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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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The word culture, from the Latin *colo*,-ere, with its root meaning "to cultivate", generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance. Different definitions of "culture" reflect different theoretical bases for understanding or criteria for evaluating, human activity. Anthropologists most commonly use the term "culture" to refer to the human capacity to use symbols to communicate their experiences symbolically. This capacity has long been taken as a defining feature of the genus *Homo*. However, primatologists such as Jane Goodall have identified aspects of culture among our closest relatives in the animal kingdom. Similarly, it has recently been determined that the Orca pods have culture specific vocalisations and tastes for food. Orcas used in theme parks are exclusively from pods that only feed on fish.

## Defining "Culture"

Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society." As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems, of belief. Various definitions of culture reflect differing theories for understanding - or criteria for evaluating- human activity. Sir Edward B. Tylor writing from the perspective of social anthropology in the UK in 1871 described culture in the following way: "Culture or civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that whole complex which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

More recently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO (2002) described culture as follows: "... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

While these two definitions cover a range of meaning, they do not exhaust the many uses of the term "culture." In 1952, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled a list of more than 200 definitions of "culture" in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*.

These definitions and many others, provide a catalog of the elements of culture. The items catalogued (e.g., a law, a stone tool, a marriage) each have an existence and life-line of their own. They come into space-time at one set of coordinates and go out of it another. While here, they change, so that one may speak of the evolution of 'the law or the tool.

A culture, then, is by definition at least, a set of cultural objects. Anthropologist Leslie White asked: "What sort of objects are they? Are they physical objects? Mental objects? Both? Metaphors? Symbols? Reifications?" In *Science of Culture* (1949), he concluded that they are objects "sui generis" that is, of their own kind. In trying to define that kind, he hit upon a previously unrealised aspect of symbolisation, which he called "the symbolate" - an object created by the act of symbolisation. He thus defined culture as "symbolates understood in an extra-somatic context." The key to this definition is the discovery of the symbolate.

## Key Components of Culture

A common way of understanding culture sees it as consisting of four elements that are "passed on from generation to generation by learning alone":

1. Values.
2. Norms.
3. Institutions.
4. Artifacts.

Values comprise ideas about what in life seems important. They guide the rest of the culture. Norms consist of expectations of how people will behave in various situations. Each culture has methods, called sanctions, of enforcing its norms. Sanctions vary with the importance of the norm; norms that a society enforces formally have the status of laws. Institutions are the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. Artifacts-things or aspects of material culture-derive from a culture's values and norms.

Julian Huxley gives a slightly different division, into inter-related "mentifacts", "socifacts" and "artifacts", for ideological, sociological and technological subsystems respectively. Socialisation, in Huxley's view, depends on the belief subsystem. The sociological subsystem governs interaction between people. Material objects and their use make up the technological subsystem.

As a rule, archaeologists focus on material culture, whereas cultural anthropologists focus on symbolic culture, although ultimately both groups maintain interests in the relationships between these two dimensions. Moreover, anthropologists understand "culture" to refer not only to consumption goods, but to the general processes which produce such goods and give them meaning and to the social relationships and practices in which such objects and processes become embedded.

## Culture as Civilisation

Many people today have an idea of "culture" that de-

veloped in Europe during the 18th and early 19th centuries. This notion of culture reflected 'inequalities' within European societies and between European powers and their colonies around the world. It identifies "culture" with "civilisation" and contrasts it with "nature." According to this way of thinking, one can classify some countries as more civilised than others and some people as more cultured than others. Some cultural theorists have thus tried to eliminate popular or mass culture from the definition of culture. Theorists such as Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) or the Leavisites regard culture as simply the result of "the best that has been thought and said in the world" Arnold contrasted culture with social chaos or anarchy. On this account, culture links closely with social cultivation: the progressive refinement of human behaviour. Arnold consistently uses the word 'his way: "... culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world".

In practice, culture referred to elite goods and activities such as haute cuisine, high fashion or haute couture, museum-caliber art and classical music and the word cultured described people who knew about and took part in these activities. For example, someone who used 'culture' in the sense of 'cultivation' might argue that classical music is more refined than music produced by working-class people, such as punk rock or the indigenous music traditions of aboriginal peoples of Australia.

