FREEMASONRY IN INDIA

Introduction

Culturally India must be amongst the most pluralist societies in the world with multiple religions, a deeply-defined traditional caste system, a proliferation of different States and languages and vast differences between rich and poor.   It is justly proud of its history and heritage. It is the home of the world's oldest-surviving religions with the largest following and it is a puzzle, at first glance, how Freemasonry could succeed in this environment.   To resolve this puzzle it is necessary to look at India's history and some of its social and cultural characteristics.

Early History – The Vedic Peoples
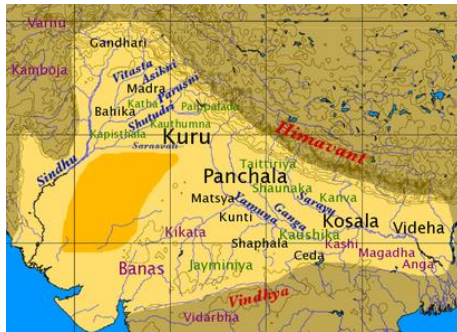
While human life is traced back more than 75,000 years in India, the Vedic Period (1,500-500 BC) is the earliest significant period because it was during these times that the 'Vedas' were being composed. They are a large body of texts written in Vedic Sanskrit, which constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, which is probably the oldest mass religion now surviving (Judaism is said to date from the rule of Saul and David in about 920 BC).   Hinduism's 'alter ego' - Buddhism - was also born in India in the 6th or 5th century BC.
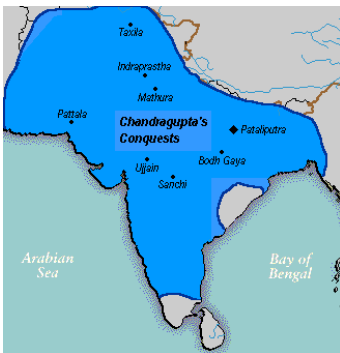
The Maurya Empire[1]

The Vedic peoples were conquered by the Maurya Empire during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC and this is known as the classical period of Indian history, during which India has been estimated to have had the largest economy of the ancient and medieval world, controlling between one third and one fourth of the world's wealth.   The population of the empire has been estimated to be about 50-60 million making the Mauryan Empire one of the most populous empires of the time.   However, it, too, became fragmented into numerous minor warring kingdoms until they again were united under the Gupta Empire.

The Gupta Empire

The Gupta Empire existed approximately from 320 to 550 AD and covered much of the Indian Subcontinent. Founded by Maharaja Sri-Gupta, the dynasty was a period of peace and prosperity, which led to advances in scientific and artistic endeavours and is called the "Golden Age" of India.

It was marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion and philosophy that crystallized the elements of what is generally known as Hindu culture.

The high points of this cultural creativity are magnificent architecture, sculptures and paintings.   The Gupta period produced scholars who made great advancements in many academic fields.   Science and political administration reached new heights and strong trade ties also made the region an important cultural centre that influenced nearby kingdoms and regions in Burma, Sri Lanka, the Malay Archipelago and Indochina so that Indian civilization, administration, culture, and religion (Hinduism and Buddhism) spread to much of south-east Asia during this period.

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[1] Wikipedia

The Mughal Empire

Muslim rule in the subcontinent began in 712 when the Arab general Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh and Multan in southern Punjab, setting the stage for several successive invasions between the 10th and 15th centuries and leading to the formation of Mughal Empire.
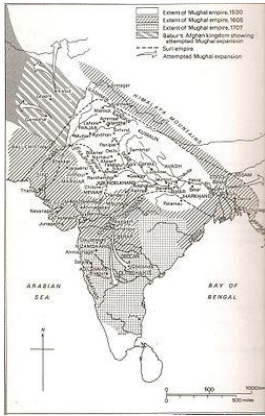
In 1526, Babur, a descendant of Genghis Khan, established the Mughal Empire, which lasted for over 200 years until Nader Shah defeated the Mughal army in 1739 but part of the dynasty survived until finally defeated during the 1857 war of independence.   This period marked vast social change in the subcontinent as the Hindu majority were ruled over by the Muslim Mughal emperors, most of whom showed religious tolerance.   Mughal rule came to cover most of the northern parts of the subcontinent and introduced middle-eastern art and architecture to India.

During the decline of the Mughal Empire several smaller empires rose to fill the power vacuum and the Afghans, Balochis and Sikhs took control over large areas in the north-west until the British East India Company gained ascendancy.

The East India Company

In 1600, a group of merchants incorporated themselves into the East India Company and were granted monopoly privileges on all trade with the East Indies by the British Government.   Trade started in India, at the port of Surat, in 1608.   In 1615 the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, granted the British the right to establish a factory at Surat.   Trading posts were established along the east and west coasts of India, and considerable English communities developed around the three towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras.   The Company spread Christianity as well as trade.

