

SAJA Style Guide

[South Asian Journalists Association](#)

ABCD Short for "American Born Confused Desi" -- a slightly derogatory name that first-generation South Asians in the U.S. use to describe children who were born and brought up in America and are "confused" about their South Asian background. Thanks to the Internet, there are now at least two versions of the phrase that stretch all the way to Z. One is "American Born Confused Desi Emigrated From Gujarat House in Jersey Kids Learning Medicine Now Owning Property Quite Reasonable Salary Two Uncles Visiting White Xenophobia Yet Zestful." And the other: "American Born Confused Desi, Emigrated From Gujarat, Housed In Jersey, Keeping Lotsa Motels, Named Omkarnath Patel, Quickly Reached Success Through Underhanded Vicious Ways, Xenophobic Yet Zestful." See desi.

Adi Granth Holy book of the Sikh religion. It is placed on a cot under a canopy in each gurdwara, or Sikh temple. Basically a compilation of the writings and teachings of Guru Nanak and other early Sikh gurus by Arjun (1563-1606), the fifth guru. Also known as the Guru Granth Sahib. See Sikhism.

Afghanistan A war-torn country in south central Asia to the northwest of India, west of Pakistan and east of Iran. Capital: Kabul; population: 23 million. Though not officially part of South Asia, the country does have close ties to the subcontinent. Most Western media outlets include Afghanistan as part of their regular coverage of South Asia. See SAJA Briefing on Afghanistan.

Air-India The hyphen is part of the name. It is the government-owned international airline of India. Headquarters is in Mumbai. Launched in October 1932 as Tata Airlines, the name was changed to Air-India in 1946. Indian Airlines is one of several domestic carriers. See Pakistan International Airlines.

anaconda The name of this South American snake most likely comes from the Sinhalese word "henakandaya," a slender green snake. See words of South Asian origin.

Andhra Pradesh One of the states in South India (language: Telugu; capital: Hyderabad; population: 67 million). People from the state are known variously as Andhrites, Andhras and Telugus. Link: official state site

Ashoka (273-232 BCE). Celebrated king of the Maurya dynasty in what is now modern-day India, and grandson of the founder, Chandragupta. At the commencement of his reign, he was a Hindu, but converted to Buddhism after seeing the havoc and suffering in the Kalinga war. Propagated Buddhism and nonviolence. The blue wheel that appears in India's tricolor flag is from the stone "pillars of wisdom" that Ashoka built.

Asian, Asian American Be careful of this usage when talking about those of Asian origin. Is your reference really about all Asians or only about East Asians and/or Southeast Asians. (For example, an American reporter might write about the "Chinese New Year being important to Asians in the U.S." South Asians are a part of the Asian American community, and they don't care about Chinese New Year.)

avatar The incarnation of a Hindu deity. Most widely known are the avatars of Vishnu, the "preserver" aspect of the Hindu trinity. See words of South Asian origin.

Bandaranaike, Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias (b. April 17, 1916) Sri Lankan stateswoman who became the world's first elected woman prime minister in 1960. She succeeded her husband, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike,

who was assassinated in 1959. See Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh (one word) Formerly the eastern section of Pakistan (known as East Pakistan), Bangladesh became independent after a civil war in 1971. Capital: Dhaka. Population (1996 census): 123 million. Official languages are Bangla (Bengali) and English. Major religions: Islam (83%), Hinduism (16), Buddhism, Christianity, others (1%). Ethnic groups: Bengali (98%), Jumma tribal (1) Bihari (0.2%). Literacy: 38%. See Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Bangalore The fifth largest city in India and the fastest growing with a population of more than 5 million. It is the capital of the South Indian state of Karnataka. Known as the "Silicon Valley of India," Bangalore is the hub of the electronics/computer industry. The name Bangalore is the anglicized version of Bengalooru, which is derived from the original name "Bendakaalooru" (the town of the boiled lentils), given by its founder Kempe Gowda. Link: city site.

Bengal, Bengali, Bangali, Bangla During partition, the Indian state of Bengal was divided into two: the mostly hindu state of West Bengal, which went to India, and the mostly muslim country of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. However, political borders are not necessarily cultural borders. Both Bangladeshis and West Bengalis speak the same language (Bengali, though with slightly different accents), and call themselves "Bengalis" or "Bangalis" (never Bangalees.) Even though you need a passport to go from one to the other. Credit: Famin Ahmed, Washington, D.C.

Bengali new year As in many regions of South Asia, the people of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal have their own traditional calendar (according to that calendar, 1999 is the year 1406). The Bengali new year, which takes place in the spring, is called "Poila Boisakh" ("Poila" is Bengali for "first" and "Boisakh" is the first month of the Bengali calendar). Poila Baisakh is a major celebration and national holiday in Bangladesh and is also celebrated in West Bengal. In Dhaka, one of the aspects of the holiday is the ritual of going to cultural centers and eating "pantha bhaath" (a watery rice dish). See new year.

bhangra Dance and music style originating in the Indian state of Punjab. Now often refers to a blend of western pop and traditional Punjabi music when performed in the West.

Bharat The official Sanskrit name of India. See Hindustan.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) India's strongest opposition party for much of the 1990s, and today the ruling party. The current prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is one of the party's most senior leaders. The BJP is often characterized as a Hindu fundamentalist party, but a more accurate description is "Hindu nationalist." Its credo equates Hinduism with Indian culture. During the 1999 parliamentary elections, the party deliberately distanced itself from some of its strident anti-Muslim and non-secular policies to highlight more pragmatic issues such as economic reforms. See Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Bhutan A mountainous South Asian kingdom located along the eastern ridges of the Himalayas (official name, Drukylu, means "land of the thunder dragon"). Capital: Thimphu. Population (1999 est): 2 million. Size: 18,150 square miles. Official language: Dzongkha, Sharchopkha, Nepali. Major religions: Buddhism 75%, Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 25%. Ethnic groups: Bhutanese of various types (65%), Nepalese (35%).

Bhutto, Benazir Pakistani politician who became the first woman leader of a Muslim nation in modern history. She is the daughter of the politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leader of Pakistan from 1971 until 1977. After her father's execution in 1979 during the rule of the military dictator Mohammad Zia-ul-

Haq, Bhutto became the titular head of her father's party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). She served two terms as prime minister of Pakistan, 1988-90 and 1993-96. Her government was dismissed on corruption charges in 1990 and 1996.

Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali See Bhutto, Benazir.

bidi or beedi (pronounced "beedee") The Hindi name for a type of small, cheap, unfiltered cigarette popular in South Asia--and now making controversial inroads among young American smokers. Bidis are basically tobacco flakes hand-rolled in tendu or other leaves and secured with a string at one end. A front-page story in the Chicago Tribune described them thus: "Bidis look like marijuana cigarettes, are easy to buy, oftentimes cheaper than conventional cigarettes and deliver more tar and nicotine than cigarettes. And especially worrisome to health officials is the obvious attempt to attract young smokers; the cigarettes come in sprightly flavors such as watermelon, cherry and vanilla. The cigarettes are prompting a wave of legislative concern..." (Chicago Tribune, Oct. 10, 1999, Page 1: "Some Fuming Over Kids' Smokes; Flavored Cigarettes pack Perilous Punch" by Sue Ellen Christian and Evan Osnos). Bidis are smoked in their natural state in India; the artificial flavoring is added once they are imported to the U.S. Critics of bidis say they contain more than three times the nicotine and carbon monoxide of traditional cigarettes, and smokers ingest more of the chemicals as the small-sized bidis require vigorous puffing to stay lit. Defenders of the product include Garry Avram, executive director of Specialty Tobacco Council in North Carolina, who told the Tribune that bidis represent a minuscule part of the U.S. cigarette market and are not advertised at all. Moreover, the typical bidi smoker consumes about half a dozen cigarettes a day, far fewer than the regular smoker, and each cigarette contains a fraction of the tobacco contained in a conventional cigarette, he said. Chicago is one of several American cities considering a ban on bidis.

