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## INDIAN CULTURE

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These are not just words, but something that are highly applicable to a country like India that is incredibly rich in culture and history in the world. India's culture that fascinates me the most. India is a unique amalgamation of cultures, religions and belief.

Perhaps no other country of the world presents such a fascinating medley of a rich and variegated heritage that is as old as the civilization itself. A few quotations or statements cannot describe the pedestal that India holds on to the world map because of its colourful and unique culture. From the times of Mauryas, Cholas and Mughals to the period of British Empire, India has always been famous for its traditions and hospitality. The warmth in the relations and euphoria in celebrations make the country stand out distinctively in the global fraternity. The country's liveliness and generosity attract a number of tourists to its vibrant culture which is an amalgamation of religions, festivals, food, art, dance, music and many other subtle things. Everything, from the culture and values to customs, rituals and traditions, is 'special' in this 'Land of Gods'.

Tolerance and Non-Violence: India is one country in the world that has the distinction of being tolerant and not resorting to arms and ammunition in the first place. Mahatma Gandhi's satyagraha movement is a testimony to this. Swami Vivekananda also aptly enunciated this fact in his speech delivered at Chicago on 11 September 1893, "the most ancient order of monks in the world, the Vedic order of sannyasins, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance..

Secularism: India has also been at the forefront of being a secular country. Freedom of worship and practice of religion is the manifestation of harmonious existence of diverse cultures in India. No religion is looked down upon or uplifted either. In fact, all religions, despite their cultural differences, come together in the times of calamity to show their 'unity in diversity' [1].

Cultural and Social Bond: India's history is replete with instances of cooperation and brotherhood. In spite of having suffered oppression from different foreign conquerors at different periods of history, its culture and oneness has not taken a beating and continued to remain intact.

Ways of Greeting. India is a land with varied greeting customs. Different religions here have different ways to express their greetings to others. For instance, in major Hindu families "Namaste" is the most common way of greeting the outsiders and elders. Both palms placed together and raised below the face not only show the respect for others but also makes the greeter feel the affection in return. Similarly, Muslims greet by saying "Adab", which involves raising of right hand towards the face in such a manner that the palm is inwards and is in front of the eyes with the finger tips almost touching the forehead. It is for sure that no 'hello' or 'hi' can create that magic.

Indian Marriages. Time has changed but the lavishness has always been an integral and indispensable part of Indian marriages. In India, marriage is still taken as an institution where not two people but two families get united. So, it always calls for boisterous celebrations full of

music and dance. Within India, every caste and community has its own way of performing the rituals of marriage. In Hindu marriages, while Punjabis perform the 'Roka' ceremony in weddings, Sindhis perform the 'Berana'. But most common of all is the ritual of Hast Milap ceremony popularly called Paanigrahan Sanskaar.

Indian Dresses. Beauty of Indian woman lies in the clothes she wears. Very traditional and ethnic yet contemporary Indian saris are famous worldwide. It is worn with a blouse that covers the upper part of the body. In rural parts, an outfit called ghagara-choli is very much popular. Choli is like a short blouse that covers the upper part of the body and ghagara is like a long skirt. In order to have a graceful and complete look, women folk carry a duppatta that is a soft and delicate material of reasonable length thrown over the shoulder.

#### India-Religious

Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain or Zoroastrian; one can find people of all religions here in India. India is a secular state and every citizen enjoys an equal right of choosing and following a particular religion. More than three fourth of Indian population belongs to Hindu religion and you can find Hindu pilgrimages in every part of the country [2].

In Northern part of India, you can visit various sacred religious places like Vaishno Devi, Amarnath, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Haridwar and Varanasi and in the Southern part of the country you can take the blessings of God at the Sabrimala, Sringeri, Dakshineswar-belur math,

and Rameshwaram. If you are in the Northeast, you can go to the Kamrup temple that is located on the outskirts of Guwahati on the Nilachal hills. If you are roaming somewhere around Gujarat and interested in knowing about Lord Krishna, then you must visit Dwarkanath temple that is built at the site where Meera Bai gave up the world. You can also visit Somnath temple that comprises one of the twelve jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva.

**Indian Dance.** Indian classical dances like Bharatnatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi and Kuchipudi mainly follow the codes of natya shastra, mythology and classical literature and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata.

**Theatre.** Another kind of performing art is theatre. Though the folk theatre prevails in each and every language and region, the professional theatre is popular only in big urban areas or metropolitan cities. Puppet shows were a unique form of Indian theatre. For centuries, puppet shows have been popular in creating awareness about social issues in masses and inculcating the moral values of truth and honesty in the kids. Musical notes is the key in the classical music. The Indian villages also have their special kind of music that carries colours of folk tradition. Music of Indian movies is also liked by the masses.

**Indian Films.** Films are another kind of performing arts for which India is quite popular in the world. The country produces more than 1000 movies every year, which not only are popular in the domestic market but also have a wide viewership especially in the Asian and European countries. Hindi Punjabi, Gujarati, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali or Marathi,

India produces movies in every language. Worldwide, Indian film stars are loved and liked in similar ways as Hollywood actors.

Visual Arts. Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder. But, if you look at the sculptures and paintings in India, you cannot live without saying that the beauty lies in the hands of Indian artists. Paintings. India's history in the paintings is prominently visible in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, Buddhists palm leaf manuscripts and Jain texts. Either it is free form of Ajanta paintings, leaf paintings or glass paintings; India has always been famous for this kind of visual art. The creativity and use of colours has always been graceful and unique in the Indian paintings. Keeping their culture and tradition in mind, Indian artists also imbibe the qualities of other European artists and this gives a contemporary look to the Indian paintings with a traditional touch. Well-known Indian painting schools are Rajput, Deccan, Kangra and Moghul.

Sculptures. From the Cholas dynasty to the present era, India has been ranked on top in the sculpture, another form of visual art. The Deccan temple in Kanchipuram, Madurai & Rameswaram, the Sun temple of Odisha and the Khajurao temple in the Madhya Pradesh, all of these sacred places are the resultants of sophisticated craftsmanship of Indian artisans. The sculptures at Sanchi Stupa throw a light on the life of Buddha and various folk deities. Sculptures of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda with architectural touch show the social life of Buddha and counterparts. Temples of Ellora and Elephanta caves are the important evident of mastery of Indian sculptures. Flora and Fauna, Deities and various

mythological characters; all these form the basis of designs in this beautiful form of visual art.

Pottery. A very ancient and aesthetic kind of visual art in India is pottery. In this form of art, lumps of clay are hand-molded to form toys and deities of worship. Terracotta and blue gaze are the two main varieties of pottery that are famous in India. Pottery also has a great religious significance. On Durga Puja and Ganesh Chaturthi the beautiful idols of Maa Durga and Lord Ganesha show the confluence of pottery, sculpture and painting [2].

Having said that, I would like to say that it is still easy to create culture but what is difficult is to preserve it. It has taken ages for our forefathers to form such a composite and ethnically rich culture, what is important for us is to preserve it and I am sure, together we can achieve it.

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