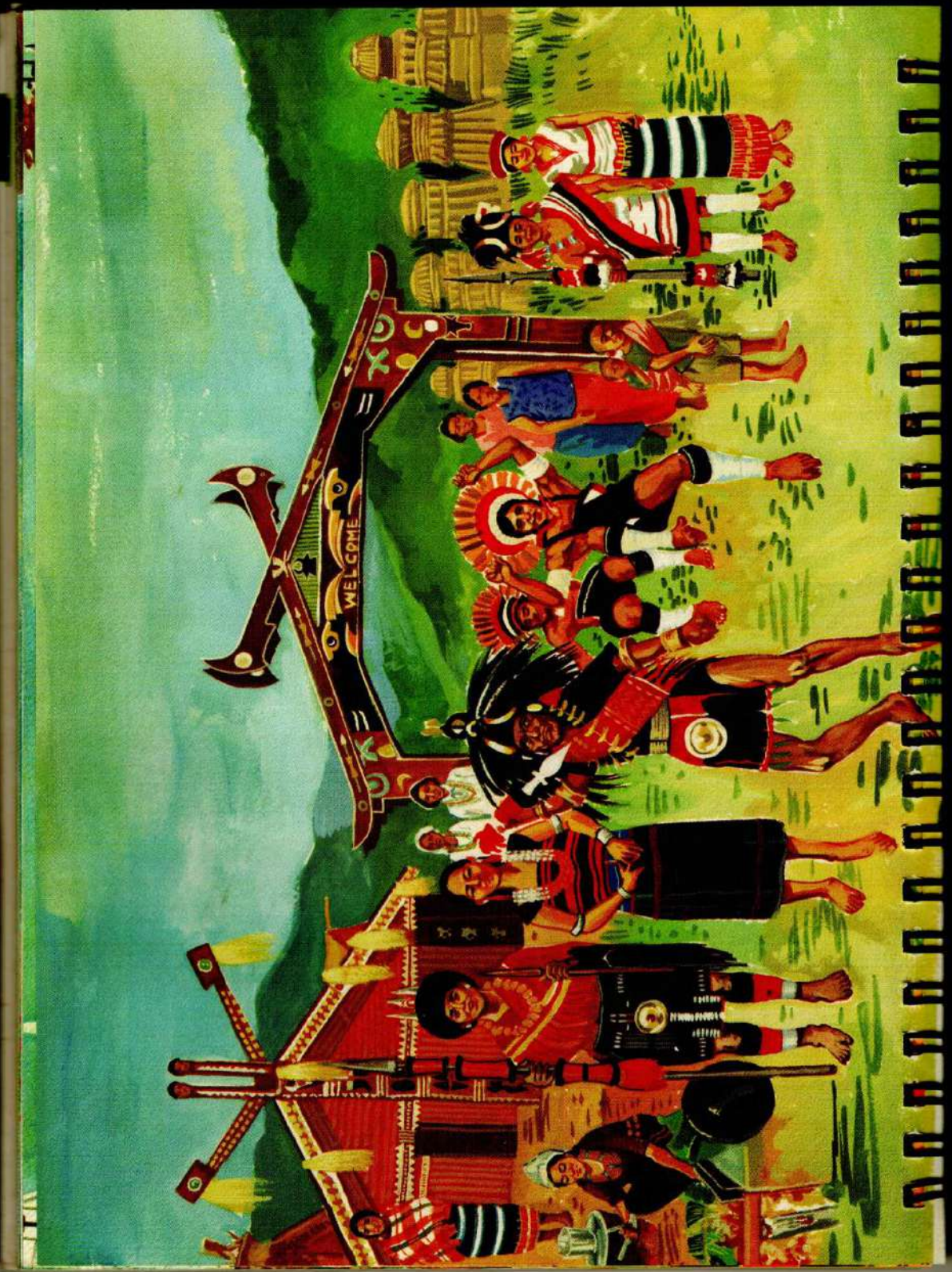
Aizawl is the state's only large city. Agriculture engages more than two-thirds of the workforce. Institutionalised education is attributable largely to Christian missionaries, who established the first schools around the turn of the 19th/20th century. By early 21st century, Mizoram had 2,000 schools. It's literacy is one of the highest in the Indian states. They eat vegetables, but they prefer to add some meat, - duck is the favourite - or fish. Mustard oil or water are the cooking mediums, but they use very little. Bamboo shoots, ducks, eggs and lentils are staples.

The Meetei people are the main ethnic community of the state, along with other tribal groups such as Kukis and Nagas. The economy is based on agriculturists and forest based sustainable livelihoods. Tourism is a large part of the economy.

Their Cheraw dance seems like training for dodging snakes. Two long bamboo poles are held by two men, one at each end. The poles are clashed together in time to the beat of drums. The dancers have to jump into the space and out before the poles crack their ankle bones.

Khullaum is a dance where two rings of people, one ring for men and inner circle for women. They sway the shawls across their shoulders. Gradually they join the circles and dance with partners. The music is provided by drums and a gong.

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## Nagaland



Capital : Kohima - Population : 32.00 Lakhs - Language : Nagamese

Between the decade of 1960 /1970, Assam lost much of its territory to a new state. In 1963 the Naga Hills district became Nagaland and is **one of the smallest states of India**. It is mostly mountainous, except those areas bordering the Assam valley. The mountain range forms a natural barrier between Nagaland and Burma.

Nagaland is inhabited by **16 tribes**. Each tribe is unique in character with its own distinct customs, language and dress. They took the heads of their enemies, believing that would absorb the strengths and powers of their victims. Most villages had a skull house and each man in the village was expected to contribute to the collection. The taking of a head is symbolic of courage, and the men who had no heads were dubbed women or cows. The head taking custom is now abandoned.

Two common threads bind the eastern states. Language and religion. English is in predominant use and the people are mostly Christian.

Nagaland became the 16th state of India on 1st December, 1963. The Nagaland Assembly proclaimed **English as the official language** of Nagaland and it is the medium of education in Nagaland. Every tribe has its own mother tongue but communicates with other tribes in English.

Sixteen rivers flow through Nagaland. The four major rivers are the **Doyang, Dikhu, Dhansiri** and the **Tizu**. The Tizu is the only one that does not flow westward into the Brahmaputra river.

Agriculture is the most important economic activity. Rice is the major crop, but maize, linseed, potato, pulses, soyabean, sugarcane, jute, gram, cotton and castor are also farmed. However, self sufficiency in foodgrains is yet to be achieved and the state is still dependent on imports. Besides agriculture, economic activity includes forestry, tourism, insurance, real estate and miscellaneous cottage industries.

The gayal, also known as 'mithun', is a large domestic bovine distributed in Northeast India and Bangladesh. They look like a buffalo trying to be a cow. They are a source of milk.

The question is, why are so many Bengali men named 'Mithun'?

The state has experienced insurgency, as well as inter-ethnic conflict, but is now peaceful. The state has a rich variety of flora and fauna. The most important of all festivals in Nagaland is the **Hornbill Festival**, which takes place from 1st to 10th December. Along with traditional dance, song, food, wrestling, craft and archery, There is also the Naga chilli-eating championship!

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पुस्तकालय



Capital : **Bhubaneshwar** - Population : **4.57 Crores** - Language : **Oriya**

In different eras, this region and various parts of the region were known by different names. The boundaries have varied over the ages. The ancient kingdom of Kalinga coincides with the borders of modern-day Odisha.

Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty, conquered the region in the Kalinga War, near present-day Bhubaneswar. The bloodshed and suffering of the war deeply affected Ashoka. He became a pacifist and converted to Buddhism. He sent peace emissaries to various neighbouring nations. The event caused the spread of Buddhism in Asia. Later, the kings of the Somavamsi dynasty began to unite the region. By the reign of Yayati II, around 1025 CE, they had integrated the region into a single kingdom. Yayati II is supposed to have built the Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar. They were replaced by the Eastern Ganga dynasty. Notable rulers of the dynasty were Anantavarman Chodaganga, who began re-construction of the present-day **Shri Jagannath Temple** in Puri, and King Narasimhadeva I, who constructed the **Konarak**, the Sun Temple.

The year 1568 CE is considered a pivotal point in the region's history. In 1568 CE, the region was conquered by the armies of the Sultanate of Bengal led by General Kalapahad. The region lost its political identity. The following rulers of the region were more tributary lords than actual kings. After 1751, the Marathas gained control of the region for almost fifty years. In 1803, the region was taken over by the British, who divided the region into parts of other provinces. The province of Odisha was formed in 1936.

The coal-fields in the Mahanadi and Ib river basins are the richest sites for fossils.

**Kumar Purnima** occurs on the first full moon day of the month of Ashwin, the birthday of the handsome god Kartikeya. It is a harvest festival marking the end of the monsoon. It is celebrated by unmarried girls who pray for a handsome husband.

The Shree Jagannath Temple of Puri is an important Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Jagannath - a form of lord Vishnu. It one of the **Char Dhams**. Puri and the Jagannath Temple were invaded 18 times by Hindu and Muslim rulers, from the 4th century AD till the early 19th century, looting the treasures of the temple. Odisha, including Puri and its temple, were part of British India from 1803 till India attained independence. Puri is now a tourist attraction, both for the temple and the beach, which is the site of the annual Puri Beach Festival.

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Capital : Chandigarh - Population : 3.00 Crore - Language : Punjabi

The name of the state denotes "Five Rivers", but after Partition, Pakistan has three. Somehow, ancient Punjab was always the first place people visited, examples are Fa Hien, Huen Tsuen and Alexander of Macedon. Travellers and invaders came through the Khyber and Bolan passes in Afghanistan.

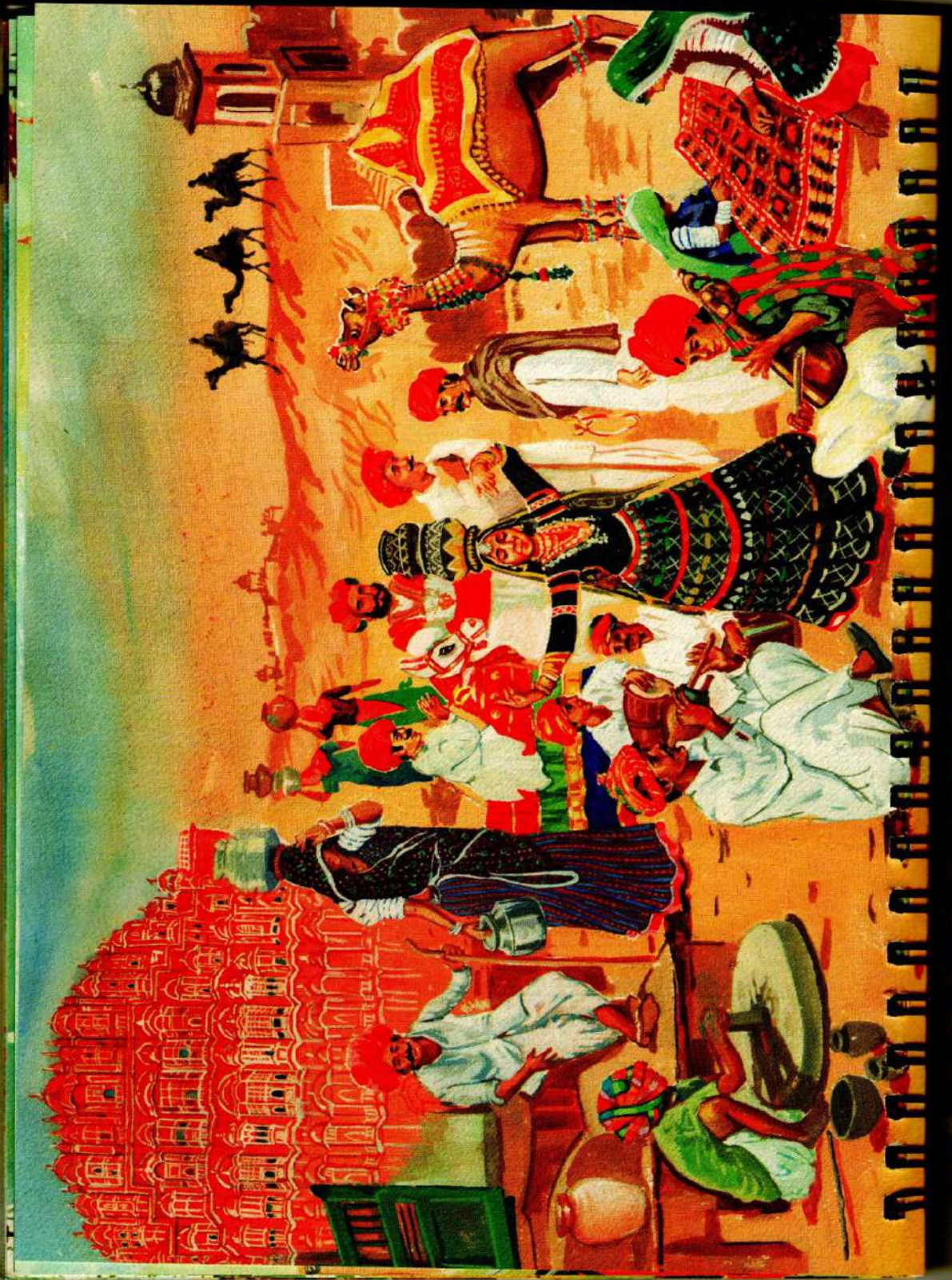
Archaeological discoveries show that, by about 3300 BCE, the small communities in and around the Indus River basin had evolved, giving rise to the Indus Valley Civilisation, the earliest civilisation in human history. At its height, it boasted large cities like Harappa and Mohenjodaro, in West Punjab (now Pakistan). Punjab was one of the states that gave the Britishers a hard time.

The 13th of April 1919 was the festival of Baisakhi, the main Sikh festival. Many villagers had gathered at Jallianwala Bagh. Major Dyer had banned assemblies. He took an armed force to a raised bank overlooking the Bagh. He ordered them to shoot at the crowd. Dyer continued the firing for about ten minutes, until the ammunition supply was almost exhausted. Dyer later stated that 1,650 rounds had been fired. Official British Indian sources gave a figure of 379 identified dead with approximately 1,100 wounded. The casualty number estimated by the Indian National Congress was more than 1,500 injured, with approximately 1,000 dead. The episode was one of the reasons for India to take decisive steps to end the Britisher's British rule in India.

The Bhakra Dam on the Sutlej River made Punjab the granary of India. Punjabis, including Sikhs, are mostly farmers. They supply India 10% of the cotton, 20% of the wheat and 11% of rice. When Pakistan was formed, Hindu and Sikh refugees came to India with just clothes on their backs. They left their houses, their fields and their businesses, but very soon were prosperous again. They are hard working, enterprising, boisterous and fun loving. There is a joke that says the State Bird of Punjab is Tandoori chicken! The "bhanga", a harvest festival dance, is today danced at every marriage procession in North India, in which the groom arrives at the bride's home on a white horse, followed on foot by his family, friends and a noisy usually tuneless band. Bollywood loves the Bhangra.

Punjabis are a martial race. They love a nice fight, are faithful friends and mostly very jovial. They are very keen on sports and Punjab supplies India most of the Olympic athletes. There is a custom in most families that their second son joins one of the Armed Forces.