bindi The Hindi name for the decoration worn on the forehead by many women in South Asia and the diaspora. Mistakenly called a "dot" by many non-South Asians. By wearing bindis in public, celebrities like Madonna and singer Gwen Stefani of No Doubt have given them an unprecedented profile in the U.S. It is not unusual to see young Caucasian women in places like New York and Los Angeles sporting bindis. Though various explanations of its religious significance have been postulated (often to satisfy the curiosity of Westerners), the bindi is typically a decoration, no different from makeup or jewelry, and comes in different shapes and colors to match a woman's wardrobe. Contrary to popular perception, the bindi does not necessarily indicate the marital status of a woman. It can be applied as a turmeric-based powder or a quick-drying liquid, but many contemporary women prefer to use "stick-on" bindis that have a weak adhesive on the back. They come in many shapes and sizes--including tear shapes--in addition to the simple, round dot. Designers now offer version that have tiny gemstones as well. In the late 1980s, a rash of hate crimes against South Asians in New Jersey sparked fears of gangs called "dot busters." See mehndi.

Bollywood "Bombay's Hollywood," word coined by the Indian media to identify the movie industry in Mumbai. Has since evolved to evoke the flamboyant, song-and-dance filled Hindi movies that India is famous for. Other centers of movie production in India include Chennai in the south and Calcutta in the east - but those movies are not considered "Bollywood" films. India makes the world's largest number of new movies each year. In July 2002, The New York Times had to run a correction for incorrectly referring to South Indian movies as being "Bollywood films." NYT, July 19, 2002: Because of an editing error, an article yesterday about the questioning of an Indian movie star, Samyuktha Verma, and her family, after they aroused suspicions on a plane to New York, misstated the meaning of the term Bollywood. It refers to the flamboyant Hindi films made in Bombay, not to the entire Indian film industry. The article also referred imprecisely to Ms. Verma's Malayalam-language films, made in southern India. While in the style of Bollywood, they are not Bollywood films.

Link: 1996 NYT story about Bollywood

Bombay Stock Exchange The oldest stock market in Asia. The benchmark indicator is the Sensex.

Booker Prize England's most prestigious literary award, given each year to the best novel published in the previous 12 months by an author in the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland. Established in 1968; formal name is Man Booker Prize for Fiction. Among the winners with a South Asian connection are: V.S. Naipaul, "In a Free State" (1971); Ruth Praver Jhabvala, "Heat and Dust" (1975); Salman Rushdie, "Midnight's Children" (1981); Michael Ondaatje, "The English Patient" (1992); and Arundhati Roy, "The God of Small Things" (1997). In 1994, "Midnight's Children" won a second Booker for the best novel in the first 25 years of the contest. See Nobel Prizes.

calico All-cotton woven fabric printed with simple designs in one or more colors. Named for the southern Indian city of Calicut (now Kozhikode) in Kerala state, where it was first made in the 10th century. By the 1700s, it was a major commodity in Indo-European trade. See words of South Asian origin.

cashmere Fine wool from the undercoat of the Kashmir/cashmere goat. While mistakenly applied to all kinds of soft wool, only the wool from this goat is true cashmere. The wool, known as pashm or pashmina, became known for its use in beautiful shawls and other handmade items produced in the Indian state of Kashmir. See paisley, words of South Asian origin.

caste system The four major castes in Hinduism are the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (kings and warriors), Vaishyas (merchants and traders) and Shudras (laborers), though there are thousands of sub-castes. While discrimination based on castes is illegal in India, the social hierarchies of the system are still recognized in various parts of the country, particularly in villages. These hierarchies are a corruption of an ancient system of classification that grouped people and families by their inherited trades--priests, merchants, soldiers, laborers, et al. In the diaspora, the caste system is almost invisible and insignificant in public -- beyond what individuals follow in their personal lives.

chai Hot tea served with milk, spices and sweeteners. "Nowadays, stop by most coffee shops and note that the trendiest beverage is neither espresso nor cappuccino, but something called chai. Rooted in the tea-drinking traditions of India, chai is suddenly the hottest sip in America" (Houston Chronicle, 7/8/98). "Fueled by the belief within the coffeehouse industry that the cafe latte craze is petering out, chai has become the latest darling.... U.S. sales of the mix of black tea, cardamom, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, milk and honey have surged" (Los Angeles Times, 8/3/98). Note: The "ch" is pronounced as in "check." The vowel rhymes with "eye." (Credit: Jesse Sheidlower, senior editor, Random House Reference). See words of South Asian origin.

Chennai Formerly known as Madras. Chennai is the capital of Tamil Nadu state and is India's fourth-largest city--the largest in South India. See Madrasi, St. Thomas.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Mountainous, mineral-rich southeastern area of Bangladesh, bordering Myanmar. Home to Bangladesh's largest group of indigenous tribal people, collectively called "Jumma people" (includes such groups as Chakma, Marma, Lusai, et al). The indigenous tribes began fighting a low-level guerilla war against the government in demand for greater autonomy in the 1970s. The government signed a peace treaty with the guerrilla army (known as Shanti Bahini) in December 1997. Link: Shobak

Congress party The political party of Jawarhalal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, which evolved from the Indian National Congress. It governed India from independence through the late 1980s, except for a brief period in the late 1970s. It assumed power again briefly in the 90s, but lost to the BJP. Remains a major player in Indian politics.

cummerbund The English word for the broad waistband worn by men with formal clothes (such as a tuxedo) is derived from the Hindi words for something that is "tied around the waist."

Dalit (capitalized) More respectful and current term for castes once called "untouchables." M.K. Gandhi coined the term Harijan ("children of God") to refer to these castes.

desi A colloquial name for South Asians, people who trace their ancestry to South Asia, especially India, Bangladesh, Pakistan. Pronounced "THEY-see," it is the Hindi word for "from my country" (from the word "desh," which means "country"). In an article about the South Asian party scene in the Big Apple, New York Times reporter Somini Sengupta described the word as a "Hindi version of homeboy or homegirl" (NYT, 6/30/96: "To Be Young, Indian and Hip"). That's a pretty good definition. See South Asian.

Devanagari Script for writing Sanskrit, Hindi, Nepali, and some other South Asian languages.

diaspora Because of the British colonial legacy and large-scale immigration, there are substantial pockets of people of South Asian origin scattered around the world (besides South Asia, of course). In some cases--Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago--South Asians make up at least 35 percent of the population. Other countries with large South Asian communities: Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. The government of India puts the size of the diaspora at more than 20 million. There are more than 2 million South Asians in the United States.

Diwali, Deepavali One of the most festive holidays observed by Hindus, Diwali always occurs during the late autumn (October or November). Although it is celebrated in many parts of northern India and the diaspora as the start of the new year, Diwali should not be referred to as the "South Asian new year," "Indian new year," or the "Hindu new year." No such event exists. Nor is there any one explanation of Diwali's significance that is applicable to all Hindus. Because of ethnic variations from state to state, the traditional new year is celebrated at different times in different parts of India and diaspora. Diwali, like Christmas, is sometimes celebrated as a secular holiday, and many non-Hindus in India also take part in the festivities.

Doordarshan India's state-run television network (also known as DD).

Dravidian Non-Indo-European, referring to people and languages, primarily of South India.