In 1757 **Bro Robert Clive**, a military official of the Company, defeated the forces of the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daulah.   Clive was a member of Lodge of Rock No. 260 EC which the second oldest Masonic Lodge in India.   Soon after this victory the Company found itself burdened with massive military expenditures and threatening collapse.   Lord North's India Bill 1773 restored its position but provided for greater parliamentary control over the Company.   Lord North also passed the 1773 Tea Act, to assist the Company, but this resulted in the Boston Tea Party[2].

Apart from the local power wielded by the Maharajas, who were religious as well as secular rulers, the proliferation of languages, scripts and even date-names made it essential to operate through these local rulers.   Appendix A illustrates the variety of different languages, scripts and numeral systems used on the Indian sub-continent.[3]   The Company militarily supported the local Maharaja of the 'independent' Princely States, often backing the wrong family thus causing unrest.   The Princely States were numerous and of widely divergent religious and political influence and importance.   Appendix B lists the honours due to the various Maharajas and illustrates their hierarchy and their relative influence and power.[4]   Where a state had not been annexed, the British practiced indirect rule, placing a Resident at the court of the native ruler who was allowed sovereignty in domestic matters.   A native state became part of British India if there was no male heir at the death of the ruler but often the annexation was justified on the grounds that the native prince was of evil disposition.

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[2] *Dr Marjory Bloy "The Ministry of Lord North: January 1770 - March 1782"*
[3] "South Asian Coins and Paper Money"
[4] Wikipedia

British Rule and Indian Independence

The annexation of native states, harsh revenue policies, and the plight of the Indian peasantry all contributed to the Rebellion of 1857 and in 1858 the East India Company was dissolved and the administration of India became the responsibility of the Crown under a Governor-General. The expansion of British rule in India was pursued vigorously until it covered the entire country. Many of the Governor-Generals were Freemasons[5], shown below, as were Wellesley, later named the **Duke of Wellington**, who made his military name in India. Wellington was initiated into Lodge 494 (IC) by hid father and was a member from 1790-1795.

| **Robert Clive** | **Wellington** | **Kitchener** | **Churchill** |

From 1896 to 1897 **Winston Churchill** served as a soldier and journalist in India under **Lord Kitchener**.

| **Lord Cornwallis** | **Earl of Mornington** | **Lord Minto** | **Earl of Moira** |

The first official step towards Indian independence and western-style democracy was taken soon after with the appointment of Indian Councillors to advise the British Viceroy, and with the establishment of provincial Councils with Indian members. Political parties began to form and **W.C. Bannerjee** presided over the first session of the Indian National Congress held at Bombay in 1885.

India's history shows how it has suffered but assimilated change and adapted, parts of it having been often over-run by a number of conquering peoples – Arabs, Mongols, Portugese, French, Dutch and British – and one understands a vital and primal yearning for independence. But the act of bringing together a nation from the many independent States or Principalities has been hampered because regional communication has been limited by a proliferation of different languages.

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[5] Mackey "History of Freemasonry" and other references

Therefore the political struggle to unify India was not simply a struggle against foreign (British) rule but also achieving uniformity between these politically divergent and often warring Princely States and between differing political parties often representing different religious alignments.

It should also be understood that multiple allegiances were a normal part of Indian culture. This is probably illustrated best by the fact that coins of the British Raj, Muslim coins (showing no effigy but only Koran script) and Princely States coins were used in some areas at the same time.

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1937

The massacre at Amritsar in 1919 might be said to have begun a truly determined wish to rid the British from India and from 1920 leaders such as Mohandas Gandhi and Bhagat Singh began mass movements to campaign against the British Raj and revolutionary activities against the British rule took place throughout India.

World War II temporarily stayed this movement until Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India after the war with instructions that India was to have independence no later than 1948. Mountbatten's instructions included a united India but with authority to adapt to a changing situation.[6]

Mountbatten was fond of Congress leader Nehru and his liberal outlook for the country. He felt differently about the Muslim leader Jinnah. Whereas Jinnah argued for Muslim representation in a united India and Gandhi emphatically insisted on a united India, Nehru and the British grew tired of negotiating and thought it would be better to give Muslims their own homeland rather than try to find a solution to which Jinnah and the Indian National Congress would agree. So partition based on religion affiliation became policy. Jinnah eventually campaigned for separation and a new State of Pakistan.

Mountbatten insisted on a set date in 1947 for the transfer of power to an Indian Government, arguing that a fixed timeline would convince Indians of his and the British government's sincerity in working towards independence. However, the hastening of the process of the handover of power would unleash an orgy of violence and retribution never before seen in the Indian sub-continent.