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## Rajasthan



Capital : **Jaipur** - Population : **7.56 Crores** - Language : **Hindi**

Rajasthan means 'The Place of Kings'. It is the largest state of the India, but most of it is desert. Camels are transportation and a source of milk.

The history of Rajasthan goes back to 5,000 years ago. Excavations at Kalibanga in northern Rajasthan revealed the existence of human settlements on the banks of a river, believed to be the Saraswati, which dried up later. It was a part of the Maurya Empire around 321-184 BCE. Most of Rajasthan is the wide and inhospitable Thar Desert, which shares a border with Pakistan. Part of Rajasthan came under the Mughals. Emperor Akbar arranged matrimonial alliances to gain the trust of the Rajputs. He married to Jodha Bai, Princess of Amer, and granted high offices to Rajput princes like Raja Man Singh. But Rana Pratap, who never accepted Akbar as his ruler, was constantly at war with him.

If Rajput rulers lost to invaders, their womenfolk would commit *Jauhar* (suicide by throwing themselves on a pyre) to protect their chastity and self-respect.

Rajasthan's independent kingdoms created a rich architectural and cultural heritage, seen today in their numerous forts and palaces. The palace of Udaipur was built in the middle of a lake. It is now a many-starred hotel. So is the Neemrana in Chitorgardh, which is palace/fort, clinging to a cliff. Many other palaces were sold to hotel chains when their owners could not finance their upkeep. The most modern palace is in Jodhpur, which was built in 1930. The *Hawa Mahal* was built in 1799 by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. Its unique five-storey exterior is akin to the honeycomb of a beehive with its 953 small windows decorated with intricate *lattice work*. The original intent was to allow royal ladies to observe everyday life and festivals celebrated in the street below, without being seen. This architectural feature also allows cool air to pass through. Most people assume the street view of the *Hawa Mahal* is the front of the palace, but it is actually the back.

The famous *Jaisalmer Desert Festival* is a three day annual event, held in the month of February every year. Cultural and colourful events, from camel races to turban tying competitions are enjoyed. The rich culture of the region is on display with performing arts like *Kalbelia* dances, folk songs and music.

No one could ever forget the famous *Gair and Fire dancers*, which are a major attraction. Camel races and turban tying competitions are organised. It is held in February, every year, in Rajasthan.

The Rajasthani turban is bigger than the heads they adorn. The womens' *ghagra-cholis* are covered with mirror insets and their *dupattas* are bright coloured, bringing life to the dreary, sandy colour of their background.

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Capital : Gangtok - Population : 6.60 Lakhs - Language : Sikkimese

Nestling in the Himalayan mountains is the state of Sikkim. *Kanchenjunga*, the world's third-highest peak is situated on the border between Sikkim and Nepal. Most of the land is unfit for agriculture because of the rocky, precipitous slopes. Some hill slopes have now been converted to terrace farms. About a third of the state is heavily forested. Sikkim is the least populous and second smallest of the Indian states.

Numerous snow-fed streams combine to create the *Teesta River* and its tributary, the *Rangteet*. About a third of the state is heavily forested. The mountains surround Sikkim, are lower in the southern reaches, which are the most densely populated. 35% of the state is covered by the *Khangchendzonga National Park*. Gangtok is the largest city.

The earliest records of Sikkim date from the 17th Century. The *Chogyals* were absolute monarchs of Sikkim from 1642 to 1975, when the monarchy was abolished and its people voted to make Sikkim India's 22nd state.

Sikkim is notable for its biodiversity, including alpine and subtropical climates. Modern Sikkim is a multiethnic and multilingual Indian state. Sikkim has 11 official languages: Besides Sikkimese, Nepali, and English, there are seven other languages. English is taught in schools and used in government documents. The predominant religions are Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism.

The *Karmapa Lama* is the head of the *Karma Kagyu*, one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The historical seat of the *Karmapas* is *Tsurphu Monastery* in the *Tolung valley* of Tibet. After the Chinese took Tibet, the *Karmapa's* principal seat in exile is the *Dharma Chakra Centre* at *Rumtek Monastery* in Sikkim. The *Karmapas* are the holders of the *Black Crown* and are thus sometimes known as "*the Black Hat Lamas*".

Sikkim's economy is largely dependent on tourism and the state had the third-smallest GDP among Indian states. The state is *completely organic* and is also among the fastest-growing. Vegetables are grown on terraced fields. Private dealers import fruit and vegetables to sell in market places.

The State Government imports grains and oils from other states, which is distributed to people holding ration cards, that state the number of family members and their age. Men and some couples go to cities in India to find work and send money back to their relatives.

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# Tamil Nadu



Capital : Chennai - Population : 8.88 Crores - Language : Tamil

The region of Tamil Nadu has continuous human habitation from 15,000 BCE. It has a 580 km coastline.

The three ancient Tamil empires of Chera, Chola and Pandya had a unique culture and language, contributing to the growth of some of the oldest literature in the world. The Cholas, who re-emerged from obscurity in the 9th century, defeated the Pallavas and the Pandyas, and extended their empire over the entire southern peninsula, upto the Bay of Bengal. Rapid changes due to incursions of Muslim armies in the 14th century, the Tamil country became part of the Vijayanagara Empire. The European trading companies appeared during the 17th century and eventually took over the country. By the 18th century, the Madras Presidency comprised most of southern India. In 1956, the areas where Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam speakers were separated, and Madras state was renamed Tamil Nadu.

It is the largest textile hub of India. The textile industry plays a significant role in the Indian economy. It provides direct employment to an estimated 35 million people and thereby contributing 4% of GDP and 35% of gross export earnings.

Pongal is an important festival, which thanks the Sun God for a successful harvest. It is celebrated by Tamils all over the world. The festival marks the day when the sun starts its journey to the north. Part of the celebration is the boiling of the first rice of the season, consecrated to the Sun - the Surya Mangalyam. The rice has to be boiled in sun light

Jallikattu, a bull taming sport, played in the villages of Tamil Nadu, differs from the Spanish Running of The Bulls, in that the bulls called by the name Jallikattu Kaalais are not killed in the end and the bullfighters are not allowed to carry weapons to the field. Jallikattu is usually conducted as part of the Pongal celebrations especially on Mattu Pongal day. A specific breed of cattle is bred for this purpose.

Tamil Nadu is the second largest state economy after Maharashtra. Due to changes in science and technology, agricultural practices have undergone radical improvement since Independence. The change is visible not only in agricultural practices but the crops they grow.

In Madurai stands the beautiful Meenakshi Temple. Built in 17th Century, it has the largest covered area in India. There is a vast hall called the 'Hall of a Thousand Pillars'. Every inch of the pillars is carved and each pillar is a work of art. Every year thousands of pilgrims visit the temple.

Lakhs of people emigrate seeking work, mostly to Malaysia, South Africa, and the UK.

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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

## Telangana



Capital : **Hyderabadi** - Population : **3.96 Crores** - Language : **Telegu**

The terrain of Telangana comprises mostly of hills, mountain ranges and thick dense forests. On 2nd of June, 2014, the area was separated from the north western part of Andhra Pradesh as the newly formed 29th state. Telangana was awarded separate statehood on 2nd June, 2014. Hyderabad was its historic capital.

There are other major cities including Warangal, Nizamabad, Khammam and Karimnagar. It is the twelfth largest state and the twelfth-most populated state in India.

It has ELEVEN wildlife sanctuaries, including two tiger sanctuaries.

The **Falaknuma Palace** has 60 rooms and 22 halls. The ceiling of the State Reception room is decorated with frescoes. The ballroom contains a two ton manually operated, said to be the only one in the world. The library has a carved walnut wood roof, a replica of the one at Windsor Castle. The dining hall can seat 101 guests and the chairs are carved rosewood. There are two identical billiard tables, one in Buckingham Palace and the other in the Falaknuma Palace. It was the private property of the Nizam's family and was not open to the public until 2000.