Durand Line Line arbitrarily drawn by Sir Mortimer Durand, a British diplomat, in 1893, dividing the former British Indian territory from Afghanistan. Today the Durand Line marks the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, dividing one ethnic group, the Pashtuns, between the two states.

East Indian an outdated word for people who trace their origin to India, to distinguish from West Indians. Do not use. Use South Asian.

Eid-ul-Fitr The day marking the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. For Muslims, this holiday is as important as Christmas to Christians. Credit: Famin Ahmed, Washington, DC.

Gandhi, Mahatma (often misspelled as "Ghandi") See Gandhi, Mohandas.

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (Oct. 2, 1869- Jan. 30, 1948) Known as the Mahatma ("great soul") and the father of modern India, M.K. Gandhi served as president of the Indian National Congress and helped lead a nonviolent movement for independence from Britain during the first half of the 20th century. He was assassinated in 1948 in a conspiracy by fanatical nationalists who accused him of betraying Hindus and favoring Muslims during the partition of 1947. No relation to Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi. See Mahatma and partition and Nobel Prizes (to learn why he never won a Nobel Peace Prize).

Gandhi, Indira Priyadarshini (Nov. 19, 1919-Oct. 31, 1984) Prime minister of India (1966-77, 1980-84). Indira, no relation to Mahatma Gandhi, was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India; mother of Rajiv Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi; mother-in-law of Sonia Gandhi. Was married to political activist Feroze Gandhi (who died in 1960). Was named minister of information and broadcasting in 1964 by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Nehru as prime minister. After Shastri's sudden death in January 1966, Indira became prime minister. Was instrumental in helping establish Bangladesh as an independent nation in 1971 by supporting the East Pakistan's secession from Pakistan. After she was convicted of election malpractices, she declared a state of national emergency (similar to martial law) that lasted from 1975 to 1977. She was then defeated in the general elections of 1977, only to be voted back into office in 1980. On October 31, 1984, she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for her government's actions against Sikh militants seeking an independent nation called Khalistan in Punjab. See Congress Party.

Gandhi, Rajiv Ratan (Aug. 20, 1944-May 22, 1991) Prime minister of India from 1984 to 1989. Rajiv, no relation to Mahatma Gandhi, was a grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, a son of Indira Gandhi, elder brother of the late Congress leader Sanjay Gandhi and husband of Sonia Gandhi. A pilot by profession, he stayed away from politics until his brother--and Indira's heir apparent--Sanjay, was killed in a plane crash in 1980. Upon his mother's assassination in 1984, he became prime minister. After losing the 1989 elections amid a bribery scandal surrounding his government, he was assassinated in 1991--while campaigning for a comeback as prime minister--by Tamil militants opposed to India's intervention on behalf of the government in Sri Lanka's civil war. See Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Gandhi, Sonia Current president of the India's Congress Party. Italian-born wife of assassinated prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi. Mother of Rahul and Priyanka. If Congress had won a majority in the 1999 parliamentary elections, Sonia would have most likely become prime minister. But the poor showing by Congress and its defeat by the BJP has left her political future in doubt. (Credit: Barkha Dutt, NDTV, New Delhi)

ghee A semifluid, clarified butter used during cooking in India and the diaspora. A New York Times crossword clue once referred to it as "Hindu clarified butter." But ghee is consumed by most communities in India. Despite the usual description, ghee in India is not always made from butter. It is made either from the cream that floats to the top when milk is boiled or churned, or from churned yogurt. The practice of making ghee from butter originated in the U.S., where butter is the immediate by-product of milk processing and is easily and plentifully available. Although ghee is a cooking fat (like cooking oil, butter, lard, etc.), it is very low in cholesterol. When made from yogurt, it has zero cholesterol; when made from butter, around 18 percent; and when made from milk, somewhere in-between. It has no saturated fats (the source of "bad" cholesterol), hence its semifluidity. One of the most unusual properties of ghee is that it never grows rancid--despite being a dairy product--even when

exposed to moisture and heat. It is easily absorbed and digested, hence its wide use for medicinal purposes, both internally and externally. (Credit: Tanuja Prasad, New York)

Ghosh, Amitav An acclaimed author whose work--along with other Indians currently writing in English (Arundhati Roy, Salman Rusdhie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, among others)--has garnered worldwide attention. His books include *Circle of Reason*, *In an Antique Land* and *The Calcutta Chromosome* and *The Glass Palace*. Ghosh, who lives in New York, also writes regularly for *The New Yorker* and a piece he wrote in November 1998 for the magazine was a 1999 finalist for the National Magazine Awards. Link: [Official Amitav Ghosh site](#)

Golden Temple The holiest gurdwara, or Sikh temple, is known as the Golden Temple and is located in the city of Amritsar in the Indian state of Punjab. Its name in Punjabi is Harimandir. See Sikhism, gurdwara.

good name Foreigners in India are often confused when asked, "What is your good name?" The questioner is just asking for the person's name. It is a literal translation of the Hindi usage "Aap ka shubh nam?" ("shubh" means "auspicious").

Gujarat A state on western coast of India. Capital is Gandhinagar (named after Mohandas Gandhi, its most famous son), a city on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, the former capital and largest city. Language is Gujarati.

Gurkhas Typically denotes male members of an ethnic race in Nepal who have served the British army since the mid-1800s and the Indian army since 1947. The name comes from the small town of Gurkha, Nepal, which overlooks the Himalayas. Nearly 10,000 of serve in British Gurkha units, and 50,000 in Indian Gurkha units (the British continue to maintain a recruiting centre in Nepal). Having earned a reputation for their valor in battle in both World Wars and the Falklands War, some Gurkhas are now employed as bodyguards by tycoons in Hong Kong and elsewhere (in addition to those in national armies). Of course, not all Gurkhas are soldiers or bodyguards.

gurdwara A Sikh place of worship (Punjabi for "doorway to the guru"). Similar to church for Christians and mosque for Muslims. The gurdwara contains a copy of the *Adi Granth*, the sacred scripture of Sikhism. There are no idols in Sikhism. A free kitchen, called a "langar," is attached to gurdwaras around the world. See Sikhism, Golden Temple, *Adi Granth*.

hajj/haj (not capitalized) A pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Prophet Mohammed. Every Muslim able to afford the journey is expected to make the hajj at least once in his or her lifetime. A person who has undertaken this pilgrimage is known as a hajji (or haji).

hero, heroine In Indian newspapers and magazines, the words are used to refer to the lead players in a movie or a play. See Bollywood.

Hindi The primary language of about 30% of India's people, and one of almost two dozen major languages spoken around the country. It is derived primarily from Sanskrit, using the Devanagari script. Do not confuse Hindi with Hindu, which is a religious designation. See Urdu.

Hindu, Hinduism Designating the religion practiced by about 80 percent of the population of India, and designating certain cultural features of South and Southeast Asia. Hinduism is not a monotheistic

religion and has evolved over thousands of years. Many Hindus regard the 2,000-page Vedas and the Gita (a segment of the epic Mahabharata) as sacred texts. Do not confuse Hindu with Hindi, which is a language. Link: Directory of Hindu Resources

Hindustan This term once referred to a particular empire in northern India, but is sometimes used to refer generally to the Indian subcontinent or the Republic of India. See Bharat.

Hindustani An unofficial language spoken in northern India, a mixture of Urdu and Hindi. See Indian Languages.

Hindu trinity Of the countless gods and goddesses that make up the Hindu pantheon, three main gods form the trinity that plays a prominent role in the religion. They are Brahma ("the creator"), Vishnu ("the preserver") and Shiva ("the destroyer").