Mountbatten also developed a strong relationship with the Indian princes, who ruled those portions of India not directly under British rule, and this was decisive in persuading the vast majority of them to opt to join the Indian Union and independence was granted in June 1947.

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[6] Wikipedia

The Caste System

The Indian caste system is possibly the most vivid example of Indian culture. The system dates from the early Videc period and is a system of social stratification in which communities are defined into hereditary groups called Jatis, which were formally defined by the Brahminical texts under four categories as follows:-

- Brahmins - scholars, teachers, priests;
- Vaishyas - agriculturists, cattle raisers, traders, bankers;
- Kshatriyas - kings, warriors, law enforcers, administrators; and
- Shudras - artisans, craftsmen, service providers.

Finally, certain people like foreigners, nomads, forest tribes and the Chandalas (who dealt with disposal of the dead) were excluded altogether and treated as untouchables or 'Dalits'. Caste determines an individual's place in society, the work they may carry out, and who they may marry and meet.

The caste system has survived all of the changes that have taken place over India's long history and, although India's national constitution of 1950 sought to abolish cast discrimination and the practice of untouchability, the caste system remains deeply entrenched in Hindu culture and is still widespread throughout southern Asia, especially in rural India. In what has been called India's "hidden apartheid", entire villages in many Indian states remain completely segregated by caste. Representing about 15 percent of India's population—or some 160 million people—the widely scattered Dalits endure near complete social isolation, humiliation, and discrimination based exclusively on their birth status. Even a Dalit's shadow is believed to pollute the upper classes. They may not cross the line dividing their part of the village from that occupied by higher castes, drink water from public wells, or visit the same temples as the higher castes. Dalit children are still often made to sit in the back of classrooms.[7]

Although generally identified with Hinduism, the caste system was also observed among followers of other religions, including some groups of Muslims and Christians most likely due to inherited cultural traits.

The Government of India has officially documented castes and sub-castes, primarily to determine those deserving positive discrimination in education and jobs and this year 2011 the Indian census will seek to record caste but some are stating that they will not identify their caste.

Criticism of the Caste system in Hindu society came both from the Hindu fold and without. The first upper-caste Hindu temple to openly welcome Dalits was the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple (where an immense fortune in gold and jewellery has recently been uncovered) and many Hindu reformers such as the Freemason **Swami Vivekananda** believe that there is no place for the caste system in Hinduism. The 15th century saint Ramananda accepted all castes, including untouchables, into his fold. Both Buddha and Mahavira preached to their people to break the bonds of the caste system, and severely criticised untouchability and the Dalit Buddhist movement in India asked its followers to leave Hinduism, and convert to Buddhism. In addition, many reform movements arose primarily as a reaction to the teachings of Christian missionaries in India and their attempts to convert those who were attracted to the prospect of escaping the caste system.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru supported the eradication of untouchability and since the 1980s, caste has become a major issue in Indian politics. In this environment, anyone espousing equality as one of its tenets was bound to find followers of all social strata.

Today India's government has affirmative action programs based on caste and a case was recently reported of an action under Anti-caste law.

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[7] "Anthropology" William A. Haviland

Education

Despite the fact that children's education is compulsory in India to age 14, 25% of India's population is illiterate, only 15% of students reach high school, and just 7% graduate. As of 2008, India's post-secondary high schools offer only enough seats for 7% of India's college-age population, 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree. Economic and social disparities exist and rural children are less able to receive education because of greater opportunity costs, since rural children have to work to contribute to the family's income.

It is reported that Muslim children are over-represented in those not receiving adequate education.[8] **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**, a noted writer and educationalist, addressed this problem and opened several Muslim schools that taught science. He advocated that Muslims should not join the political parties without seeking parity in Education with the Hindus. Masonic emphasis on education helped to score its appeal.

Philosophy and Art

A Bengali thinks of himself as a poet and a philosopher. President Lt-General Ershad, the military leader of Bangladesh, opened the first SAARC conference in Dhaka in 1986 quoting poetry.

Indian music originated in the Vedas which prescribed vocal music. Classical Indian music has evolved into one of the most complicated rhythmic patterns imaginable and is revered by such famous musicians as Yehudi Menuhin who spent time in India studying the Sitar and wrote "Melodically and rhythmically Indian music long ago achieved a complex sophistication which only in the twentieth century, with the work of Bartok and Stravinsky, has Western music begun to adumbrate". [9].