The **Salar Jung Museum** in Hyderabad is one of the three National Museums and is one of the largest in the world. The museum's collection was the property of the Salar Jung family.

Daggers that belonged to Empress Noor Jehan, Emperors Jehangir and Shah Jehan; the turbans and chair of Tippu Sultan; furniture and paintings on display. Among the sculpture is the world famous "Veiled Rebecca" by the Italian sculpture, Benzoni. The beautiful sculpture is visible through a veil of marble!!!

When in Independence came in 1947, nearly all of these states agreed to become part of India. But the Nizam emigrated to Australia with all his wealth.

The Dussehra is also called 'Jumbo Savari' for the grand elephant procession, where elephants carry ornate howdahs and are adorned with golden head dresses and elaborately painted trunks. The Charminar, the Golconda, Bhongir and Khammam Forts and the Nagarjunasagar are magnets for tourists. Hyderabad continues to be the capital of both, Telangana and Andhra. But Andhra will have to make their own capital by 2024.

The economy of Telangana is mainly driven by agriculture but the state is also the main administrative centre to a large number of Indian defence aero-space and research labs like Bharat Dynamics Limited, Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory, Defence Research and Development Organisation. The state is also the main administrative centre to a large number of Indian defence, aero-space and research labs.

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## Tripura



Capital : Agartala - Population : 45.60 Lakh - Language : Bengali

The State of Tripura has a long history. During the 14th and 15th centuries AD., the Kingdom of Tripura was at its peak. It included the whole eastern region of Bengal from the Brahmaputra River in the north and west, the Bay of Bengal in the south and Burma to the east. The last ruler of Tripura was Kirit Bikram Bahadur, who reigned from Agartala 1947 to 1949, after which the kingdom merged with India on 9th September, 1949.

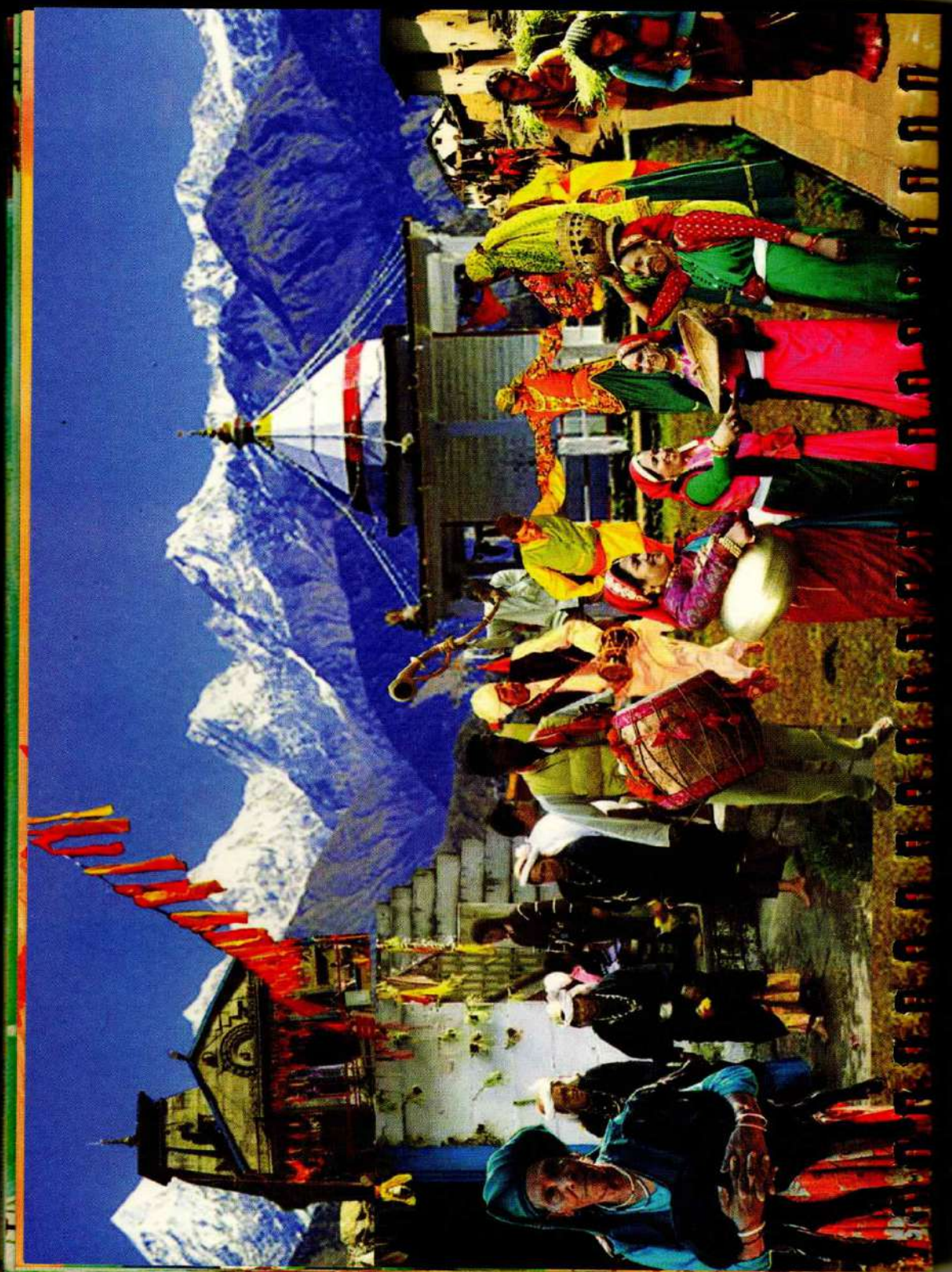
The origins of the kingdom are shrouded in the myths in the chronicles of the Kings of Tripura, which meanders from Hindu mythology to Tripuri folklore. The 14th century was their most glorious period. Their power and fame was acknowledged by the Mughals.

In 1871, the British Indian government appointed an "agent" to assist the Maharaja in the administration. The capital was shifted to Agartala in the early part of 19th century and remains the capital.

Tripura joined the Republic of India in October 1947.

Sachin Dev Burman and his only son RD Burman came from Tripura, they rise to be music directors in Bollywood. SD was a composer, and his musical talent made him one of the most influential music directors of the Indian film industry. The Burmans composed musical scores for 331 films from the 1960s to the 1990s. "Dum Maro Dum" from the film Hare Rama Hare Krishna was a huge hit, and is still a favourite.

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## Uttarakhand



Capital : Dehradun - Population : 1.03 Crore - Language : Garhwali/Kumaoni

Uttarakhand was the ancient Puranic term for the central stretch of the Himalayas. In ancient times its peaks and valleys were known as Devbhumi, the abode of deities and source of the sacred river Ganges. The **Badrinath temple** was re-established as a major pilgrimage site by Adi Shankara in the 7th century. In earlier days, pilgrims used to walk hundreds of miles to visit the temple. It has been repeatedly destroyed by earthquakes and avalanches. As late as 1945, the town consisted only of the 20-odd huts used by the temple's staff. In recent years its popularity has increased, with an estimated 6 lakh pilgrims visiting during the 2006 season, compared to less than 1 lakh in 1961. Besides Benaras, **Haridwar** is also a place where people go to immerse the ashes of their relatives.

It is the youngest state in India, carved out of northern Uttar Pradesh in 2000, as the 27th State of India. It lies on the southern slope of the Himalaya range and the climate and vegetation vary greatly with elevation, from glaciers at the highest elevations to subtropical forests, closer to the plains. It has two divisions, Garhwal and Kumaon. The state hosts the Bengal tiger in the **Corbett National Park**, the oldest national park in the Indian subcontinent.