India The largest and most populous nation on the Indian subcontinent. World's largest democracy and nation with world's second-largest population (behind China): 975 million. Capital is New Delhi. Commercial center is Mumbai. Major religions (1991 census): Hinduism: 82.41 percent; Islam: 11.67; Christianity: 2.32; Sikhism: 1.99; Buddhists 0.77; Jains 0.41; others 0.43 percent. See Indian languages, Indian names, Indian states.

Indian languages India has two official languages, English and Hindi. The government recognizes 17 major regional languages. They are not dialects; many are as distinct in their vocabulary and grammar as, say, English and Chinese. Along with these languages exist hundreds of dialects, peculiar to certain villages, towns or communities. See Sanskrit, Urdu.

Indian names Indian names follow different patterns, depending not only on the ethnicity of the person, but also his or her caste, subcaste or other classification. Furthermore, some families modify their naming practices upon migrating to the West, to conform with local customs. The general rule is that there is no general rule. In some groups, the family name might occur first and the given name last, so that a father and son can have the same first names but different last names. Other groups follow customs similar to the West, with the given name first; a middle name or initial, perhaps patronymic; and a last name--sometimes designating a subcaste or occupation--being passed from generation to generation. Some groups will name their children for their grandparents (hence several cousins may have similar name), and yet other groups deliberately avoid reusing names within a family. For second references on Indian names, the last name (whether it is the given name or the family name) is usually considered the surname, but it's best not to assume that is the case. Among Sikhs--but not only with them--males and females may have the same given name; also some names are used across communities "Iqbal" and other "secular" ones have become popular (such as "Aman").

Indian states India has 25 states--not provinces--and seven union territories administered directly by the central government. The state lines were redrawn in the 1950s to roughly reflect language boundaries. Other changes have come in the years since.

Indo A modifier used to denote something of Indian origin or with an India connection; similar to "Sino" for China. eg: "Indo-U.S. relations" or "Indo-Americans" (preferred term: Indian-Americans). Also increasingly used to refer to the South Asian diaspora and not just India the country. eg: "Indo-American art" may refer to art by South Asians of all backgrounds, not just India.

Islam One of the two biggest religions of South Asia. Though Pakistan and Bangladesh are officially

Islamic republics, India had--until the 1970s--the largest number of Muslims in the region (and the second-largest in the world, after Indonesia). Now, Pakistan has more Muslims than India does. See Muslim/Moslem.

Islamabad Capital of Pakistan. Construction on this planned city began in 1961. It is northeast of Rawalpindi, the former interim capital, and is northwest of Karachi, the commercial center of the country (and original capital).

-ji (also -jee) An honorific added to the end of names to signify respect; used mainly in northern India. For instance: Gandhiji, for Mahatma Gandhi.

Jinnah, Mohammad Ali (Dec. 25, 1876-Sept. 11, 1948) Known as Qaid-i-Azam, or "great leader" of Pakistan. He was once a member of the Indian Congress Party, but later parted ways with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to fight for a separate independent nation called Pakistan. He served as president of the All-India Muslim League from 1934 until Pakistan's creation in 1947, when he became the nation's first governor-general. See Pakistan.

Jones, Nora Daughter of sitar legend Ravi Shankar and music promoter Susan Jones. She and her debut album "Come Away With Me," won eight 2003 Grammys, including Album of the Year and Best New Artist. Her parents were never married and Shankar was not part of her life till after she was a teenager.

juggernaut This English word is derived from Jagganath (Sanskrit for "lord of the world"), a deity worshipped in Puri, a town in the Indian state of Orissa. Jagganath is a form of Krishna, one of the incarnations of the Vishnu (who is part of the Hindu trinity). Each year, an idol representing the god is taken from its temple and dragged on a huge wooden cart to a nearby house by hundreds of pilgrims. In the past, frenzied pilgrims occasionally threw themselves under the wheels, which crushed them to death. Hence the word juggernaut, or an invincible force. See words of South Asian origin.

jute Fibers from the bark of the jute plant (grown in Bangladesh and the Bengal area of India) are used to make fabrics and a wide range of bags, sacks and ropes. The material is popular because of its low cost and high strength. The plain-woven fabric known as burlap is made from jute.

Karachi Pakistan's largest city and commercial center. Capital of the southern province of Sindh province. See Islamabad, the country's political capital.

Karnataka A state in South India (language: Kannada; capital: Bangalore; population: 45 million). Formerly known as Mysore, and with a history of more than 2,000 years. People from the state are known as Kannadigas. Link: official state site.

Kashmir A disputed region at the northern tip of the Indian subcontinent claimed partly by India, Pakistan and China. The portion claimed by India is in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. While Muslims form a majority in the region, Hindus form a sizeable portion of the population in the south. The northern region of Ladakh is predominantly Buddhist. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since partition, two of them over Kashmir. Use the third person singular when referring to the state of Jammu and Kashmir (ie, it is the state, not states). See cashmere. (Credit: Naresh Fernandes, The Wall Street Journal).

Kathmandu Founded in 723 C.E., Kathmandu is the capital city of modern Nepal and the largest city in the Kathmandu Valley. The cultural and religious center of Nepal. See Nepal.

Khalistan Name used by Sikh separatists and nationalists for a proposed independent country in what is now the Indian state of Punjab. Not all those who support the concept of Khalistan are militants or terrorists. The clamor in certain quarters for Khalistan peaked in the mid-1980s and has since quietened down.

Kipling, Rudyard (1865-1936) Bombay-born novelist and poet most widely known for his writings set during the British rule of India. Winner of the 1907 Nobel Prize in Literature. Author of books such as "Kim," "The Jungle Books" (one in 1894 and another in 1895), "Captains Courageous" and "Just So Stories." Among his poems: "Gunga Din," "The Ballad of East and West" and "If." His work was popular with adults as well as children, for whom he wrote some specific works. They include the nursery rhyme "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep"--in his short story collection, "Wee Willie Winkie". His family lived in India till he was six, then moved to England. He lived there till he was 17. After moving back to India in 1882 and working as a journalist for seven years (including a stint at a Lucknow-based newspaper called The Pioneer), he started writing full time. In 1892, at the age of 27, he married an American, Caroline Balestier, and moved for a few years to Vermont (where he wrote some of his most noted books). They moved back to England and lived in Sussex till his death in 1936. His Nobel citation read: "in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author." See Nobel Prizes for list of other South Asia-related winners. Link: Rudyard Kipling in Nobel Archive (includes links to full text of many books).

Lajja ("Shame") A controversial 1992 novel by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen. A fictional account of vandalism against Hindu temples in Bangladesh in retaliation for the Ayodhya mosque-breaking incident in India. After the publication of the novel, Nasreen faced criticism from progressive, pro-secular forces who complained about the novel's lack of sympathetic, pro-secularism characters. The publication sparked a debate on the role of "inflammatory" fiction in the sensitive area of Hindu-Muslim relations on the subcontinent. Matters were further complicated when Hindu nationalist BJP activists in India began using translations of the novel to fan communal tension. Critics say Nasreen did not act quickly to dissociate herself from the BJP's use of her novel. The Bangladesh government banned the novel, but it is easily available in Dhaka markets. The English translation published abroad is actually from the second, revised edition--which is double the length of the original, and carries, according to Nasreen, more sympathetic Muslim characters. See Taslima Nasreen.

Lama, Dalai Spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and formerly the ruler of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is believed to be a reincarnation of the Buddha. The current (and 14th) Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled with a group of followers to India in 1959 after an unsuccessful rebellion. He and thousands of other Tibetans now live in exile in India, mainly in the northern town of Dharamsala. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent efforts to win independence for his homeland. Technically speaking, Tibet is not part of South Asia, but the presence of its exiled leadership in India makes it an integral part of South Asia coverage. See Nobel Prizes for list of other South Asian winners.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) A militant group in Sri Lanka that has been at war with the government since the early 1980s, seeking a homeland for the Tamil ethnic minority in the predominantly Buddhist and Sinhalese nation (most, but not all Tamils are Hindu). Also known as the Tamil Tigers. The Indian government attempted to enforce a peace plan, but failed, angering both the Tigers and the Sinhalese. A member of the LTTE was the suicide bomber that killed Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

madrasah Muslim place of learning, also referred to as a seminary. Not connected to the southern Indian city of Madras (now known as Chennai).