Muslim art may not depict graven images but the art museum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has many art exhibits showing text of the Koran in various scripts and materials - from golden Sanskrit to ebony Arabic – and they are a wonderful and inspiring statement of faith to all who see them.
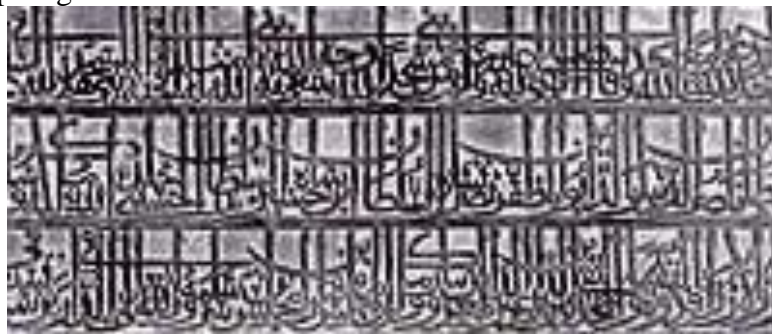
Inscription in Arabic on black stone - 1522-23[10]

They illustrate most comprehensively that art cannot be constrained by very strict and limiting rules and that freedom is not a necessary and basic ingredient of imagination.

The earliest recorded art of India originated from a religious Hindu background, which was later replaced by popular Buddhist art. Art in India has been constantly inspired by spiritualism and mystical relationship between man and god. Modern Indian art has diverged and artists such as **Gaganendranath Tagore** experimented with many new expressive forms.

People of this ilk find kindred spirits in Freemasonry.

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[8] Wikipedia
[9] Yehudi Menuhin "*Unfinished Journey*"
[10] Bangladesh National Museum

The Beginning of Freemasonry in India

Formal Freemasonry began in India when a petition was sent to the Grand Lodge of England by a few Brethren, members of the East India Company, in 1728 to constitute a Provincial Grand Lodge in Calcutta (Fort William).   The Petition was granted and Bro **Pomfret** was empowered to constitute a regular Lodge at Fort William (No 72) – Lodge "Star of the East", which is still in existence.   In 1729, **Captain Ralph Farwinter** was appointed "Provisional Grand Master for East India in Bengal" and also **James Dawson** as "Provincial Grand Master" for East Indies.[11]

The first Lodge in Madras was formed in 1752.   Bombay followed in 1758 with the "Bombay Lodge No. 234 EC" and then in the Punjab in 1786 - Lodge No. 489 EC.   The Provincial Grand Lodge of Madras was formed in 1752 and The Provincial Grand Lodge of Bombay was created in 1758.

Religious restrictions on membership

Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of England of 1723 declared that Freemasons should not prevent others from joining the fraternity based upon the perspective member's nationality, race, or religion, the first Jewish Mason was not recorded in England until 1732.[12]   Freemasonry in India was initially also restricted to British residents until 1775, when for the first time an Indian, Nawab Umadat-ul-Umara, the eldest son of the Nawab of the Carnatic was initiated into Freemasonry at Trichinopoly.   He became Nawab in 1795.   Given the need to administer the country with the assistance of local Maharajas, this should be no surprise as the father, Nawab Muhammed Ali Khan Wallajah (1749-1795), supported the English against the French, placing him heavily in debt and, as a result, he had to surrender much of his territory to the East India Company.

The second Indian Mason was **M. Bandeh Ali Khan**, initiated in Marine Lodge, Calcutta in 1812 although several members objected to the admission of a Muslim despite Grand Lodge's ruling that there be "no distinction on the score of Religion or Creed".[13]   This 1830 ruling, from the **Duke of Sussex,** Grand Master UGLE, who believed in a genuinely universal brotherhood, proclaimed that the religion of a Mason was his own concern.

The **Duke of Sussex** was the sixth son of George III, all of whom were Freemasons (the seventh was not).[14] Initially Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England, he later became the first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813.   He held this position until his death in 1843.   He established the Lodge of Reconciliation that produced the Emulation working and created an inclusive, less obviously Christian freemasonry.[15]   His statue now dominates the Sussex corridor of the current Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street.   His ruling was opposed by those who wanted to retain the Christian ethic of the craft. and by those who did not want interference in each Lodge's right to admit people of its own choice.

This landmark ruling, nevertheless, was accepted and, in retrospect, gave Freemasonry a very precious gift – the ability to accept men of all monotheistic religions.

In 1843 in Bombay a Lodge was formed under the Scottish Constitution designed expressly "for the admission of natives into the Craft" and a Parsee, **Ardeshir Cursetji Wadia**, an engineer and ship-builder and the first Indian Fellow of the Royal Society, was admitted.

