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CULTURAL GLANCE OF INDIA



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

Cultural history combines the approaches of anthropology and history to look at popular cultural traditions and cultural interpretations of historical experience. It examines the records and narrative descriptions of past knowledge, customs, and arts of a group of people. Its subject matter encompasses the continuum of events occurring in succession leading from the past to the present and even into the future pertaining to a culture. Cultural history records and interprets past events involving human beings through the social, cultural, and political milieu of or relating to the arts and manners that a group favors. Jacob

Burckhardt helped found cultural history as a discipline. Cultural history studies and interprets the record of human societies by denoting the various distinctive ways of living built up by a group of people under consideration. Cultural history involves the aggregate of past cultural activity, such as ceremony, class in practices, and the interaction with locales.

KEYWORDS

*Cultural history combines , anthropology and history , human societies .*

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural history overlaps in its approaches with the French movements of historicity and the so-called new history, and in the U.S. it is closely associated with the field of American studies. As originally conceived and practiced by 19th Century Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt with regard to the Italian Renaissance, cultural history was oriented to the study of a particular historical period in its entirety, with regard not only for its painting, sculpture and architecture, but for the economic basis underpinning society, and the social institutions of its daily life as well. Most often the focus is on phenomena shared by non-elite groups in a society, such as: carnival, festival, and public rituals; performance traditions of tale, epic, and other verbal forms; cultural evolutions in human relations (ideas, sciences, arts, techniques); and cultural expressions of social movements such as nationalism. Also examines main historical concepts as power, ideology, class, culture, cultural identity, attitude, race, perception and new historical methods as narration of body. Many studies consider adaptations of traditional culture to mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, posters, etc.), from print to film and, now, to the Internet (culture of capitalism). Its modern approaches come from art history, Annales, Marxist school, micro history and new cultural history.

## CULTURAL HISTORY OF INDIA

The History and Culture of the Indian People is a series of eleven volumes on the history of India, from prehistoric times to the establishment of the modern state in 1947. Historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, popularly called the 'dean of Indian historians' was the general editor of the series, as well as a major contributor. Cultural history is not simply the study of high culture or alternatively of peoples' past rituals. It is best characterized as an approach which considers the domain of representation and the struggle over meaning as the most fruitful areas for the pursuit of historical understanding. In its modern form it evolved to a certain extent out of the 'new' social, economic and women's histories of the 1960s and 1970s, which sought to understand the lives of non-elites and women, but whose use of structures of class was increasingly seen as reductionist, ignoring the assumptions and judgments actually shaping, say, women's experiences. As this approach grew in popularity from the 1980s onwards it became associated with the 'linguistic turn', as its interest in contested meanings inevitably means an interest in the language these are expressed in. Today cultural history practices are increasing applied to a wide variety of subjects, generating histories of the body or of food, for example.

## RELIGION

India is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, collectively known as Indian religions. Indian religions are a major form of world religions along with Abrahamic ones. Today, Hinduism and Buddhism are the world's third and fourth-largest religions respectively, with over 2 billion follower's altogether, and possibly as many as 2.5 or 2.6 billion followers. India is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world, with some of the most deeply religious societies and cultures. Religion plays a central and definitive role in the life of many of its people. According to the 2011 census, 78.35% of the population of India practice Hinduism. Islam (14.88%), Christianity (2.5%), Sikhism (1.9%), Buddhism (0.8%) and Jainism (0.4%) are the other major religions followed by the people of

India. Many tribal religions, such as Sarnaism, are found in India, though these have been affected by major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and the Bahá'í Faith are also influential but their numbers are smaller. Atheism and agnostics also have visible influence in India, along with a self-ascribed tolerance to other faiths.

The Hindu religion has many schools, each with their own unique views. For example, according to Yogavasistha, a spiritual text of the Advaita school of Hindu religion, the values of the liberated self-actualized human being, may be summarised as follows: "Pleasures do not delight him; pains do not distress. Although engaged in worldly actions, he has no attachment to any object. He is busy outwardly, yet calm inwardly. He feels free from restrictions of scriptures, customs, age, caste or creed. He is happy, but his happiness does not depend on anything else. He does not feel needy, proud, agitated, troubled, depressed or elated. He is full of compassion and forgiveness even to those who mean him harm. He does the right thing, regardless of the pressures. He is patient, perseverant, and without any impurity in his heart. He is free of delusions; he does not crave for anything. His sense of freedom comes from his spirit of inquiry. The fruits of his inquiry are his strength, intellect, efficiency and punctuality. He keeps company of wise and enlightened persons. He is contend