Madrasi A term used by many northern Indians to refer to all South Indians, who resent it. There are four South Indian states -- Kerala, Tamil Nadu (former Madras state), Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Each has its own language and culture. A Keralite, for example, is not a Madrasi. Even a "Madrasi" (Madras is the former name of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu) may resent the word because it is used derogatorily by some people. See Tamil.

Mahatma Sanskrit term for "great soul." Became the honorific for M.K. Gandhi during India's struggle for independence.

Malayalam The language spoken primarily in the southern state of Kerala. A person from Kerala is known as a Malayalee (or Malayali, both are acceptable spellings). Be careful not to confuse Malayalam (the language), with Malayalee (the person and the adjective). Happens to be the longest one-word palindrome in the English language.

mandarin This English word for an official in imperial China is derived from the Sanskrit word "mantri," which means counselor. See words of South Asian origin.

mango The name of this popular tropical fruit is derived from the Tamil "mangay" (which the Portuguese adopted as "manga" when they settled in western India). The fruit is closely connected with the folklore and religious ceremonies of India. See words of South Asian origin.

masjid Urdu word for mosque, a place of prayer and meeting for Muslims. Shot into the limelight because of a 1992 controversy in India over the Babri Masjid in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Credit: Sujatha Shenoy, BusinessWorld magazine, Chicago.

mehndi Refers to the traditional Indian and diaspora art of intricate hand and body decoration using dyes from the henna plant. Used mainly by brides during marriage ceremonies, it is now becoming popular as an exotic decoration and a non-permanent "tattoo." In recent years, mehndi has gained attention in the West as a result of its use by certain pop stars and actresses, including Madonna and Gwen Stefani of No Doubt. Link: Pinto mehndi site. See bindi.

Mehta, Zubin Mumbai-born symphony conductor who is one of the best known figures in the world of classical music. He has served as music director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (for 13 years, 1978-1991), the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (he was appointed music director for life in 1981) and at other institutions. He is currently music director of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. Mehta is a Parsi. Link: Sony classical biography.

Mercury, Freddie (1946-1991) Late lead singer of popular British rock group Queen. Mercury, the son of Indian-Parsi parents, was born Farookh Balsara off the coast of Tanzania and educated in boarding school in Bombay. His family moved to England in 1963 and he eventually became one of the most flamboyant and recognizable musicians in the world. His South Asian connection, however, was kept mostly hidden from his fans. He died of complications from AIDS in November 1991. Link: official Queen site.

Mohajir (also Muhajir) Name given to citizens of Pakistan who are descendants of Muslims who migrated from India during 1947's partition. They account for approximately 10 percent of the

population.

Mumbai India's largest city and commercial center, formerly known as Bombay. Although the Associated Press, New York Times and Los Angeles Times continue to use "Bombay," the name change is official in India and has been widely recognized by other news outlets.

Muslim/Moslem The word "Muslim" refers to those who follow the Islamic religious faith. The preferred word to use is "Muslim" rather than "Moslem." In the same way as the word "Hindoo" was used by Britishers to refer to Hindus, the word "Moslem" was used by them for Muslims. It was often used as a slur and therefore many Muslims consider "Moslem" to be a derogatory term. See Islam. Credit: Sameera Khan, assistant editor, Times of India, Mumbai.

Myanmar Formerly known as Burma. Capital is Yangon, formerly called Rangoon. Though not considered a part of South Asia, the country--which is ruled by a military regime--has close ties to the subcontinent. Starting in 1824, Britain went to war repeatedly with what was called Myanmar when the native dynasty wanted to invade the northeastern British-Indian state of Assam. In 1885, Britain took full control of the country, changed the name to Burma and made it a province of India. Peasant uprisings forced the British to finally separate Burma from India in 1937. In 1948, Burma became independent and, in 1989, the name was changed back to Myanmar. Note: the democratically elected opposition--led by Aung San Suu Kyi--refers to the country as "Burma," claiming that the military regime, having no legitimacy, had no right to change the name.

Naipaul, V.S. British writer born in Trinidad to parents of Indian origin. One of the most influential and controversial writers of the past 30 years, Naipaul was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in Oct. 2001. See SAJA Roundup of articles and Web resources about him.

Nasreen, Taslima Bangladeshi feminist author and poet. A collection of her essays, "Nirbaachito Column" ("Selected Columns"), won India's Ananda Bazaar award. Initially focusing on issues of sexual harassment in the workplace, women's safety on streets, and other issues affecting women in urban centers, Nasreen won support among young, urban women in Bangladesh. In 1992, she published "Lajja" (Shame), a fictional account of vandalism against Hindu temples in Bangladesh, in retaliation for the Ayodhya mosque-breaking incident in India. The Bangladesh government banned the novel citing possibility of "enflaming communal sentiments." Later, Nasreen was quoted by an Indian newspaper as saying the Koran needed "thorough revision." When controversy erupted in Bangladesh over this statement, she retracted and claimed the newspaper had misquoted her. The situation escalated after a small right-wing religious organization in Sylhet placed a price on her head. With rising controversy at home, Nasreen left Bangladesh and settled in Europe. See Lajja.

Nehru, Jawaharlal (Nov. 14, 1889-May 27, 1964) India's first prime minister, from 1947 until his death in 1964. He worked alongside Mohandas Gandhi in the leadership of the Indian National Congress during the fight for independence from Britain. Father of prime minister Indira Gandhi and grandfather of Rajiv Gandhi. See Nehru collar/jacket.

Nehru collar/jacket The round, banded collar shirt comes from the style of jacket that Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru often wore. A common piece of formal attire in India and the diaspora.

Nepal A country in South Asia bounded by China on the north and India on the south. Capital and largest city: Kathmandu. Population: 23 million. A multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy (in June 2001, several members of the royal family, including the king and queen were killed). Major religions: Hinduism: 90%; Buddhism: 5%; Islam: 3%. Hinduism is the official religion. Language is Nepali. See Nepali.

Nepali People from Nepal are known variously as Nepalese or Nepali, the latter of which is favored in current usage -- though U.S. press uses Nepalese when referring to those in the United States.. As such, the word Nepali can be both a noun and an adjective. As a noun, it can refer to the people of Nepal as well as the official state language, Nepali. As an adjective, it can be used, for example, to refer to a Nepali hat, or a Nepali sari, or a Nepali government official. See Nepal.

new year There's no such thing as an "Indian New Year" or a "South Asian New Year" the way there's a Chinese New Year. Different regions of South Asia have their own traditional calendars and mark their new years in unique ways. See diwali, Bengali new year.

nirvana This English word means bliss; a state of oblivion to care and pain. In Buddhism, attaining a state of freedom from the endless cycle of personal reincarnations. From the Sanskrit for "act of extinguishing." See words of South Asian origin.