People who use the term "culture" in this way tend not to use it in the plural as "cultures". They do not believe that distinct cultures exist, each with their own internal logic and values, but rather that only a single standard of refinement suffices, against which one can measure all groups. Thus, according to this worldview, people with different customs from those who regard themselves as cultured do not usually count as "having a different culture," but are classed as "uncultured." People lacking "culture" often seemed more "natural," and observers often defended (or criticised) elements of high culture for repressing "human nature".

From the 18th century onwards, some social critics have accepted this contrast between cultured and uncultured, but have stressed the interpretation of refinement and, of sophistication as corrupting and unnatural developments that obscure and distort people's essential nature. On this account, folk music (as produced by working-class people) honestly expresses a natural way of life and classical music seems superficial and decadent. Equally, this view often portrays Indigenous peoples as 'noble savages' living authentic unblemished lives, uncomplicated and uncorrupted by the highly-stratified capitalist systems of the West.

Today most social scientists reject the monadic conception of culture and the opposition of culture to nature. They recognise non-elites as just as cultured as elites (and non-Westerners as just as civilised)-simply regarding them as

just cultured in a different way. Thus social observers contrast the "high" culture of elites to "popular" or pop culture, meaning goods and activities produced for and consumed by the masses. (Note that some classifications relegate both high and low cultures to the status of subcultures.)

### **Culture as Worldview**

During the Romantic era, scholars in Germany, especially those concerned with nationalist movements - such as the nationalist struggle to create a "Germany" out of diverse principalities and the nationalist struggles by ethnic minorities against the Austro-Hungarian Empire - developed a more inclusive notion of culture as "worldview." In this mode of thought, a distinct and incommensurable worldview characterises each ethnic group. Although more inclusive than earlier views, this approach to culture still allowed for distinctions between 'civilised' and "primitive" or "tribal" cultures.

By the late 19th century, anthropologists had adopted and adapted the term culture to a broader definition that they could apply to a wider variety of societies. Attentive to the theory of evolution, they assumed that all human beings evolved equally and that the fact that all humans have cultures must in some way result from human evolution. They also showed some reluctance to use biological evolution to explain differences between specific cultures - an approach that either exemplified a form of or segment of society vis-a-vis other segments and the society as a whole, they often reveal processes of domination and resistance;

In the 1950s, subcultures - groups with distinctive characteristics within a larger culture - began to be the subject of study by sociologists. The 20th century also saw the popularisation of the idea of corporate culture - distinct and malleable within the context of an employing organisation or a workplace.

### **Culture as Symbols**

The symbolic view of culture, the legacy of Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1967), holds symbols to be both the practices of social actors and the context that gives such practices meaning.-Anthony P. Cohen (1985) writes of the "symbolic gloss" which allows social actors to use common symbols to communicate and understand each other while still imbuing these symbols with personal significance and meanings. Symbols provide the limits of cultured thought. Members of a culture rely on these symbols to frame their thoughts and expressions in intelligible terms. In short, symbols make culture possible, reproducible and readable. They are the "webs of significance" in Weber's sense that, to quote Pierre Bourdieu (1977), "give regularity, unity and systematicity to the practices of a group."

### **Culture as a Stabilising Mechanism**

Modern cultural theory also considers the possibility that (a) culture itself is a product of stabilisation tendencies

inherent in evolutionary pressures toward self-similarity and self-cognition of societies as a whole or tribalisms. Steven Wolfram's A new kind of science iterated simple algorithms from genetic unfolding, from which the concept of culture as an operating mechanism can be developed and Richard Dawkins' The Extended Phenotype for discussion of genetic and memetic stability over time, through negative feedback mechanisms.