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[11] Grand Lodge of India website.
[12] Sarah Breger "Moment" magazine
[13] 1979 Prestonian Lecture – "250 Years of Masonry in India" – G E Walker
[14] MQ Magazine Issue 13 April 2006
[15] www.thefleece.org

Hindus were initially not admitted at all because it was believed that they did not believe in one Supreme Being but worshipped many Gods. However the Duke's ruling that the Hindu gods were the personification of a single Supreme Being allowed Hindus to join the Craft. The first Hindu to be made a Freemason was Bro. **Ranganath Sastry** in Lodge Perfect Unanimity No. 233, Madras in 1857. The Hindu caste system was also a problem as it was understood that members of different castes could not sit or eat with each other. But, in 1877, the Lodge of Rock initiated seventeen Hindus of seven different caste names.[16]

The earliest Sikh to be made a mason was Bro. **Duleep Singh** in Lodge Star in the East in 1861. In Bengal Bro. **P C Dutt** of Calcutta joined Lodge Anchor and Hope, No. 234 in 1872, nine years after he was first proposed for initiation, after much opposition.[17]

All restrictions had clearly been lifted by the time **Rudyard Kipling** was made a Freemason by dispensation (being under age) in 1885 in The Lodge of Hope and Perseverance 782 E.C. He wrote - "Here I met Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, members of the Araya and Brahmo Samaj, and a Jewish Tyler".[18]

Grand Lodges operating in India

In addition to the English Constitution, several other Grand Lodges formed Lodges in India as follows:-
- Dutch Constitution - Lodge Solomon was founded on April 7, 1758 at Tandelga near Chinsurah in Bengal by the commander of the merchant fleet of the Netherlands East India Company, Bro. Jacob Larwood Van Chevichaven;
- French Constitution - Lodge Sincere Amite, Pondicherry was chartered in 1787;
- Scottish Constitution - The first Lodge under the Scottish Constitution was consecrated in 1801 in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). One Lodge Hope No. 334 SC, Karachi was charted in 1767; in 1770 it was shifted to New Castle and in 1782 to New York. The date of its arrival in India cannot at present be stated. Lodge Hope was charted by the PGM of Western India on April 25, 1842;
- Danish Constitution – a Lodge at Tranquebar was formed in 1807 by the National Grand Lodge of Denmark with the name "De L'amour Fraternelle" (to Brotherly Love); and
- Irish Constitution - The Light of the North No. 357 at Kurnaul [now Karnal] in 1835.

Some Lodges had been constituted by the "Moderns" while others owed allegiance to the "Ancients" so there were differences in rituals amongst the English Lodges but these differences were resolved, at least in Madras, in 1785 some years before union in England.

The Masonic Structure

The various Grand Lodges created District Grand Lodges in various parts of India to co-ordinate the activities of the various Lodges. The District Grand Lodges had delegated but independent responsibilities but Lodges had rights to appeal. In general this system worked well and illustrated that governance in a Federal system of government with States having independent rights can be workable. It cannot have passed unnoticed in the formation of India's future Constitution, nor amongst the various independent Maharajas.

An unusual incident in Afghanistan

It should be recalled that the First Anglo-Afghan War was fought between British India and Afghanistan from 1839 to 1842 and was one of the first major conflicts during the 19th century competition for power and influence in Central Asia between the United Kingdom and Russia.

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[16] G E Walker – Op cit

[17] "Introduction to Freemasonry and a quick overview of its history" - RW Bro Justice Devinder Gupta, DGM, GLI.

[18] "Kipling and Freemasonry" - MW Bro. Robert A. Gordon PGM - G.L. P.E.I

It also marked one of the worst setbacks inflicted on British power and is considered one of Britain's worst disasters in Asia.   **Alexander Burnes**, said by some to be the inspiration for Kipling's "*The Man who would be King*", had advised the viceroy to support one claimant to the throne of Kabul, but the viceroy preferred to follow another opinion, thus leading to the massacre which began the war.

The calmness with which he continued at his post long after the imminence of his danger was apparent, and the ferocity with which he fought after the killing of his political assistant won him a heroic reputation.[19]

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was fought from 1878 to 1880 and fared differently.   The war ended after attaining all the British geopolitical objectives.   The Afghans were permitted to maintain internal sovereignty but they had to cede control of their nation's foreign relations to the British.

So it is a surprise to read that, in 1906, when H M **Habibullah Khan**, Amir of Afghanistan, was paying a State visit to India (the first time any ruler of Afghanistan had been out of his country), he professed a wish to be made a Freemason.   This had to be done in absolute secrecy and in incredible haste as His Majesties advisors were strongly against the introduction of any further western ideas being imported into their country.

One evening, after a dinner with **Lord Kitchener**, he was secreted away to Lodge Concordia, where, having received dispensation from the GM the **Duke of Connaught**, the Lodge conferred the three degrees on the august visitor.[20]

The Grand Lodge of India

Freemasonry grew rapidly from 40 Lodges in 1860 (34 England and 6 Scottish) to 291 a century later (202 Lodges of UGLE - 17 in what was to become Pakistan - and 79 of Irish or Scottish Constitutions).   Partition also meant partition of the District Grand Lodges of Punjab and Sind.