Nobel Prizes Several people associated with South Asia have won Nobel Prizes. In chronological order: Ronald Ross (Medicine, 1902); Rudyard Kipling (Literature, 1907); Rabindranath Tagore (Literature, 1913); Sir C.V. Raman (Physics, 1930); Har Gobind Khorana (Medicine, 1968); Abdus Salam (Physics, 1979); Mother Teresa (Peace, 1979); Subramanyan Chandrasekhar (Physics, 1983); Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama (Peace, 1989); Amartya Sen (Economics, 1998); V.S. Naipaul (Literature, 2001). Interestingly, Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi never won the Nobel Peace Prize. Reuters reported in early 1998 that the reason for not selecting the leader of India's struggle for independence was Norway's friendship with Britain after World War II. Hundreds of documents in a basement safe at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, made available to Reuters after a 50-year secrecy rule, showed that Gandhi was nominated but did not win in 1937, 1947 and 1948. Historians say the five-man jury in the 1930s and '40s was pro-British and had a patronizing attitude to candidates from the developing world. "If I were to guess, one factor which made it difficult to give the prize to Gandhi was the very strong pro-British orientation in Norway 's foreign policy," said Geir Lundestad, director of the Nobel Institute. See Gandhi, Mohandas K., Booker Prizes.

non-resident Indian or NRI A term coined by bureaucrats in New Delhi to define Indians who live outside India. Indian tax law includes three categories: resident and ordinarily resident; resident and not-ordinarily resident, and non-resident. The first is one who lives in India all the time; the second, one who lives at least 180 days in India, and the third, who lives less than 180 days in India. That non-resident got the suffix "Indian" to define the person of Indian origin living abroad, since specific investment policies and tax policies were being created to attract his/her money to India. Credit: Salil Tripathi, Far Eastern Economic Review, Singapore

Ondaatje, Michael (Sep. 12, 1943 -) Poet and author. Wrote "The English Patient," a 1992 novel that won a Booker Prize and became an Oscar-winning film. Born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and moved with his mother in 1954 to England; now lives and works in Toronto. According to the 1998 Canadian & World Encyclopedia, "Ondaatje's imagery is characterized by its preoccupation with romantic exoticism and multiculturalism; its gravitation towards the bizarre, the exaggerated, and the unlikely; its fascination with the secret codes of violence in both personal and political life; and with its continued delving into the world of movies, jazz and friendship. His work is also notable for its cinematic qualities in its frequent use of montage techniques and spare dramatic dialogue." See Booker Prize for list of

other winners of South Asian origin. Link: Ondaatje fan site

orange The English name of this fruit comes, says Webster's, from the Sanskrit word for an orange tree, "naranga" (via Middle English, from Middle French, from Old Provençal "auranja," from Arabic "naranj", from Persian "narang"). See words of South Asian origin.

paisley A tear-shaped pattern derived from the stylized mango that decorated Indian shawls, which were later imitated by manufacturers in the Scottish town of Paisley. Now used to mean any textile designs that use the mango shape. See cashmere, words of South Asian origin.

Paki A derogatory slang word for people of Pakistani origin. Is the South Asian equivalent of "Jap" or the "N word." Do not use under any circumstances. If you are quoting someone saying this, be sure to treat the word with the same caution you would treat "Jap." Used often in England as a racial epithet against South Asians in general (especially by skinheads). From LondonSlang.com: "paki - a derogatory term used to describe anyone who looks vaguely Asian even though it is an abbreviation for Pakistani." Some people mistakenly use it as a shorthand way of saying "Pakistani." Egregious Examples: A headline in the New York Post (June 17, 1999): "India: Pakis Killed POWs." President George W. Bush at a press conference (Jan. 7, 2002): "And we are working hard to convince both the Indians and the Pakis there's a way to deal with their problems without going to war." The official White House reaction within hours: "The president has great respect for Pakistan, the Pakistani people, and the Pakistani culture. Pakistan has been a strong member of the international coalition in the war against terrorism and that he meant no disrespect with the word." See slurs.

Pakistan Urdu for "Land of the Pure." An officially Islamic nation created in 1947 from the partition of British India upon independence. Capital: Islamabad. Population: 132 million. Commercial center is Karachi. Pakistan initially consisted of two noncontiguous parts: West Pakistan and East Pakistan. After a civil war in 1971, East Pakistan (partially supported by India) broke away and became the independent nation of Bangladesh. Major religions: Sunni Islam: 77%; Shi'a Islam: 20%. See Mohd. Ali Jinnah, Bangladesh.

Pakistan International Airlines Government-owned airline of Pakistan. Started service in May 1954. In 1959-60, became first Asian airline to operate a jet. See Air-India.

Pakistani languages Urdu and English are the official languages of Pakistan. Other languages include: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu and Balochi. Bengali used to be an official language until East Pakistan became the country of Bangladesh in 1971 (Bengali remains the official language of Bangladesh).

Parsi, Parsis (also Parsees) An ethnic group in India (mainly Mumbai) and other parts of the diaspora who follow the religion of Zoroastrianism. Parsis are descendants of followers of the Persian prophet Zoroaster (628 BC-551 BC). Parsis emigrated to India (roughly in the year AD 900) to avoid religious persecution by conquering Muslim rulers. The community in India has dwindled to less than 100,000 people (mainly because of strictures against conversion to the religion), but has wielded considerable influence in Indian business and public life. Well-known Parsis include conductor Zubin Mehta, rocker Freddie Mercury, authors Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry, and the Tatas, India's most successful business family. Note: All Parsis are followers of the Zoroastrian religion, but not all Zoroastrians are Parsis--there are also Iranian and Central Asian Zoroastrian communities. Credit: Tamina Davar, NYC. Link: Zoroastrianism@net or Zarathushtra.com.

partition The partition of 1947 refers to the division of British India upon independence into India and Pakistan. The partition, one of the largest forced migrations in history, occurred on two sides of British

India--in the western Punjab region, and in the eastern Bengal region--where Muslims represented a majority of the population. Ensuing violence resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands. See Mohajir.

Pashtun Ethnic group of approximately 18 million people who live primarily along the Durand Line, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The rulers of Afghanistan for almost three centuries, the Pashtun Taliban broke a four-year hiatus from this rule when they took over Afghanistan in 1996. Although the Pashtun of Pakistan maintain semi-autonomy from Pakistan, they continue to fight for an independent state that would unite the Pashtun on both sides of the Durand Line.

playback singer A singer who lip-syncs for an actor or actress in the elaborate song-and-dance sequences that dominate Indian cinema. See Bollywood.

political party abbreviations (India) There are, according to the Indian Election Commission's report on the 1998 general elections, seven national parties in India, 30 recognized state parties and 139 registered (unrecognized) parties. All have official abbreviations. Several of the national parties typically are referred to in speech and in the press by their abbreviation: the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party); the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party); the CPI (Communist Party of India); the CPM (Communist Party of India [Marxist]). The Janata Dal is sometimes abbreviated to JD. The Indian National Congress (official abbreviation: INC) is typically referred to as the Congress, or the Congress party (lower case "p"). It is incorrect to write "the Bharatiya Janata" since "Party" is in its official name.

punch This word for a drink made by mixing a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic liquids is derived from the Hindi word "panch" (meaning five) and refers to it originally having five ingredients, citrus juice, water, arrack, sugar and spices. According to The New York Times, "By the end of the 17th century it had made its way to the British Isles, where it was known as the drink of mariners, and it was a hit among the English in colonial India. Colonial America also latched onto punch, replacing the arrack with rum." (The New York Times, Dec. 15, 1999: "Dip Into the Past: Rediscovering Punch" by Amanda Hesser). See words of South Asian origin.

pundit This word, meaning an expert, or, on occasion, a commentator (especially on politics) is derived from the Sanskrit word "pandita" (meaning "learned") through the Hindi word "pandit." See words of South Asian origin.

Punjab Both a state in north India and a province in eastern Pakistan. At partition, the British split Punjab, dividing it between the two neighbors. The name Punjab means "five waters," or "five rivers," and signifies the land drained by the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers, which are tributaries of the Indus River.