### Cultures within a Society

Large societies often have subcultures or groups of people with distinct sets of behaviour and beliefs that differentiate them from a larger culture of which they are a part. The subculture may be distinctive because of the age of its members or by their race, ethnicity, class or gender. The qualities that determine a subculture 'as distinct may be aesthetic, religious, occupational, political, sexual or a combination of these factors. In dealing with immigrant groups and their cultures, there are essentially four approaches:

- o **Monoculturalism:** In Europe, culture is very closely linked to nationalism, thus government policy is to assimilate immigrants.
- o **Leitkultur (core culture):** A model developed in Germany by Bassam Tibi. The idea is that minorities can have an identity of their own, but they should at least support the core concepts of the culture on which the "society is based.
- o **Melting Pot:** In the United States, the traditional view has been one of a melting pot where all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention.
- o **Multiculturalism:** A policy that immigrants and others should preserve their cultures with the different cultures interacting peacefully within one nation.

The way nation states treat immigrant cultures rarely falls neatly into one or another of the above approaches. The degree of difference with the host culture (i.e., "foreignness"), the number of immigrants, attitudes of the resident population, the type of government policies that are enacted and the effectiveness of those policies all make it difficult to generalise about the effects. Similarly with other subcultures within a society, attitudes of the mainstream population and communications between various cultural groups play a major role in determining outcomes. The study of cultures within a society is complex and research must take into account a myriad of variables.

### Belief Systems

Religion and other belief systems are often integral to a culture. Religion, from the Latin religare, meaning "to bind fast", is a feature of cultures throughout human history. The Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion defines religion in the following way:

... an institution with a recognised body of communicants who gather together regularly for worship and accept a set of doctrines offering, some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate nature of reality.

Religion often codifies behaviour, such as with the 10 Commandments of Christianity or the five precepts of Buddhism. Sometimes it is involved with government, as in a theocracy. It also influences arts.

Eurocentric custom to some extent divides humanity into Western and non-Western cultures, although "this has some flaws.

Western culture spread from Europe most strongly to Australia, Canada and the United States. It is influenced by ancient Greece, ancient Rome and the Christian church.

Western culture tends to be more individualistic than non-Western cultures. It also sees man, god and -nature or the universe more separately than non-Western cultures. It is marked by economic wealth, literacy and technological advancement, although these traits are not exclusive to it.

### Eastern Religion and Philosophy

Philosophy and religion are often closely interwoven in Eastern thought. Many Asian religious and philosophical traditions originated in India and China and spread across Asia through cultural diffusion and the migration of peoples. Hinduism is the wellspring of Buddhism, the Mahayana branch of which spread north and eastwards from India into Tibet, China, Mongolia, Japan and Korea and south from China into Vietnam. Theravada Buddhism spread throughout Southeast Asia, including Sri Lanka, parts of southwest China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand.

Indian philosophy includes Hindu philosophy. They contain elements of nonmaterial pursuits, whereas another school of thought from India, Charvak, preached the enjoyment of material world. Confucianism and Taoism, both of which originated in China have had pervasive influence on both religious and philosophical traditions, as well as statecraft and the arts throughout Asia.

During the 20th century, in the two most populous countries of Asia, two dramatically different political philosophies took shape. Gandhi gave a new meaning to Ahimsa, a core belief of both Hinduism and Jainism and redefined the concepts of nonviolence and nonresistance. During the same period, Mao Zedong's communist" philosophy became a powerful secular belief system in China.

### Folk Religions

Folk religions practiced by tribal groups are common in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Their influence can be considerable; may pervade the culture and even become the state religion, as with Shintoism. Like the other major religions, folk religion answers human needs for reassurance in times of trouble, healing, averting misfortune and providing

rituals that address the major, passages and transitions in human life.

## CULTURE OF INDIA

The culture of India was moulded throughout various eras of history, all the while absorbing customs, traditions and ideas from both invaders and immigrants. Many cultural practices, languages, customs and monuments are examples of this co-mingling over centuries.

In modern India, there is remarkable cultural and religious diversity throughout the country. This has been influenced by the various regions of India, namely South, North, and North-East, have their own distinct identities and almost every state has carved out its own cultural niche. In spite of this unique cultural diversity, the whole country is bound as a civilisation due to its common history, thereby preserving the national identity.

India was the birth place of religious systems such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, which have a strong influence not only over India, but also the whole world. Following the Islamic invasions and the subsequent foreign domination from the tenth century onwards, the culture of India was influenced by the foreign cultures, particularly Persian, Arabic and Turkish cultures. Their influence comes in the form of religion, language and dress. In turn, the various religions and the multitude traditions of India have influenced South East Asia (and to a minimal extent, East Asia).