Inevitably this growth led to the formation of an independent Grand Lodge and the Grand Lodge of India was formed in 1961 in New Delhi, sponsored by the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland.   **H H Major General Syed Raza Ali Khan**, Nawab of Rampur, was the first Grand Master.

The three sponsoring Grand Masters stated that it was up to individual Lodges in India to decide whether to join the new Grand Lodge of India, adding that they would accept the decision of these Lodges and establish the closest fraternal relations with the new Grand Lodge.   Lodges not wishing to participate would continue to enjoy the existing rights under their respective Grand Lodges.

Out of a total of 277 individual Lodges in India (not including those from Pakistan, Ceylon and Aden, which were excluded for the poll) 145 with a total membership of 7,466 opted for the new Grand Lodge of India.

This represented a little over 52 per cent.   The 132 Lodges who opted not to join were mainly from the English, Scottish and Irish jurisdictions and comprised one half of the Lodges from those jurisdictions.

About 1,491 Brethren from all over India were present at the Consecration Ceremony.

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[19] Wikipedia
[20] Bro Lt Col Sir A Henry McMahon in Vol 3 No 3 of "The Indian Mason" 1996.

There are number of prominent Indians who have been Freemasons.   To name a few;-
- **Sir Phirozeshah Mehta**, Patriot and social reformer in the 19th century;
- **Dadabhoy Nowroji** , social reformer and 1st Indian to be elected to the British house of Commons;
- **Swami Vivekananda;**
- **W.C. Bannerjee**, a founder member of the Indian National Congress;
- **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**, Freedom fighter and the 1st President of Independent India;
- **Dr. S. Radhakrishnan** the 2nd President of Independent India:
- **President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed**, President of India;
- **Rajagopalachari**, the 1st and last Governor General of Independent India;
- **Dr. Badruddin Tyabji**, Leader, Patriot and Founder Member of the Indian National Congress;
- **His Holiness Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah, Aga Khan;** and
- **The Nawab of Pataudi Mansur Ali Khan.**
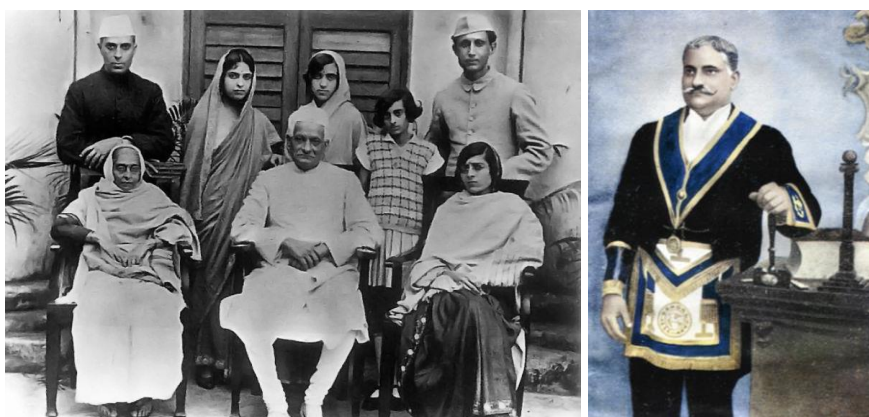
Notable among them was **Shri Motilal Nehru**, who was an early Indian independence activist and leader of the Indian National Congress (showed in the centre of the picture).   He was the founder patriarch of India's most powerful political family, the Nehru-Gandhi family.
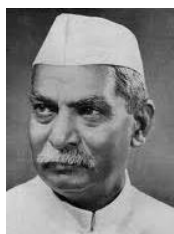
Dr Rajendra Prasad was a great leader of the Indian Nationalist Movement and also one of the architects of the Indian Constitution.   He was elected as the first President of Republic of India.   **Rajendra Prasad** was a crucial leader of the Indian Independence Movement, who left his lucrative profession to participate in the nationalist movement of India.

Indian royalty have graced Freemasonry since its early introduction into India and over 20 Maharaja have joined the craft.

Srikanta Datta Narasimharaja Wadiyar
Current Maharaja of Mysore

Sampatrao Gaikwad
ex-Maharaja of Baroda

Freemasonry in India today

Today there are around 370 Lodges with about 15,000 Masons forming the Grand Lodges of India. Initially there was one Grand Master for all of India and four Provincial Grand Lodges - North, South, East and West, each with a Provincial Grand Master. The Grand Lodge met in Delhi and runs a not-for-profit medical clinic next to the lodge where health care is provided to those who can't afford it and to Brethren. This situation resolved into four sovereign Grand Lodges, namely, Grand Lodge of Upper India, Grand Lodge of South India, Grand Lodge of Western India and Grand Lodge of Eastern India

Indian Lodges keep five Volumes of Sacred Law on the Altar, namely, The Holy Bible [Christianity], Bhagvad Gita [Hinduism], Holy Koran [Islam], Guru Granth Sahib [Sikhism] and the Zenda Avastha [Zorastrian] on the Altar. They are opened and placed separately and not piled up one upon the other.