Punjabi The primary language of Punjab and one of the main regional languages in India. A person from Punjab is referred to as a Punjabi. See Punjab, bhangra.

qawaali or qawwali (not capitalized) Devotional songs of the Sufi tradition of Islam. In the style popularized by the late singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, this centuries-old tradition has been sped up and blended with Western instruments.

Ramadan/Ramzan The Islamic month of fasting. Muslims around the world abstain from all food and water from dawn to dusk for each day of this month, the 9th month of the lunar Muslim calendar. The 27th day of Ramadan is particularly holy; Muslims believe that their holy book, the Koran, was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed on that day. Some South Asian muslims decorate their hands with mehndi

(henna) while fasting on that day, which is preceded by a night of prayer (Lailat-ul-Qadr). The end of Ramadan is marked by Eid-ul-Fitr, one of the most important holidays in the Islamic calendar. Eid is celebrated with feasting, presents, and new clothes. Credit: Famin Ahmed, Washington.

Raj Term used to describe the centuries of British rule of India (and what would later be called Pakistan and Bangladesh).

Ross, Sir Ronald (1857-1932) First winner of a Nobel Prize to have a South Asian connection (and first British citizen to win a Nobel). This doctor was born in Almora, India, and won the 1902 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work on malaria. His citation read: "For his work on malaria, by which he has shown how it enters the organism and thereby has laid the foundation for successful resesarch on this disease and methods of combating it." See Nobel Prizes for list of other South Asian winners.

Roy, Arundhati Author of "The God of Small Things," a first novel that became a worldwide bestseller and 1997 winner of the Booker Prize. She was the first Indian citizen to win the prize. She had received a \$1.6 million book advance, a record for an Indian author. In July 1998, she wrote an 8,000-word essay titled "The End of Imagination" in several publications (including Frontline, Outlook and The Nation) in which she condemned the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. In 1999, she took on an active role in protesting the environmental impact of the Narmada Dam in India by publishing an essay in Frontline and Outlook. Her latest book is the short non-fiction work, "The Cost of Living" (Modern Library 1999). The book is basically a reprint of her two essays on nuclear weapons and on dams. Kirkus Reviews wrote: "[the book] reveals the authoritarian paternalism of the Indian state that lies behind a mask of benevolence." See Booker Prize to see list of other South Asian winners. Link: Roy bio on SAJA

rupee The separate monetary units of India, Nepal, Pakistan. In India, a rupee is 100 paise; one paisa equals 1/100th of a rupee. Rupee is abbreviated in the singular as "Re." (at a cost of Re. 1) and in the plural as "Rs." (Rs. 65 million).

Rushdie, Salman Bombay-born, London-based author. Most widely known for the 1989 fatwa, or decree, by Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran calling for his death. The novel he published in 1988, *The Satanic Verses*, was considered blasphemous to Islam by many clerics and was banned in many countries (the first nation to ban the book was India), forcing him into hiding in Britain. Though the Iranian government withdrew the fatwa in 1998, a private foundation in Iran is still offering a multimillion-dollar reward to anyone to kills Rushdie. Before his run-in with the Ayatollah, Rusdhie had won a reputation as a brilliant writer with *Midnight's Children*, a fictional chronicle of modern India published in 1981. That book was awarded the Booker Prize twice--first in 1981, and a second time in 1994, as the best novel in the first 25 years of the prize. See Booker Prize to see list of other South Asian winners.

Sanskrit Indo-Aryan language in which many ancient Indian texts are written; also used by Hindu clergy for recitation of most prayers. The name is based on the Sanskrit word "samskrta," which means "purified" or "perfect." Vedic Sanskrit, based on a dialect of northwestern India, dates from as early as 3750 BC. Not all Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit. Dozens of English words of South Asian origin are derived from Sanskrit.

sari (also saree) Often referred in the Western press as a dress worn by Hindu women. It is also worn by many Christians in India and by many Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan women.

seersucker This English word for the striped, slightly puckered light fabric of linen comes from the Hindi word "sirsaker" and the Persian "shir-o-shakar," which means "milk and sugar."

Sen, Amartya (1933 -) Indian-born winner of the 1998 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. Widely known for his work in welfare economics and the study of famines. Currently master of Trinity College, Cambridge, he was formerly a professor of both economics and philosophy at Harvard University. See Nobel Prizes for list of other South Asian winners.

serendipity This word, used so aptly nowadays to refer to things found on the Internet, means happening across something you are not quite looking for. The South Asian connection is that "Serendip" (also Serendib) was the old Arab name for Ceylon, later Sri Lanka. In the 1700s, British author Horace Walpole coined "serendipity" from a Persian fairy tale called "The Three Princes of Serendip" (the princes made discoveries by chance). Serendib is itself a corruption of the Sanskrit word "Simvahaladweepa," which means "island of the the lions." See words of South Asian origin.

shampoo Derived from the Hindi verb "chaamp" (the infinitive form "chaampnaa" which means to press, to massage). This word is now obsolete in modern Hindi, but its derivative "champi," in the sense of head message, has survived in colloquial and slang Hindi, at least in the Delhi area. See words of South Asian origin.

Shiv Sena Hindu nationalist party based in Indian state of Maharashtra. Mistakenly referred to by at least one major U.S. newspaper as "Army of Shiva." The Shiv in the name of the party refers to the 16th century founder of the Maratha kingdom, Shivaji, and not Lord Shiva, the "destroyer" aspect of the Hindu trinity. Leader of the Shiv Sena is Bal Thackeray.

Shiva (also Lord Shiva) The "destroyer" aspect of the Hindu trinity. Brahma, the "creator," and Vishnu, the "preserver," are the other parts of the trinity.

Siddhartha In reference to the Buddha, Siddhartha should retain the final "a." Its derivation is Sanskrit, in which the final "a" would always be retained. The likely confusion is that many modern Hindi words derived from Sanskrit have dropped the final "a" that would have been retained in earlier usage in Sanskrit. That has happened in this case; Siddharth (without final "a") is a commonly heard modern name. Same with Rama, who in some Hindi-speaking areas becomes Ram. (Credit: Richard Cohen, Sanskrit and Pali scholar at the Univ. of Pennsylvania)

Sikhism Monotheistic faith, based on a revelation, founded in India c. 1500 A.D. by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the first in the line of 10 Sikh prophets. Sikhism is a separate religion and Sikhs should not be confused for Muslims or Hindus. It brings an egalitarian message of universalism, sharply condemning rituals and divisions in society. It places a strong emphasis on serving the needy and fighting for the oppressed. At 25 million followers, Sikhism is one of the largest religions in the world. A majority of Sikhs live in the Indian state of Punjab, but they also make up a highly visible portion of South Asians in the diaspora. Sikh men almost always have the name Singh (Punjabi for "lion") as their last or middle names. Women often use the name Kaur ("princess"). The religion requires men to always carry, among other things, a ceremonial dagger known as a "kirpan." Sikhs consider themselves disciples of Nanak and his nine successors, who are called the "10 gurus." The writings of the early gurus were compiled in the Adi Granth (also known as the Guru Granth Sahib), the Sikh sacred book, by Arjun (1563-1606), the fifth guru. Worshippers gather in a temple called a gurdwara, which houses a copy of the Adi Granth. A note on the last name Singh: Almost all Sikh men are Singhs, but not all Singhs are Sikhs, as Singh is also a common Hindu last name in northern India. Link: Sikh Mediawatch & Resource Task Force.