### Overview

**Regions:** Indian culture can be classified into many varied forms which are existent in their totality throughout the territory of India. The culture of India has been influenced by various religions and customs of the world, which resulted in the mingling of religious values, folk idioms and art forms. While the religious influence is quite evident in the "classical" Indian culture mostly found in smaller towns and villages, the urban India is now widely influenced by globalisation.

**Language:** As well as regional diversity, languages have created diverse traditions of culture in India. There are a large number of languages in India; 216 of them are spoken by a group of 10,000 persons or more. The two major families of languages are those of the Indo-Aryan languages and those of the Dravidian languages, the former largely confined to the North India and the latter to the South India. The Constitution of India has stipulated the usage of Hindi and English to be the two official languages of communication for the national government.

A further 22 languages are scheduled for official use, mainly by state governments. Sanskrit has served as a classical language of India and South-Eastern Asia and is equated in importance to Latin or Greek in Europe. It is studied as far away as Japan and the West due to its cultural and

religious significance. The classical language of the Dravidian family is regarded to be old Tamil. The number of speakers of state languages and dialects is very high.

### Literature

The earliest literary traditions were mostly oral and passed through descendants by the citizens. They were later transcribed. Most of these spring from Hindu tradition and are represented by sacred works like the Vedas, the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Tamil Sangam literature represents some of India's oldest secular traditions. Many Buddhist and Jain works are in Prakrit languages like Pali. The classical works of playwright Kalidasa even today exert an important influence on Indian literature.

Upon the arrival of Mughal dynasty, Islamic culture also influenced the medieval Indian literature. This was due to the spreading influence of Persian and the rise of famous poets such as Amir Khusrau. Colonial rule prepared the stage for modern literature exemplified by the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Munshi Premchand, Devaki Nandan Khatri, among many others. Indian writers in modern times, like R. K. Narayan, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Mahasweta Devi, Amrita Pritam, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie have been the cynosures of wide acclaim, both in Indian languages and English.

### Poetry

India has strong traditions of poetry, as well as prose writing. This is often closely related to musical traditions and most poetry can be attributed to religious movements. Writers and philosophers were often also skilled poets.

In modern times, poetry served as an important nonviolent tool of nationalism during the Indian freedom movement. A famous modern example of this tradition can be found in such figures as Rabindranath Tagore in modern times and poets such as Kabir in medieval times, as well as the epics of ancient times. Two examples of poetry from Tagore's Gitanjali serve as the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh.

### Performing Arts

**Music:** The music of India includes multiple varieties of folk, popular, pop and classical music. India's classical music tradition, including Carnatic and Hindustani music, noted for the use of several Raga, has a history spanning millennia and developed over several eras, remains instrumental to the religious inspiration, cultural expression and pure entertainment. Alongside distinctly subcontinental forms there are major influences from Persian, Arab and British music. Indian genres like filmi and bhangra have become popular throughout the United Kingdom, South and East Asia and around the world.

**Dance:** India offers a number of Classical Indian dance forms, each of which can be traced to different parts of the country. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people. The eight main styles are Bharata Natyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Bhangra, Manipuri and Kathakali. Besides, there are several forms of Indian folk dances and special dances observed in regional festivals.

### **Drama and Theatre**

Indian drama and theatre is perhaps as old as its music and dance. Kalidas's plays like 'Abhigyan Shakuntala' and 'Meghadoot' are some of the oldest plays from literary traditions. The tradition of folk theatre is alive in nearly all the linguistic regions of the country. In addition, there is a rich tradition of puppet theatre in rural India. Group Theatre is also thriving in the cities, initiated by the likes of Utpal Dutt, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and still maintained by groups like Nandikar and Prithvi Theatre.

### **Visual Arts**

**Painting:** The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of pre-historic times, the petroglyphs as found in places like Bhimbetka and some of them are older than 5500 BC. Ancient texts outline theories of darragh and anecdotal accounts suggesting that it was common for households to paint their doorways or indoor rooms where guests resided.