## PERCEPTION OF THE INDIAN CULTURE

India's diversity has inspired many writers to pen their perceptions of the country's culture. These writings paint a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India. According to industry consultant Eugene M. Makar, for example, traditional Indian culture is defined by a relatively strict social hierarchy. He also mentions that from an early age, children are reminded of their roles and places in society. This is reinforced, Makar notes, by the way many believe gods and spirits have an integral and functional role in determining their life. Several differences such as religion divide the culture. However, a far more powerful division is the traditional Hindu bifurcation into non-polluting and polluting occupations. Strict social taboos have governed these groups for thousands of years, claims Makar. In recent years, particularly in cities, some of these lines have blurred and sometimes even disappeared. He writes important family relations extend as far as gotra, the mainly patrilineal lineage or clan assigned to a Hindu at birth. In rural areas & sometimes in urban areas as well, it is common that three or four generations of the family live under the same roof. The patriarch often resolves family issues.

Others have a different perception of Indian culture. According to C.K. Prahalad by Des Dearlove, author of many best selling business books, modern India is a country of very diverse cultures with many languages, religions and traditions. Children begin by coping and learning to accept and assimilate in this diversity. Prahalad - who was born in India and grew up there - claimed, in the interview, that Indians, like everyone else in the world, want to be treated as unique, as individuals, want to express themselves and seek innovation.[19] In another report, Nancy Lockwood of Society for Human Resource Management, the world's largest human resources association with members in 140 countries, writes that in the past two decades or so, social change in India is in dramatic contrast to the expectations from traditional Indian culture. These changes have led to Indian families giving education opportunities to girls, accepting women working outside home, pursuing a career, and opening the possibility for women to attain managerial roles in corporate India. Lockwood claims that change is slow, yet the scale of cultural change can be sensed from the fact that of India's 397 million workers, 124

million are now women. The issues in India with women empowerment are similar to those elsewhere in the world.

According to Amartya Sen, the India born Nobel Laureate in Economics, the culture of modern India is a complex blend of its historical traditions, influences from the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Western culture - both collaterally and dialectically. Sen observes that external images of India in the West often tend to emphasize the difference - real or imagined - between India and the West. There is a considerable inclination in the Western countries to distance and highlight the differences in Indian culture from the mainstream of Western traditions, rather than discover and show similarities. Western writers and media usually misses, in important ways, crucial aspects of Indian culture and traditions. The deep-seated heterogeneity of Indian traditions, in different parts of India, is neglected in these homogenised description of India. The perceptions of Indian culture, by those who weren't born and raised in India, tend to be one of at least three categories, writes Sen:

- Exoticist approach: it concentrates on the wondrous aspects of the culture of India. The focus of this approach of understanding Indian culture is to present the different, the strange and as Hegel put it, "a country that has existed for millennia in the imaginations of the Europeans."
- Magisterial approach: it assumes a sense of superiority and guardianship necessary to deal with India, a country that James Mill's imperialist history thought of as grotesquely primitive culture. While great many British observers did not agree with such views of India, and some non-British ones did, it is an approach that contributes to some confusion about the culture of India.
- Curatorial approach: it attempts to observe, classify and record the diversity of Indian culture in different parts of India. The curators do not look only for the strange, are not weighed by political priorities, and tend to be more free from stereotypes. The curatorial approach, nevertheless, have an inclination to see Indian culture as more special and extraordinarily interesting than it actually may be. The curatorial approach, one inspired by systematic curiosity for the cultural diversity of India within India, is mostly absent. Susan Bayly, in her book, observes that there is considerable dispute in India and Orientalist scholars on perceived Indian culture. She acknowledges that many dispute claims of pervasiveness of caste and strict social hierarchy in modern India. Bayly notes that much of the Indian subcontinent was populated by people for whom the formal distinctions of caste and strict social hierarchies were of only limited importance in their lifestyles.