Rishis and Sadhus go there to visit the temples to meditate and attain Nirvan and pilgrims go to Badrinath and Kedarnath. Uttarakhand has the highest percentage of Brahmins of any state in India. **Trekking and rafting** attracts a different type of tourists.

The Valley of Flowers is home to a large variety of flowers, as the name suggests. Sir Joseph Hooker, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in England, visited the region and realised this. The result was the founding of the Forest Research Institute in 1878 in Dehradun. The Valley of Flowers is a UNESCO World Heritage site, located near the Jyoshinath temple.

The Himalayan ecosystem provides habitats for many animals including bharal (mountain goats), snow leopards and tigers as well as plants and rare herbs.

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## Uttar Pradesh



Capital: Lucknow - Population: 22 Crore - Language: Hindi / Santhali

Lucknow, Agra and Varanasi are part of the Uttar Pradesh Heritage Arc.

U.P, the Hindi heartland, hosts over two hundred million people, the largest population in India. Archeological evidence suggests this region was inhabited by Stone Age hunter/gatherers 85 thousand years ago. The state is a strategic military position as it touches Tibet and Nepal on the northern border of the country.

The sacred Ganges River and its major tributary, the Jamuna, flow through the state. In Allahabad is the 'sangam', the merging of the Ganges and Jamuna rivers. Varanasi and Allahabad are pilgrimage destinies, as it is believed that a dip in the sacred water will wash away all sins.

Agra was the capital of the Moghul dynasty for centuries. The Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort were built there before the Moghuls moved to Delhi. Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Lucknow was exiled to Burma by the British after the revolt of the Sepoys in 1857.

Millions of Hindus go to Varanasi to take a dip in the holy river Ganga and purify themselves. Varanasi is also a centre of silk weaving. No Indian bride goes to her new home without a gold-bordered Banarasi saree. Many old people and widows go to Varanasi to die. Some because they want to spend their last days near the holy river and sadly, some who are evicted by their families. There are charitable places where they can live.

Close to Varanasi is Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon and died under the Bodhi tree, where a huge Buddhist temple was built by the Japanese.

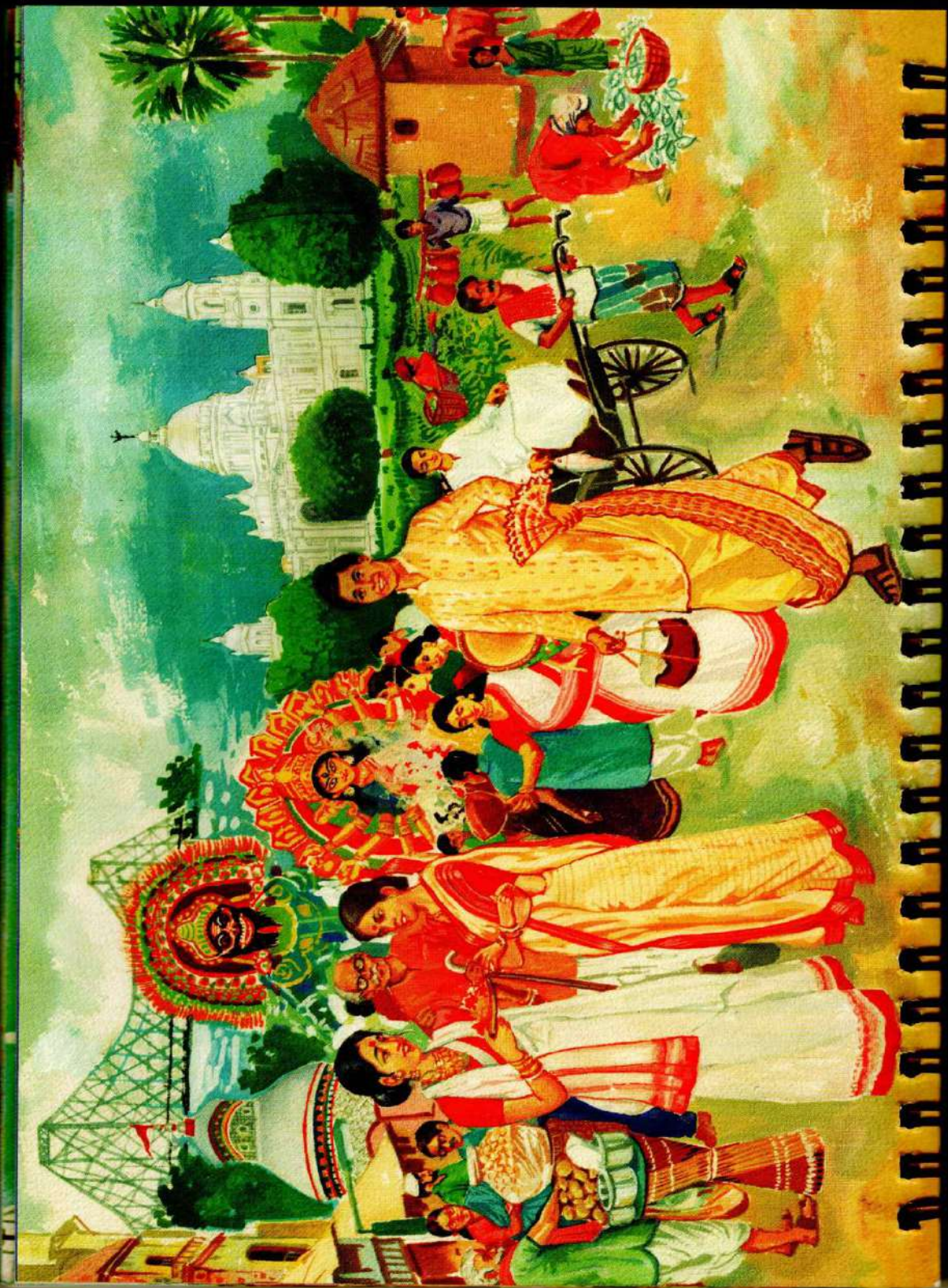
Other major cities in the state are Kanpur, Lucknow and Allahabad. Moradabad has the largest production of brass. Lucknow is famous for chikankari, a type of embroidery that is usually seen on kurtas, male and female.

The Kumbh Melas are held periodically, by rotation, at Haridwar, (Uttarakhand), Allahabad (U.P), Nashik (Maharashtra) and Ujjain (Rajasthan). The main festival site is Allahabad, where the rivers Ganges, Yamuna and the invisible Sarasvati join together. Over 1 crore pilgrims bathe in the river.

The origin of the classical dance, Kathak, originated in U.P. under Wajid Ali Shah, ruler of Awadh. The term Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word Katha which means "story" and Kathaka which means "the one who tells a story".

Chikankari embroidery is a speciality of Lucknow. It is used to adorn kurtas around the neck and the buttons are sometimes dotted all over the kurta. Winter wear is woollen, shin-long sherwanis with stand-up collars. Shawls emerge from metal trunks, where neem leaves had protected them from pests. Sandals are replaced by jootis.

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## West Bengal



Capital : Kolkata - Population : 9.9 Crore - Language : Bengali

The delta of the conjoined Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers split into more than 50 rivers, which run through Bengal and Bangladesh, making it one of the most fertile areas in the world. The Mughal Empire considered it as the wealthiest province. In 1757, Siraj-ud-Daula was defeated by Robert Clive in the battle of Plassey. This was the turning point for the British East India Company. They started making laws and enforcing them. Calcutta was the capital of India and the headquarters of the East India Company until 1930. The Bengal famine of 1943, during World War II, was due to the failure of the monsoon. Because the administration did not move the grain to where it was needed, an estimated 2.1 million died from starvation, malaria and other diseases.

After Independence, Bengal was divided along religious lines, into two entities: West Bengal in India and East Bengal, part of newly created East Pakistan. In 1972, East Bengal became the independent country of Bangladesh.