The Square and Compasses is ordinarily placed in position on that Book to which the Worshipful Master owes his allegiance, except on Installation Nights when they will be placed on that Book on which the Master Elect will take his Obligation. The candidates for Initiation, Passing and Raising take their Obligation on the Book of their faith. [21]

Indian Freemasons are active in promoting social well-being. For instance **S.V. Sista** is the Executive Trustee of Population First, which is an NGO working on population and health issues within the framework of women's rights and social development.

Divided Masonic Allegiances

In USA the doctrine of 'Exclusive Territorial Jurisdiction' was coined as a result of the geographic disposition of the military Lodges after the American Civil War and meant that Lodges should belong to only one Grand Lodge in each State or Jurisdiction. It basically applies in New South Wales and most other States in Australia today and there is concern if any other jurisdiction attempts to form a Lodge than the one holding sway in that State.

Currently there are still Lodges functioning under the English, Scottish and Irish constitutions in India and members may belong to Lodges in more than one jurisdiction. For instance, **W Bro Dr. Burnes** was WM of an English Lodge in Bombay at the same time as he was Provincial Grand Master for the Grand Lodge of Scotland.[22] The relationship between the constitutions is India is reported to be cordial and inter-visitation is encouraged and practised.

However, it has not always been so. At one time the Grand Lodge of India required its members to forsake any "divided allegiances" thus effectively requiring those of its members who were also members of Lodges in different constitutions to make a choice. This is perhaps an understandable action in a nation with a long history of throwing out the invader. It may have been a reasonable expectation that UGLE, Scotland and Ireland might forsake their continued Masonic presence in India in view of the fact that the Dutch, French and Danes had done so.

However the English, Scottish and Irish Constitutions have not subscribed to the doctrine of exclusive territorial jurisdiction and, in response, UGLE suspended recognition possibly because this looked like its introduction. This situation was eventually resolved but not until UGLE had instructed brethren in its Lodges in Western Australia not to attend a planned Pan-Pacific Masonic Conference because GLI representatives intended to attend. The Conference in Perth was cancelled.

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[21] "Introduction to Freemasonry and a quick overview of its history" R.W.Bro Justice Devinder Gupta, Deputy GM. Grand Lodge of India
[22] G E Walker – Op cit

The United Grand Lodge of India

At a council of the four Grand Masters of the four Grand Lodges held on 5th August 2001 at Lucknow, it was resolved that these four sovereign & independent Grand Lodges in India should act in unison on issues and matters concerning Freemasonry within and outside India and to form a Confederation of Grand Lodges to be known as the "United Grand Lodges of India".

M.W.Bro. N.R.Doraiswami, founder Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of South India, was appointed Chairman and **V.W.Bro. Philip R. J. Fowler** was appointed Secretary of the Council of United Grand Lodges of India having its headquarters in Coimbatore.   At present the United Grand Lodges of India comprises of two Grand Lodges, Grand Lodge of Upper India and Grand Lodge of South India, the other two Grand Lodges having opted out.[23]

Freemasonry in Pakistan and Bangladesh

Following partition in 1947, Freemasonry in Pakistan came under Muslim criticism and the Craft in Pakistan was "suspended".[24]   It was finally banned in 1972 by the then President Ali Bhutto. Laws were introduced into the country forbidding this society to meet and the buildings and artifacts were sequestered by the government. The old lodge building in Lahore is today government owned. As a result of this ban, all the lodges of the English and Scottish constitutions closed.[25]

However, Lodge Quetta No 2333 EC, went underground and met in the Italian-run construction camp at Tarbela Dam in the Northwest Frontier Province. Two of our brethren, **RW Bro Ron Mertin and VW Bro John Church,** were members of this lodge in the '70s and early '80s. The lodge continued to meet at Tarbela until it was finally moved to England in 1984, where it now meets in Grand Lodge in London. During its latter days in Pakistan, it was still administered by the District Grand Lodge in Pakistan and members attended the annual installation meetings, although they did not meet as a District Grand Lodge.

It is interesting to note that a number of senior army officers became members of the lodge when it was based in Quetta in Baluchistan. These officers were usually attending the Army Staff College at Quetta. Amongst these was **General Zia-ul-Haq**, the then President. The Temple in Rawalpindi, which was a rather magnificent building, was one of those taken over by the Government. The lodge and its associated Royal Arch Chapter, of the same name and number, was also administered by the District Grand Chapter, whose officers filled the corresponding positions in the District Grand Lodge[26].