## FAMILY STRUCTURE

For generations, India has had a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. It is a system under which extended members of a family – parents, children, the children's spouses and their offspring, etc. – live together. Usually, the oldest male member is the head in the joint Indian family system. He makes all important decisions and rules, and other family members abide by them. In a 1966 study, Orenstein and Micklin analysed India's population data and family structure. Their studies suggest that Indian household sizes had remained similar over the 1911 to 1951 period. Thereafter, with urbanisation and economic development, India has witnessed a break up of traditional joint family into more nuclear-like families. Sinha, in his book, after summarising the numerous sociological studies done on Indian family, notes that over the last 60 years, the cultural trend in most parts of India has been an accelerated change from joint family to nuclear families, much like population trends in other

parts of the world. The traditional large joint family in India, in the 1990s, accounted for a small percent of Indian households, and on average had lower per capita household income. He finds that joint family still persists in some areas and in certain conditions, in part due to cultural traditions and in part due to practical factors. Youth in lower socio-economic classes are more inclined to spend time with their families than their peers due to differing ideologies in rural and urban parenting

### WEDDING RITUALS

Weddings are festive occasions in India with extensive decorations, colors, music, dance, costumes and rituals that depend on the religion of the bride and the groom, as well as their preferences. The nation celebrates about 10 million weddings per year, of which over 80% are Hindu weddings. While there are many festival-related rituals in Hinduism, vivaha (wedding) is the most extensive personal ritual an adult Hindu undertakes in his or her life. Typical Hindu families spend significant effort and financial resources to prepare and celebrate weddings. The rituals and process of a Hindu wedding vary depending on region of India, local adaptations, resources of the family and preferences of the bride and the groom. Nevertheless, there are a few key rituals common in Hindu weddings - Kanyadaan, Panigrahana, and Saptapadi; these are respectively, gifting away of daughter by the father, voluntarily holding hand near the fire to signify impending union, and taking seven steps before fire with each step including a set of mutual vows. After the seventh step and vows of Saptapadi, the couple is legally husband and wife. Sikhs get married through a ceremony called Anand Karaj.

### FESTIVALS

India, being a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, celebrates holidays and festivals of various religions. The three national holidays in India, the Independence Day, the Republic Day and the Gandhi Jayanti, are celebrated with zeal and enthusiasm across India. In addition, many Indian states and regions have local festivals depending on prevalent religious and linguistic demographics. Popular religious festivals include the Hindu festivals of Navratri, Diwali, Maha Shivratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Durga puja, Holi, Ratha-Yatra, Ugadi, Rakshabandhan, and Dussehra. Several harvest festivals such as Sankranti, Pongal and Raja sankranti swinging festival "Nuakhai" are also fairly popular. Indian New year festival are celebrated in different part of India with unique style in different times. Ugadi, Bihu, Gudhi Padwa, Puthandu, Vishu and Vishuva Sankranti are the New years festival of different part of India.

### CLOTHING

Traditional clothing in India greatly varies across different parts of the country and is influenced by local culture, geography, climate and rural/urban settings. Popular styles of dress include draped garments such as sari for women and dhoti or lungi or panche (in Kannada) for men. Stitched clothes are also popular such as churidar or salwar-kameez for women, with dupatta (long scarf) thrown over shoulder completing the outfit. Salwar is often loose fitting, while churidar is a tighter cut. For men, stitched versions include kurta-pyjama and European-style trousers and shirts for men. In urban centres, people can often be seen in jeans, trousers, shirts, suits, kurtas and variety of other fashions. In

public and religious places, Indian dress etiquette discourages exposure of skin and wearing transparent or tight clothes.[72] Most Indian clothes are made from cotton which is ideal for the region's hot weather.[73] Since India's weather is mostly hot and rainy, majority of Indians wear sandals. Indian women perfect their sense of charm and fashion with make up and ornaments. Bindi, mehendi, earrings, bangles and other jewelry are common. On special occasions, such as marriage ceremonies and festivals, women may wear cheerful colours with various ornaments made with gold, silver or other regional stones and gems.

Bindi is often an essential part of a Hindu woman's make up. Worn on their forehead, some consider the bindi as an auspicious mark. Traditionally, the red bindi was worn only by married Hindu women, and coloured bindi was worn by single women, but now all colours and glitter has become a part of women's fashion. Some women wear sindoor - a traditional red or orange-red powder (vermilion) in the parting of their hair (locally called mang). Sindoor is the traditional mark of a married woman for Hindus. Single Hindu women do not wear sindoor; neither do over 1 million Indian women from religions other than Hindu and agnostics/atheists who may be married.