Cave paintings from Ajanta, Bagh, Ellora and Sittanavasal and temple paintings testify to a love of naturalism and God. Most rock art in India is Hindu or Buddhist. A freshly made coloured flour design (Rangoli) everyday is still a common sight outside the doorstep of many (mostly South? Indian) Indian homes.

Mughal painting, Rajput painting, Tanjore painting, Madhubani painting are some notable Genres of Indian Art; while Raja Ravi Varma, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy to M.F. Hussain are some modern painters. Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, has on display several good Indian paintings.

**Sculpture:** The first sculptures in India date back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, where stone and bronze carvings have been discovered. This is one of the earliest instances of sculpture in the world. Later, as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism developed further, India produced some of the most intricate bronzes in the World, as well as unrivalled temple carvings. Some huge shrines, such as the one at Ellora were not actually constructed using blocks, but instead carved out of solid rock, making them perhaps the largest and most intricate sculptures in the world.

The pink sandstone sculptures of Mathura evolved during the Gupta period (4th to 6th century) to reach a very high fineness of execution and delicacy in the modelling. Newer sculptures in northwest, in stucco, schist or clay, display very strong blending of Indian post-Gupta mannerism and Classical influence, Hellenistic or possibly even

Greco-Roman. Meanwhile, elsewhere in India, less anatomically accurate styles of human representation evolved leading to the classical art that the world is now familiar with and contributing to Buddhist and Hindu sculpture throughout Asia.

**Architecture:** Indian architecture is that vast tapestry of production of the Indian subcontinent that encompasses a multitude of expressions over space and time, transformed by the forces of history considered unique to the subcontinent, sometimes destroying, but most of the time absorbing new ideas. The result is an evolving range of architectural production that none the less retains a certain amount of continuity across history. The earliest production in the Indus Valley Civilisation was characterised by well planned cities and houses where religion did not seem to play an active role, but which demonstrated world-famous city planning.

During the reign of the Gupta and Maurya empires, several Buddhist architectural examples like caves of Ajanta and Ellora and the monumental Sanchi Stupa were built. South India contains several Hindu temples like Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur, the Sun Temple, Konark, Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam and the Buddha stupa (Chinna Lanja dibba and Vikramarka kota dibba) at Bhattiprolu. Angkor Wat and other Buddhist and Hindu temples carry the evidence of Indian influence on South East Asian architecture, as they are built in styles almost identical to traditional Indian temple building.

With the advent of Islamic influence from the west, the erstwhile Indian architecture was slightly adapted to allow the traditions of the new religion. Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal, Gol Gumbaz, Qutub Minar, Red Fort of Delhi are the creations of this era and are often used as the stereotypical symbols of India, despite the greater antiquity and originality of traditional architecture. The colonial rule of the British Indian Empire saw the development of Indo-Saracenic style and mixing of several other styles, such as European Gothic. Victoria Memorial, Victoria Terminus are notable examples. Recent creations such as Lotus Temple and the various modern urban developments of India are also notable.

The traditional system of Vaastu Shastra serves as India's version of Feng Shui, influencing town planning, architecture and ergonomics. It is unclear which system is older, but they contain many similarities. Though Vastu is conceptually similar to Feng Shui in that it also tries to harmonise the flow of energy, (also called life-force or Prana in Sanskrit and Chi/Ki in Chinese/Japanese), through the house, it differs in the details, such as the exact directions in which various objects, rooms, materials etc. are to be placed.

Indian architecture has influence on the world, especially eastern Asia, due to the spread of ideas with Buddhism. A number of Indian architectural features such as the temple mound or stupa, temple spire or shikhara, temple tower or pagoda and temple gate or torana have become famous

symbols of Asian culture, used extensively in East Asia and South East Asia. The central spire is also sometimes called a vimanam. The variant southern temple gate or gopuram is noted for its intricacy and majesty. The arch, a cornerstone of world architecture, was first developed by the Indus Valley Civilisation and would later be a staple of Indian architecture.

### Recreation and Sports

In the area of recreation and sports, India had evolved a number of games. The modern eastern martial arts originated as ancient games and martial arts in India and it was from here that these games were transmitted to foreign countries, where they were further modernised. Additionally, a few games introduced during the British Raj have grown quite popular in India, field hockey, football (soccer) and especially cricket.