The symbol of Kolkata is the massive Howrah Bridge over the Hooghly River. It is a cantilever bridge, which means the span does not rest on pillars. It is the 6th longest cantilever bridge in the world. Another landmark is the Victoria Memorial, built of white Makrana marble. The design echoes the Taj Mahal, with its dome and corner towers.

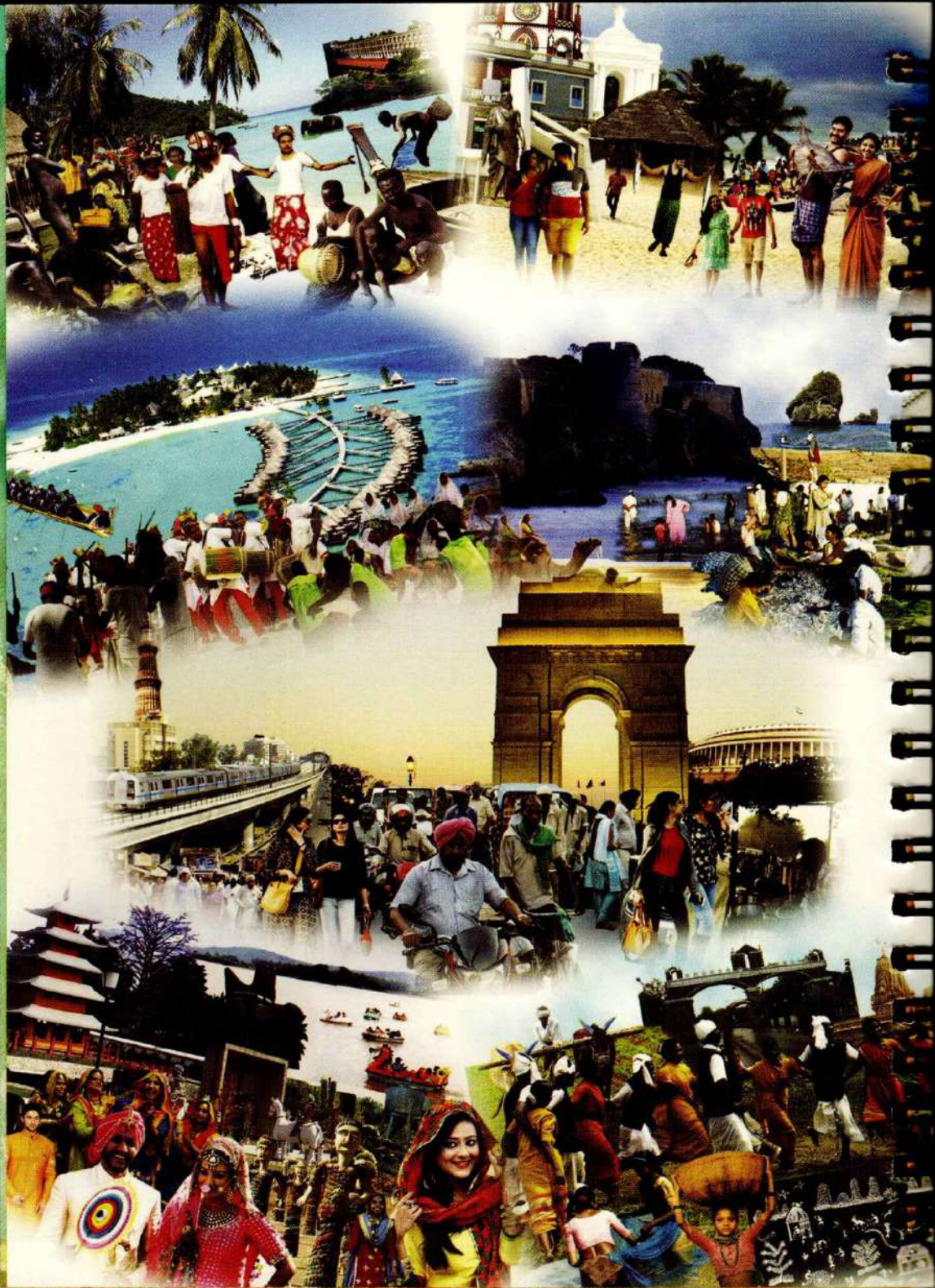
Many Indian Nobel Laureates are from Bengal. Scientist Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose was a polymath and an early writer of science fiction. Satyanand Bose who collaborated with Einstein, discovered the atomic particle, which is named the 'boson' in his honour. And of course, the immortal Rabindranath Tagore, who needs no introduction. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a polymath and a key figure of the Bengal Renaissance. (He was a philosopher, academic educator, writer, translator, printer, publisher, reformer, entrepreneur and philanthropist.)

Durga Puja is the major festival in Bengal. Celebrated in the Hindu month of Ashwin (October), coinciding with Dussehra. This marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon, Mahishasura -symbolic of the victory of good over evil. Her images are all over the city, set in elaborately decked pandals.

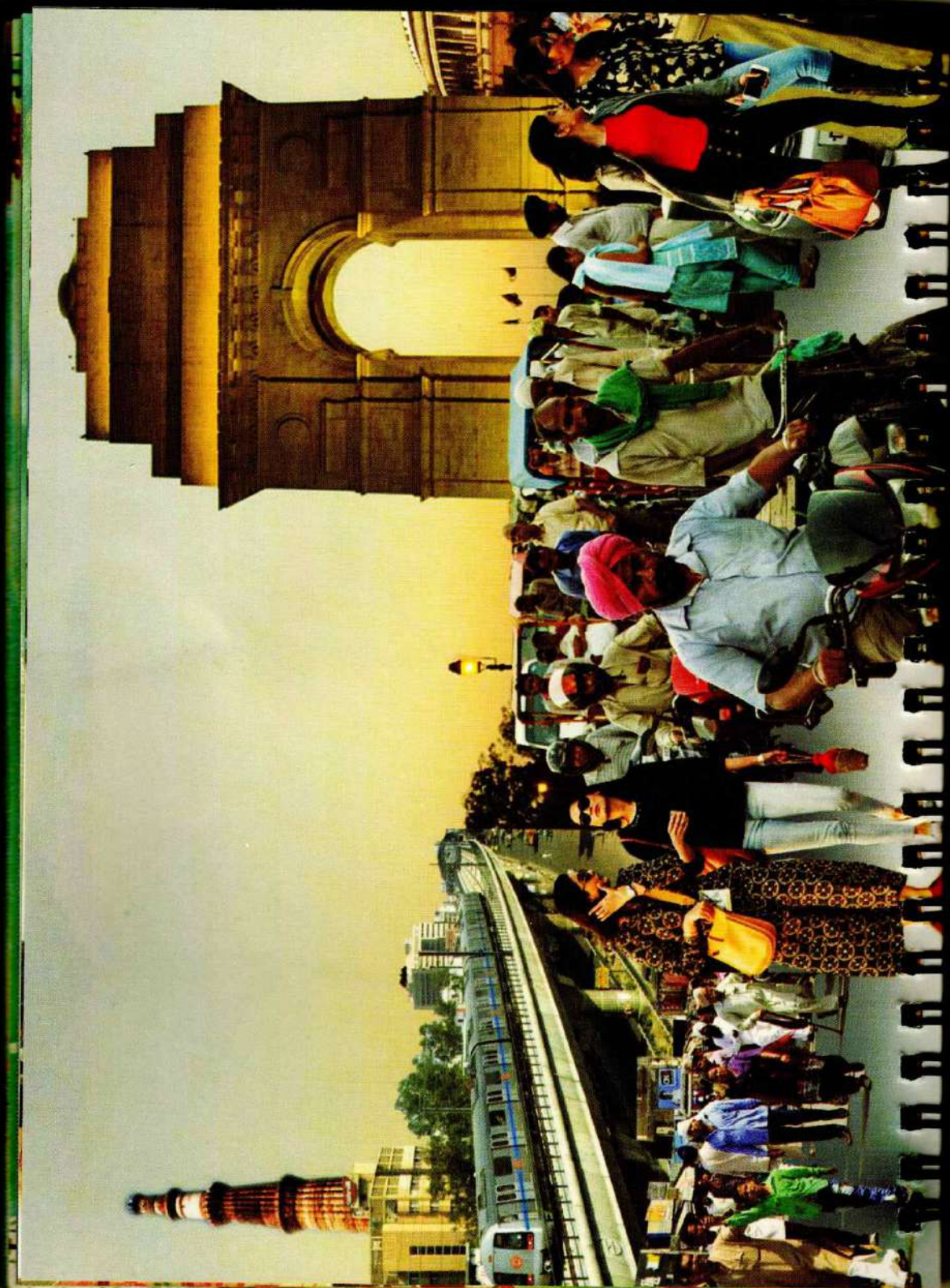
"Maach", Bengali for fish, is the staple protein in Bangla. Food is cooked in raw mustard oil, which takes non-Bengalis by surprise as it is quite pungent.