Sindh A province in southeastern Pakistan, of which Karachi is the capital. It is bordered by the provinces of Baluchistan on the west and north, Pakistani Punjab on the northeast, the Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat on the east and the Arabian Sea on the south. The language spoken in Sindh is Sindhi. A person from Sindh is known as a Sindhi. Sindhis are found in large numbers throughout the diaspora. Sindhis who are Hindu are most likely to have a last name that ends in the letters "ani." e.g., Khemlani, Mahbubani, Sivadasani.
See Sindhi.

Sindhi The language spoken in Sindh, a province in what is now Pakistan. It is spoken in India and the diaspora by immigrants from Sindh. A person from Sindh is known as a Sindhi. See Sindh.

Sinhalese The ethnic majority of Sri Lanka. Also the name of the language spoken by the Sinhalese. See Sri Lanka, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Tamil.

slurs As with any ethnic group, there are some words commonly used to describe South Asians that are considered offensive. Among them: "dothead," "Paki," "towel-head." Do not use under any circumstances. If you are quoting someone saying any of these, be sure to treat the word with the same caution you would treat "Jap" or the "N word."

South Asia All-encompassing term for the Indian Subcontinent, used to differentiate from East and Southeast Asia. The seven countries of South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. See diaspora.

South Asian Term for people who trace their origin to the Subcontinent. Preferred to East Indian, which should not be used. 2002 estimates for South Asians in the U.S.: about 2 million. See diaspora.

South India While not an official region, four states in India are regarded as being part of South India. In order of size, they are (with state language, capital, area and population): Andhra Pradesh (Telugu; Hyderabad; 106,204 square miles; 67 million); Karnataka (Kannada; Bangalore; 74,051 square miles; 45 million); Tamil Nadu (Tamil; Chennai; 50,216 square miles; 56 million); Kerala (Malayalam; Thiruvananthapuram; 15,005 square miles; 29 million). South India also includes the union territory of Pondicherry, which includes the enclaves of Mahe (bordered by Kerala and the Arabian Sea), Karaikkal (bordered by Tamil Nadu and the Bay of Bengal) and Yanam (bordered by Andhra Pradesh and the Bay of Bengal). Credit: S. Gopi Krishna, Toronto.

Sri Lanka An Indian Ocean island nation off the southern coast of India, formerly known as Ceylon. Population: 19 million. Sri Lanka won independence from Britain in 1948. The capital is Colombo. The two major ethnic groups are the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils. An armed insurgency by Tamil rebels against the Sri Lankan army has devastated the country since the early 1980s, as tens of thousands of civilians have died in the crossfire. See Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, serendipity.

Subcontinent, Indian (capitalized) Also known as "the Subcontinent." See South Asia.

sugar This sweet word comes from the Sanskrit "sarkara," which means pebble. Webster's etymology: Middle English "sugre," "sucre," from Middle French "sucre," from Medieval Latin "zuccarum," from Old Italian "zucchero," from Arabic "sukkar," from Persian "shakar"). See words of South Asian origin.

swadeshi Economic nationalism, or a policy promoting India-made goods as a means to economic self-reliance. Originated during India's struggle for independence from Britain, but now used by the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) against foreign (mainly American) products and services being introduced in

the newly liberalizing economy.

Syrian Malabar Christians A major sect of Christians in India converted, they believe, by St. Thomas in the First century A.D. during his travels to India. They owe no allegiance to Rome, Constantinople or Canterbury. Their patriarch is Indian and resides in India. More than two million Syrian Christians live all over India, but primarily in the state of Kerala. India is one of the few countries in the world where Christianity is an apostolic faith (i.e., conversion took place by one of the original disciples of Christ). Credit: Jacob Matthan, Oulu, Finland

Tamil Language spoken in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and a word used to refer to anyone whose mother tongue is Tamil. The country with the most prominent Tamil population outside of India is Sri Lanka. Because of the large population of Tamil-speaking immigrants and their descendants, Tamil is an official language in Singapore and a major language in Malaysia and Mauritius. See Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, diaspora. Credit: M.K. Srinivasan, managing editor, Masala

Teresa, Mother (Aug. 27, 1910-Sept. 5, 1997; b. Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu) Albanian-born Catholic nun who worked with the poor of Calcutta, earning the nickname "Saint of the Gutters" and winning the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. Famed for her works of charity and humanitarianism. Founder of an order of nuns called the Missionaries of Charity, which--from its founding in 1948--has grown from 12 sisters in India to more than 3,000 in 517 missions in 100 countries worldwide. During the last few years of her life, her work came under criticism from certain observers unhappy with her fundraising methods and the medical treatment she provided. Most vocal of the critics is journalist Christopher Hitchens, who wrote "The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice" (Verso Books, 1997). Still, she died one of the world's most popular and recognizable women. See Nobel Prizes for list of other South Asian winners. Link: Mother Teresa.

Thomas, Saint One of the apostles of Jesus Christ, who, Christians believe, visited India in the First Century A.D. and founded the sect that came to be known as Syrian Malabar Christians. Tradition holds that he died in 53 in Madras (now Chennai) in what is now the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, but his relics were moved and enshrined in Italy. In Chennai today, you can find St. Thomas Mount and SanthomeCathedral. In addition to his influence in India, St. Thomas is responsible for the phrase "doubting Thomas" (because he did not believe, at first, in Christ's resurrection). See Syrian Malabar Christians, Chennai.

thug This English word, which means a "ruffian" or "criminal," has had an interesting linguistic journey. It is originally derived from the Sanskrit "sthag," which as a verb meant "to hide," "to conceal," gradually developing into the meaning of "a cheat," "a fraudulent person." It gradually developed into "thag" in the Prakrit language and continued into many modern Indo-Aryan languages in that form, including Hindi. The word referred to members of a fraternity of professional robbers and murderers, who strangled their victims across northern India. The British suppressed the thugs starting in 1831, and the group died out by the end of the 1800s. See words of South Asian origin.

Urdu One of the official languages of Pakistan; also spoken in many parts of India, especially in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Also the language used in ballads known as ghazals. Urdu is written in a Perso-Arabic alphabet. Persian uses an adapted Arabic script which is further adapted to accommodate Urdu.

Vajpayee, Atal Bihari (use all three names; NYT & AP spell the middle name as "Behari") b. Dec. 25,

1924. Prime minister of India and the most widely respected leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party. After serving as prime minister for just 13 days in 1996, Vajpayee, became, in 1998 and 1999, the first person to become premier in back-to-back elections since Indira Gandhi in 1971. He is credited with putting a more tolerant face on the Hindu nationalist BJP. In more than four decades in politics, Vajpayee has in various government positions, including foreign minister in 1977-80. See Bharati Janata Party. Link: official profile.

-ware According to language guru William Safire, this suffix "started out in the Sanskrit *vasna*, 'price,' and came to mean, in English, things of value--'goods.' We used this combining form for articles made of clay--earthenware--or a range of tools--hardware" (The New York Times, Nov. 8, 1998).

words of South Asian origin The following English words have roots in various Subcontinental languages (with the majority derived from Sanskrit). anaconda, aryan, atoll, avatar, bandana, bangle, banyan, bazaar, brahmin, bungalow, calico, cashmere, catamaran, chai, cot, chintz, cheetah, cheroot, chutney, coolie, cummerbund, curry, cushy, dinghy, dungaree, fakir, ghat, ginger, grieve, guru, indigo, jodhpurs, juggernaut, jungle, jute, karma, khaki, loot, mandarin, mango, mantra, mogul, mongoose, mughal, mullah, musk, mulligatawny, mynah, nabob/nawab, nirvana, orange, pajamas, pariah, paisley, pepper, punch (the drink), pundit, seersucker, serendipity, shampoo, sugar, swami, swastika, teak, thug, verandah, -ware (the suffix), yoga. More on such words: <http://www.allindia.com/general/eng.htm>