Although field hockey is India's official national sport, cricket is by far the most popular sport not only in India, but the entire subcontinent, thriving recreationally and professionally. Cricket has even been used recently as a forum for diplomatic relations between India and longstanding rival, Pakistan. The two nations' cricket teams face off annually and such contests are quite impassioned on both sides. Traditional indigenous sports include kabaddi and gillidanda which are played in most parts of the country. Indoor and outdoor games like Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Playing cards, Polo, Carrom, Badminton are also popular.

### Cuisine

The earliest Indians, the Harappans, probably ate mainly wheat, rice and lentils and occasionally meats such as pork, lamb, goat and chicken. Some believe that vegetarianism became popular with the arrival of Buddhism and Jainism that emphasised ahimsa (non-violence).

The cuisine of Modern India has great variety and each region has its own distinctive flavours. The staple cereals are rice and wheat. North Indian staple meals consist of chapatis or rotis, wheat based and rice as staples, eaten with a wide variety of side dishes like dais, curries, yogurt, chutney and achar. South Indian staple dishes consist of rice, sambhar, rasam, yoghurt and curries being important side dishes.

Another important ingredient in South Indian food is coconut and most popular snacks like idli, dosa are also rice-based. Fish is popular in coastal states, especially West Bengal, Orissa and Kerala. Several kind of street foods like Panipuri, Vada pav, Bhelpuri, Samosa, Vada are popular, though they are known by different names in different regions. Indian Chinese cuisine, an Indianised version of the Chinese cuisine is also popular, especially among youngsters in Mumbai. This cuisine is supposed to have originated from east of India generally and Darjeeling specifically. Tea like other Asian countries, enjoys heavy popular-

ity, while coffee is quite popular in South India. Nimbu pani (lemonade), lassi and coconut milk are also popular, while India also has many indigenous alcoholic beverages like Fenny and Indian beer.

### Dress

Indian costume is full of variations. Every region and state has its distinct style. In cities and towns, men mostly wear collared shirts and cotton trousers with shoes or sandals. A three-quarter-length coat called achkan, buttoned all the way up the front and topped with a short, stiff collar, is worn as the official Indian costume on formal occasions. Urban women mostly wear the salwar: free-flowing pants topped by a long shirt, often worn with a scarf draped around the neck.

The traditional garments worn by men is dhoti, a four to five yard white cotton cloth wrapped around the waist and tucked between the legs. There are variations in its drape, length, texture and quality of border adornment. In Bengal one end hangs loose in front, while in Maharashtra both ends, are passed between the legs and tucked into the back waistband. In the Punjab, loose-fitting pyjamas called shalwar are worn. Most Indian women wear the sari, a bordered, length of cloth from six to nine yards long, which is draped loosely around the entire body and frequently covers the head as well. The sari is wrapped around the waist several times, making pleats in front and then thrown across the chest and shoulders. Either a full blouse or a short, halterlike garment called a choli is worn on the upper body.

Footwear for both men and women consists usually of sandals, though shoes worn in Western countries are beginning to become more popular for women (heels, wedges, etc.). For men distinctive styles of headdress indicate regional affiliation, religious community or social class. However, only certain cultures of India, such as the Panjabi or Sikh culture, involve the wearing of turbans. Aside from the many ways of wrapping the turban, special head wear includes the traditional Parsi hat of shiny starched black alpaca in the shape of a rimless bowler; the Muslim hat, preferably of angora wool; and the Gandhi cap, an unadorned visorless cap that originally denoted membership in the Congress party. Women usually wear no headdress other than a shawl or the end of the sari, if even that.

### Courtesies

**Greetings:** The Namaste is India's traditional greeting. One presses the palms together (fingers up) below the chin and says Natnasle (in the south, Namaskaram). Muslims might greet each other with Salaam or Adaab. Traditionally men and women don't shake hands with each other but it is accepted norm these days in urban India. "Hello" and "Hi" are acceptable greetings among equals, but people address superiors with more formal terms such as "Good morning" or its equivalent. It is considered polite to use titles such as Professor, Doctor, Mr., Shri (for men), Shreemati (married

women), Kumari (unmarried women) or the suffix-ji with a last name to show respect. Indians usually ask permission before taking leave of others.