Men wear the usual dhoti-kurta, but the Bengali dhoti is resplendent, with the most pleats. It is easy to recognise a Bengali housewife. She ties her keys to a corner of her pallav, which goes under the left arm and over the right shoulder, It is very practical because they can't be lost and no one can steal them.

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## Delhi



(National Capital Territory) - Population : 2.98 Crore - Language : Hindi

The Delhi we see now is two Delhis. Old and New. But before these cities there were previous Delhis. The history books talk of the Seven Cities of Delhi. In actual fact, there were many more. So, depending on whom you ask or what you're reading, Siri is either the second, third or fourth city.

The Tomar Rajputs are credited for founding Delhi. Prithviraj Chauhan took over and extended the city called Qila Rai Pithora. The ruins of the fort are still visible in the Qutab Minar area. Prithviraj, left his slave, Qutubuddin Aibak, as his viceroy and went off to battle Mohammed Ghori in 1192, Qutubuddin captured Delhi from the Chauhans and, after Ghori died, he assumed the throne and was the first Sultan of Delhi. He built the Qutab Minar, which is the tallest brick building in the world. Razia Sultan, his grand daughter, the first woman to rule in India, reigned for a mere three years. They were followed by the line of Khilji rulers. Built by Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khilji in 1303, Siri is the third city of Delhi. Siri Fort had the Palace of Thousand Pillars, which is now in ruins. In the 1320s Ghias-ud-din Tughlak invaded India and created the city of Tughlakabad, the fourth Delhi.

One of the Tughlak rulers, Firoze Tughlak created the fifth city of Delhi, Firozabad or Firozeshah Kotla next to the river Yamuna. Shergarh is the sixth city, founded by Humayun, where only the Purana Qila survives. Shah Jehan, the man who gave the Taj Mahal to the world, also created the city of Shahjehanabad, the fifth city of Delhi - in the area that is now known as Old Delhi.

Delhi passed into the direct control of British Government in 1857 and a new city was designed by the Edwin Lutyens. Rashtrapati Bhavan and Nehru's house were the palace of the Governor General of India and the Army Commander's house respectively.

All the Maharajahs were ordered to make houses in New Delhi, that is why you see Patiala House, Hyderabad House etc. Houses were built for Government officers and many contractors who were building New Delhi, were also 'urged' to buy properties.

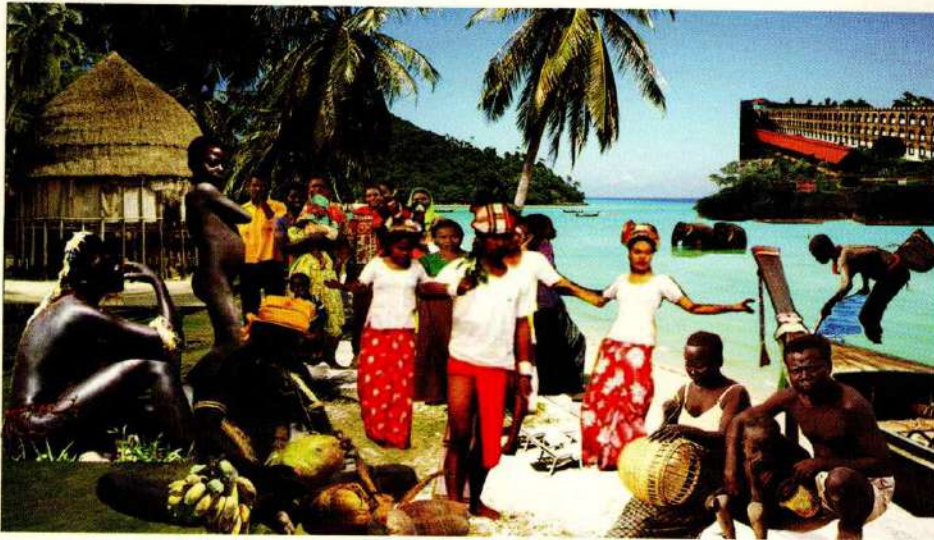
New Delhi was officially declared the seat of the Government of India after independence in 1949. Delhi now has spread its colonies into Harayana and U.P. From being a sleepy Government town it is now a hub of industry and commerce.

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## Andaman and Nicobar



Capital : Port Blair - Population : 4.27 Lakh - Language : Bengali



One of the seven union territories of India, they are a group of islands at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. There are two groups of islands, Andamans and Nicobar. There are 572 islands in the territory. Out of these, about 38 are permanently inhabited.

The Islands are home to the indigenous Andamanese people. They are the only people in the world who have not reached further than a Paleolithic level of technology. The Andamanese have diversified into distinct linguistic, cultural and territorial groups. They shun contact with any non-Andamanese.

The Danish East India Company arrived in the Nicobar Islands in December of 1755 and were made a Danish colony. The Danes deserted the islands due to constant outbreaks of malaria and sold the rights to the Nicobar Islands to Britain in 1868, which made them part of British India. The primary purpose was to set up a penal colony for convicts from the Indian subcontinent.

Presently, the islands host the Andaman and Nicobar Command of the Indian Armed Forces, comprising all three Services.

The islands now have a key position in India's strategic role in the Bay of Bengal and the Malacca Straits.

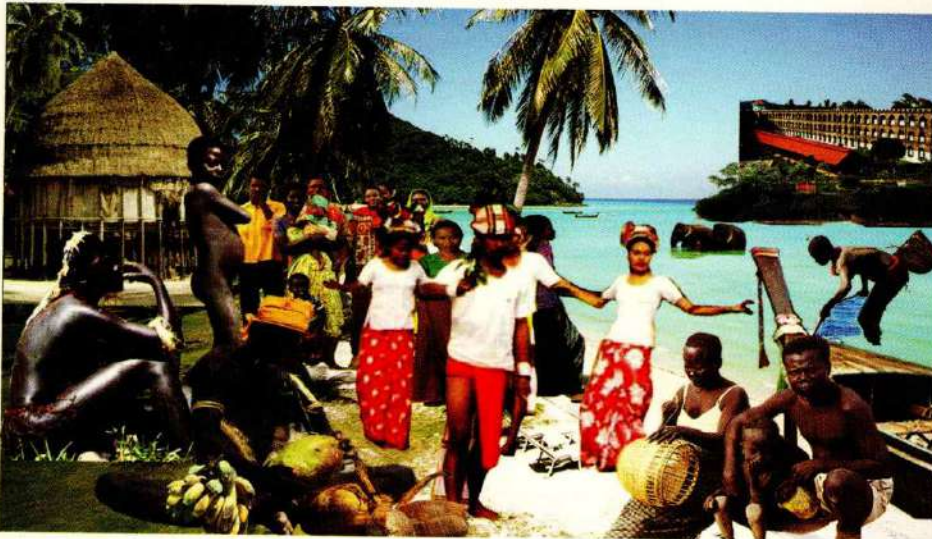
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# Chandigarh



Population : 12.30 Lakh - Language : Punjabi



It is a capital and a union territory. It serves as the capital of the two neighbouring states of Haryana and Punjab. The city is unique. It is not a part of either state, but is directly administered by the Union Government. The master plan of the city was prepared by Swiss-French architect *Le Corbusier*. The BBC named Chandigarh one of the perfect cities of the world, in terms of architecture, cultural growth and modernisation.