India's clothing styles have continuously evolved over the course of the country's history. The 11th-century BCE Rig-veda mentions dyed and embroidered garments (known as paridhan and pesas respectively) and thus highlights the development of sophisticated garment manufacturing techniques during this period. In 5th century BCE, Greek historian Herodotus describes the richness of the quality of Indian cotton clothes.[ By the 2nd century AD, muslins manufactured in southern India were imported by the Roman Empire and silk cloth was one of the major exports of ancient India along with Indian spices. Stitched clothing in India was developed before the 10th century CE and was further popularised in the 15th century by Muslim empires in India. Draped clothing styles remained popular with India's Hindu population while the Muslims increasingly adopted tailored garments.

During the British Raj, India's large clothing and handicrafts industry was left paralysed so as to make place for British industrial cloth. Consequently, Indian independence movement leader Mahatma Gandhi successfully advocated for what he termed as khadi clothing — light coloured hand-woven clothes — so as to decrease the reliance of the Indian people on British industrial goods.[79] The 1980s were marked by a widespread modification to Indian clothing fashions which was characterised by a large-scale growth of fashion schools in India, increasing involvement of women in the fashion industry and changing Indian attitudes towards multiculturalism. These developments played a pivotal role in the fusion of Indian and Western clothing styles

## LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit . The evolution of language within India may be distinguished over three periods: old, middle and modern Indo-Aryan. The classical form of old Indo-Aryan was sanskrit meaning polished, cultivated and correct, in distinction to Prakrit -

the practical language of the migrating masses evolving without concern to proper pronunciation or grammar, the structure of language changing as those masses mingled, settled new lands and adopted words from people of other native languages. Prakrita became middle Indo-Aryan leading to Pali (the language of early Buddhists and Ashoka era in 200-300 BCE), Prakrit (the language of Jain philosophers) and Apabhramsa (the language blend at the final stage of middle Indo-Aryan). It is Apabhramsa, scholars claim, that flowered into Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi and many other languages now in use in India's north, east and west. All of these Indian languages have roots and structure similar to Sanskrit, to each other and to other Indo-European languages. Thus we have in India three thousand years of continuous linguistic history recorded and preserved in literary documents. This enables scholars to follow language evolution and observe how, by changes hardly noticeable from generation to generation, an original language alters into descendant languages that are now barely recognisable as the same.

Sanskrit has had a profound impact on the languages and literature of India. Hindi, India's most spoken language, is a "Sanskritised register" of the Khariboli dialect. In addition, all modern Indo-Aryan languages, Munda languages and Dravidian languages, have borrowed many words either directly from Sanskrit (tatsama words), or indirectly via middle Indo-Aryan languages (tadbhava words). Words originating in Sanskrit are estimated to constitute roughly fifty percent of the vocabulary of modern Indo-Aryan languages, and the literary forms of (Dravidian) Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. Tamil, although to a slightly smaller extent, has also been significantly influenced by Sanskrit. Part of the Eastern Indo-Aryan languages, the Bengali language arose from the eastern Middle Indic languages and its roots are traced to the 5th-century BCE Ardhamagadhilanguage. Hindi is mutually intelligible with Urdu, both languages being standardised registers of Hindustani. Urdu is generally associated with South Asian Muslims. The main difference between the two is that Hindi is generally written in the Devanagari script, whilst Urdu is written in Nastaliq, but, when spoken colloquially, both are mutually intelligible. Mutual intelligibility decreases, however, in specialised contexts where Urdu has borrowed words from Persian and Arabic, whilst Hindi has done so from Sanskrit and English.

## CONCLUSION

The glance of Indian cultural histories is very important in the present contest of the conditions, why because of the ongoing terrorism in the world affair will fluctuate the conditions of Indian society. The India is country having unity in diversity, that philosophy will be well understood by the cultural history of India. The people of the land always had the faith in the ideas of liberty fraternity and equality. The all these ideas will be identified through the cultural history of India. The cultural values are always backbone of the nation to develop at its international level. The system of food habits, type of marriage, dress code, language and literature of the Indian people from the earliest to till today one or other way they are correlated to the system of the past and the present. The Ministry of Culture plays a vital role in the preservation and promotion of art and culture. Its aim is to develop ways and means by which basic cultural and aesthetic values and perceptions remain active and dynamic among the people. It also undertakes programmes for the promotion of various manifestations of contemporary art. The Department is a nodal agency for commemorating significant events and celebrating centenaries of great artists.

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