With Indian help Bangladesh (East Pakistan) ceded from Pakistan following the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and one Lodge still operates in Bangladesh under the UGLE, meeting in successive months in Dhaka and Sylhet.

Conclusions

The story of India is of a struggle to unify a diverse number of independent States into a single country which had a long and richly endowed cultural history but had been historically over-run by a sequence of differing religious and economic powers.   India assimilated change and adapted as a result and while there is still a strong will to preserve aspects of the Hindu culture, nevertheless there is an equally strong will for social and economic progress.

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[23] UGLI website
[24] G E Walker – Op cit
[25] Wikipedia
[26] Personal correspondence from VW Bro John Church

This ability to accept and adapt to change, the need to reduce the social inequity of the caste system and the positive latent spiritualism of the Indian people, have all created an environment in which Freemasonry has been accepted and can flourish.   The political necessity to work through and with the co-operation of the local Indian rulers meant that non-Christian Maharajas were admitted to the craft despite attempts to retain the Christian ethos in Freemasonry.

Undoubtedly Freemasonry and Freemasons, in helping to break down the caste system, and in creating a meeting place for different religions and races, have helped to achieve the National unity that exists today. No doubt it will continue to address the continuing social problems.

The whole Masonic experience in India, in particular the ruling of the **Duke of Sussex**, has greatly enriched the Craft and left it with a wonderful legacy by assisted in making the Craft a truly universal brotherhood welcoming all monotheistic religions and all classes of men.

Appendix A – Languages and Numeral Systems used in India

	0	½	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	50	100	500	1000
WESTERN	0	½	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	50	100	500	1000
ROMAN			I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	L	C	D	M
ARABIC																
PERSIAN																
EASTERN ARABIC																
HYDERABAD ARABIC																
INDIAN (Sanskrit)																
ASSAMESE																
BENGALI																
GUJARATI																
KUTCH																
NAVANAGAR																
NEPALESE																
TIBETAN																
BURMESE																
KANARESE																
ARAKANESE																

Appendix B – Saluting honours for a Maharaja

No of Guns in Salute		Maharaja
Normal	**Local**	
21	21	H.E.H The Nizam of Hyderabad
		H.H. the Maharaja of Mysore
		H.H. the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir
		H.H. the Maharaja of Gaekwad
		H.H. the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior
19	21	H.H. the Maharaja Holkar of Indore
19	19	H.H. the Maharaja of Kolhapur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Travancore
17	19	H.H. the Maharaja of Kotah
		H.H. the Maharaja of Bharatpur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Bikaner
		H.H. the Maharaja of Jaipur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Jodhpur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Patiala
17	17	H.H. the Maharaja of Cochin
		H.H. the Maharaja of Karauli
		H.H. the Maharaja of Rewa
15	17	H.H. the Maharaja of Alwar
		H.H. the Maharaja Rana of Dholpur
15	15	H.H. the Maharaja of Datia
		H.H. the Maharaja of Dewas Senior
		H.H. the Maharaja of Dewas Junior
		H.H. the Maharaja of Dhar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Idar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Jaisalmer
		H.H. the Maharaja of Kishangarh
		H.H. the Maharaja of Orchha
		H.H. the Maharaja of Sikkim
13	15	H.H. the Maharaja of Jind
		H.H. the Maharaja of Kapurthala
		H.H. the Maharaja of Benares
		H.H. the Maharaja of Bhavnagar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Nabha
		H.H. the Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Ratlam
13	13	H.H. the Maharaja of Cooch Behar
		H.H. the Maharaja Raj Sahib of Dhrangadhra-Halvad
		H.H. the Maharaj Rana of Jhalawar
		H.H. the Maharaja Rana Sahib of Porbandar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Rajpipla
		H.H. the Maharaja of Tripura

__Appendix B (Continued) – Saluting honours for a Maharaja__

No of Guns in Salute		Maharaja
Normal	**Local**	
11	11	H.H. the Maharaja of Ajaigarh
		H.H. the Maharaja of Bijawar
		H.H. the Maharaja of Charkhari
		H.H. the Maharaja of Chhatarpur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Gondal
		H.H. the Maharaja of Kangra-Lambagraon
		H.H. the Maharaja of Morvi
		H.H. the Maharaja of Narsinghgarh
		H.H. the Maharaja of Panna
		H.H. the Maharaja of Sirmur
		H.H. the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal
9	9	The Maharaja of Bansda
		The Maharaja of Jawhar
		The Maharaja of Kalahandi
		The Maharaja of Lunawara
		The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj
		The Maharaja of Patna
		The Maharaja of Sonepur