The city has one of the highest per capita incomes and one of the cleanest in India. It also heads the list of Indian states and territories according to Human Development Index. In 2015 it ranked it as the **happiest city in India**. The Capital Complex buildings includes joint Punjab and Haryana Secretariat and Assembly. Sculptures like *Open Hand*, *Martyrs Memorial*, *Geometric Hill* and the *Tower of Shadow*, are situated in parks and Government gardens, where everyone can enjoy them. Their water reservoir is an artificial lake, surrounded by a park.

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# Dadra & Nagar Haveli



Capital : Silvassa - Population : 4.12 Lakh - Language : Marathi/Gujarti



It is a land of spell-binding beauty, green forests, winding rivers, golden beaches, distant mountain ranges, the gentle gurgle of streams and a kaleidoscope of flora and fauna. The Daman Ganga river flows through Nagar Haveli and then forms the southern border of Dadra. The towns of Dadra and Silvassa lie on the north bank of the river.

Nagar Haveli is wedged between Maharashtra and Gujarat and 1km to the northwest, is the smaller enclave of Dadra, surrounded by Gujarat.

Curiously, smack in the middle of Nagar Haveli, lies the village of Mughval - which belongs to Gujarat!!

These territories were earlier ruled by the Koli chiefs until the Marathas and later the French, annexed their territories. They made no change in their customs or their art, myths, songs and folklore. They are mostly nature worshippers, believing that the sun and the moon are the two eyes of God.

Over 60% of the population consists of four major tribes. Be it a wedding, a birth or a harvest, it is not complete without folk dances and a feast. Women wear knee length sarees, beaded necklaces, metal bangles and a coin sized nose pin/nose ring inserted in one nostril. The main ornamentation is tattoos for men and women. Men wear dhotis and a waistcoat for formal occasions and daily wear is a sarong/lungi, pulled up to the knees.

## Daman and Diu



Capital : Daman (Union Territory) - Population : 3.14 Lakhs - Language : Gujarati



This union territory is in Western India. With an area of 112 square km, it is the smallest federal division of India on the mainland. The territory has two distinct regions, Daman on the mainland and Diu which is an island. They are geographically separated by the Gulf of Khambhat. The sea and Gujarat are their borders.

From the 8th to 13th century, Daman and Diu were the stronghold of the Chowda Rajputs, who were beaten by the Waghals, who were conquered by Muslims in the early 13th century, till they were ousted by the Portuguese in 1510.

The territories were joined to India in 1961, after the Indian Army threw out the Portuguese, who obviously hadn't heard about Goa.

Diu, Daman and Goa formed one political unit until Goa became a state. Daman and Diu received the status of a Union Territory in 1978.

The indigenous people prefer to live in villages for farming and fishing. Various Portuguese dances are well preserved and still widely presented. Tribal dances with caustic social comments are much in vogue. Fish and vegetables dominate menus, and the flavours are very like their neighbour, Gujarat.

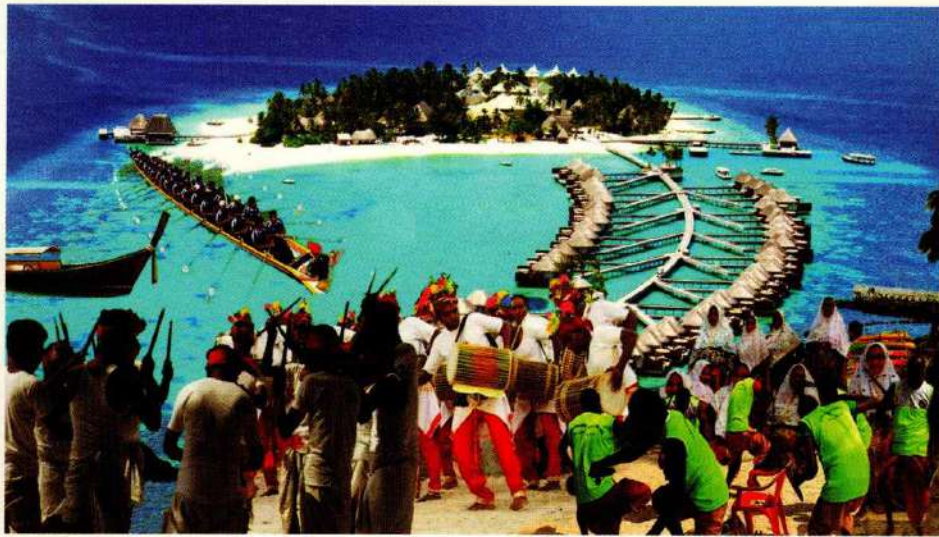
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# Lakshwadeep

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Capital : Kavarati - Population : 87 K - Language : Malayalam



The islands of Lakshwadeep lie off the coast of Kerala. It is an archipelago of 36 islands, It was part of the Chola empire, and later, part of Tippu Sultan's kingdom. The first European to set foot on an island was Vasco Da Gama, who build a fort. The Portuguese did two things. It made the islands a hub of maritime trade, and years of plunder, pillage, oppression and tyranny. Five islands remained with Tippu Sultan. The British seized the rest as payment for a debt the Chirakkal empire didn't pay, and after Tippu's defeat and death, took the last five islands.

In 1947 the islands were given back to India and was and still is, a Union Territory.

Silver, beads and shells are the choice for jewellery.

Men dress themselves in the customary lungis and shirts. They have to undertake an under-sea expedition before he is allowed to wear regular trousers. A strip of twisted cloth is his belt.

On the island of Minicoy, women wear a blue or green under-garment, along with a long cloak, called 'Libus', stretching from shoulder to ankle - like a cloak. The Libus is usually brick coloured cloth with black stripes.

The majority follows Islam, therefore the islands celebrate all the major Islamic Festivals like the Eids and Muharram.

Sea food, meat and vegetables are cooked in spicy gravies, and fried, obviously, in coconut oil.

# Pondicherry

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(Union Territory) - Population : 14.10 Lakh - Language : Tamil/Telegu



Puducherry was apparently an important destination for Roman trade with India. Roman pottery was found in 1937. Archaeological excavations revealed that it was a trading station where Roman manufacture was imported during the first half of the 1st century AD.

In 1674 the French East India Company set up a trading centre at Pondicherry. This outpost eventually became the chief French settlement in India.

Puducherry remained a part of French India until when, on March 18, 1954, the members of the executive council, the mayors of Pondicherry and seven adjoining communes proclaimed their decision to merge with India without a referendum.

A lot of France remains in Puducherry. On the 14th of July it still celebrates Bastille Day, the start of the French Revolution which made it a democracy. Uniformed, retired soldiers still march down the streets. The French consulate and French citizens pay solemn tributes to war heroes at French War Memorial on Goubert Avenue. Fireworks illuminate the beach and bands play the French and Indian anthems. It is community living, where everyone shares the work.

The famous city of *Auroville* was created by the followers of Shri Aurobindo, a mystic and philosopher. Many foreigners come to live there.

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