**Gestures:** Excessive hand gestures or verbal articulation is considered impolite. People beckon with the palm turned down; they often point with the chin. It is impolite to sniff or handle flowers displayed at bazaars. Grasping one's own ears expresses repentance or sincerity. One's feet or shoes should not touch another person and if they do, an immediate apology is necessary. Whistling, is considered impolite at public places but is acceptable in informal atmosphere. Too much public displays of affection is considered inappropriate but holding hands is now mostly accepted. Footwear is removed before entering a temple, mosque or Sikh shrine. When entering a Sikh shrine or mosque, all people cover their heads.

**Visiting:** Visits in the home between friends or family are often unannounced. The need for prior arrangements is increasing in large cities. It is impolite to say "no" to an invitation; if one cannot attend, one more likely says, "I'll try;" At certain gatherings, guests adorned with a garland of flowers remove and carry them as an expression of humility. Guests repay hosts' hospitality by giving gifts, such as flowers, speciality foods (fruits, sweets) from other areas of the country or something for their children.

Most Indians do not wear shoes inside the home. Most guests at least remove shoes before entering the living room. Hosts offer their guests water, tea or coffee and fruits or sweets. It is polite for a guest initially to refuse these refreshments but eventually to accept them. Visitors often indicate they are ready to leave by saying Namaste.

**Eating:** Eating habits vary sharply between traditional and modern settings. Many families eat their food with the right hand instead of relying on spoon and fork. Most of families have dinner together where family members discuss any issues and decisions.

### Popular Media

**Cinema:** Bollywood is the informal name given to the popular Mumbai-based film industry in India. Bollywood and the other major cinematic hubs (Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Bhojpuri, etc.) constitute the broader Indian film industry, whose output is considered to be the largest in the world in terms of number of films produced and, possibly, number of tickets sold.

Bollywood films are usually musicals, though not in the Western sense of the word. Indian movies have a regular plot, with songs and dances interspersed to add to the entertainment value of the movie. Few movies are made without at least one song-and-dance number. Indian audiences expect full value for their money; they want songs and dances, love interest, comedy and dare-devil thrills, all mixed up in a three hour long extravaganza with intermission.

Such movies are called masala movies, after the Indian spice mixture masala. Like masala, these movies are a mix-

ture of many things. Approximately, 95% of Bollywood movies are this type of movie, because Indians enjoy this type of movie very much. Plots tend to be melodramatic. They frequently employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers and angry parents, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, conniving villains, courtesans with hearts of gold, long-lost relatives and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reversals of fortune and convenient coincidences and even movies with tri-polar changes that can turn a movie and its plot upside down.

Bollywood is becoming increasingly popular in other countries including several places in Europe and the U.S. Some Bollywood actors have adapted to more Hollywood-type films in movies like 'Bend It Like Beckham' and 'Bride and Prejudice'. Bollywood's fame is increasing internationally as more and more people across the globe are exposed to its style.

Besides the regular masala film, India has also produced many critically acclaimed cinema-makers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Ram Gopal Varma, Mani Ratnam, G. Aravindan, Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihlani, etc. In fact, with the opening up of the economy in the recent years and consequent exposure to world cinema, audience tastes have been changing. Indian commercial movies have also started following authentic, real world themes with a lower amount of melodrama and some do not even contain songs. In addition, multiplexes have mushroomed in most cities, changing the revenue patterns and allowing film makers greater liberty and scope for executing bold and innovative ideas which would not have been possible even a decade ago.

**Television:** Indian television started off in 1959 in New Delhi with tests for educational telecasts. Doordarshan was established on 15 September, 1976. Indian small screen programming started off in the early 1980s. At that time there was only one national channel Doordarshan, which was government owned. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were some among the popular television serials produced. By the late 1980s, more and more people started to own television sets. Though there was a single channel, television programming had reached saturation. Hence the government opened up another channel which had part national programming and part regional. This channel was known as DD 2 later DD Metro. Both channels were broadcasted terrestrially.

In 1994, the government liberated its markets, opening them up to cable television. Since then, there has been a spurt in the number of channels available. Today, Indian silver screen is a huge industry by itself and has thousands of programmes in all the states of India. The small screen has produced numerous celebrities of their own kind some even attaining national fame. TV soaps are extremely popular with housewives as well as working women and even men of all kinds. Some small time actors have made it big in Bollywood. Indian TV has evolved to be similar to Western

TV, including stations such as Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon and Indian MTV. Today DD has 24 channels including 4 national, 1 international channel and 11 Regional Language channels and 8 State Network Service. It also has Direct to Home (DTH).

**Radio:** Radio Broadcasting started in India in the early 1920's. The first programme was broadcast in 1923 by the Radio Club of Bombay. This was followed by setting up Broadcasting Services in 1927 with two privately-owned transmitters at Mumbai and Kolkata. These were nationalised in 1930 and operated under the name "Indian Broadcasting Service" until 1936, when it was renamed All India Radio (AIR). Although officially renamed again to Akashwani in 1957, it is still popularly known as All India Radio. All India Radio is a division of Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India), an autonomous corporation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. It is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, the national television broadcaster. News Service Division functions round the clock in both Indian and foreign language. There are 44 regional news units. External Service Division broadcasts in 27 languages 16 of them foreign and 11 Indian. Presently there are 223 radio stations in the country.

## Religion and Philosophy

**Philosophy:** Indian philosophy throughout the ages has had a tremendous impact on world thought, especially in the east. Various theistic schools of philosophy, such as many schools of Buddhism and Hinduism, have had huge influences, but also, India produced some of the longest and most influential secular traditions of logic, rationalism, science, mathematics, materialism, atheism, agnosticism, etc. which are often overlooked due to popular conception that India is a 'mystical' country.

Many of the complex scientific and mathematical concepts such as the idea of zero, found their way to Europe via Arab intermediates. The most famous school of Indian atheism, is Charvaka, considered by some to be the oldest materialistic school of thought in the world, composed around the same time as the Hindu Upanishads, as well as the philosophy of Buddhism and Jainism.

This period around 600-400 BC marked a huge leap in both Indian philosophy and world philosophy in general, with contemporary Greek schools emerging simultaneously. Some philosophical concepts from India were introduced to the Greeks, especially during the campaigns of Alexander the Great and vis-a-vis, leading some schools of classical Greek philosophy to be almost identical to prior Indian schools.

In addition to the unbroken high emphasis placed on philosophy in India, which has existed since ancient times, modern India has produced some of the world's most influential philosophers of modern times, who have written both in their native languages and often English. During the British occupation of India, various thinkers, both secular and religious, achieved a new level of recognition across the world as both ancient Indian texts and the work of contemporary Indian philosophers was translated into English, German and other languages.

Swami Vivekananda travelled to America and participated in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, impressing delegates with a groundbreaking speech that for the first time gave access to eastern, Indian, Hindu and dharmic philosophy to western intellectuals.

As well as various religious thinkers Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and other members of the Indian freedom movement, generated political philosophy and formed the basis of modern Indian democracy, secularism and liberalism. Today, economists such as Amartya Sen, who won Asia's first Nobel Prize in economics, continue to give India a reputation as an important contributor to world thought.

**Religion:** The Dharmic religions, one of the two main families of world religion (the other being the Abrahamic), originated in India. Every dharmic religion originated in India, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and other schools. Today, Hinduism and Buddhism are the world's third and fourth largest religions respectively, with a collective 1.4 billion followers, despite being free of any evangelistic traditions. Unlike the sectarianism that has often marked differences among the Abrahamic schools, the philosophical-like treatment of these religions has generally made the idea of rivalry and conversion alien, leading to extremely close relationships between these faiths.

India is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world, with one of the most deeply religious societies and cultures. Religion plays a central and definitive role in the life of the country and most of its people. The religion of more than 80.4% of the people is Hinduism, considered the world's oldest religious and philosophical system.

Islam is practiced by around 13.4% of all Indians. Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism are systems that are strong and influential not only in India but across the world. Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and the Baha'i Faith are also influential but their numbers are smaller. Despite the strong role of religion in Indian life, atheism and agnostics are also visible influences.

