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CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF INDIA

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India, a country in South Asia, is the seventh-largest country by
area. It is also the second-most populous country (more than 1.3 billion
people) and the most populous democracy in the world. It includes 29
states and 7 union territories [1]. The0 national Indian flag, which was
adopted in 1947, is a tricolour of deep saffron, white, and green, in
horizontal bands (with green at the bottom). In the centre of the white band
is a blue wheel, the chakra. The national anthem is a song composed by
Rabindranath Tagore in 1911 entitled Jana-gana mana [1].

India's physical features and geological structure had a great
influence on its culture, as did the country's diverse flora and fauna. North
India and its deep-rooted Aryan influence gave birth to an incredibly
unique culture which feels so distinct when compared to the Dravidian

influences of the South [3]. Each state managed to carve out its own identity while the North-eastern parts of the country enjoyed their own cultural beliefs and festivals. The castes and subcastes in each region relate to each other through a permanent hierarchical structure. Tribes usually do not have a caste hierarchy but often have their own internal hierarchical organization. The pastoral and foraging tribes are relatively egalitarian in their internal organization. So, India is home to several thousand ethnic groups, tribes, castes, and religions. It has rightly been described as a mini world, an ethnological museum that is fierce in its beliefs, proud of its unique way of life.

India has a history going back thousands of years and a prehistory going back hundreds of thousands of years. In 2700 B.C.E. the first genuinely urban civilization appeared in the Indus Valley and western India [2]. The walled citadels in some early cities developed into elaborate palisades, walls, and moats to protect the multitude of Iron Age and medieval cities throughout much of the country. The towns and cities are of eight historic types: 1) ancient pilgrimage centres, such as Madurai; 2) local market towns, roughly one every 20 miles; 3) medieval fortified towns, such as Gwalior; 4) ancient and medieval seaports, such as Bharuch (Broach); 5) military cantonments first set up by the British, such as Pune; 6) modern administrative centres such as New Delhi; 7) new industrial centres, such as Jamshedpur; 8) great modern metropoles such as Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) [2].

After the disappearance of ancient urban civilization around 1500 B.C.E. there was a bewildering variety of princely states and kingdoms, small and large, throughout the subcontinent, creating a long history of war and conquest that was punctuated by foreign invasions and the birth of some of the world's largest religions: Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Sikhism [4]. So, Indian national architecture developed distinct regional styles that remain apparent. The landscape is dotted with over half a million villages, and each region has distinctive forms of domestic architecture and village layout. Holy places of the various religions are commonly within villages and towns, but the numerous pilgrimage sites are not necessarily located there.

A five-thousand-year-old civilisation of India has been deeply touched by invaders and explorers from all over the world. India was ruled by the British government after 1858 through a viceroy and a council, although several hundred "princely states" continued to maintain a measure of independence. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, slowly moved from a position of advisor and critic for the British administration toward demanding the transference of power to native Indian politicians. It was to be a long struggle, but independence was achieved in 1947, with the condition that predominantly Muslim areas in the north would form a separate country of Pakistan. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was to be Pakistan's first prime minister, while Nehru became the prime minister of the Republic of India. The departure of the colonial authorities, including the British armed forces, was peaceful, but the splitting off of Pakistan caused

a massive population movement and bloodshed on both sides as a result of "communal passions." A quarter century later, the eastern wing of Pakistan split from that country to become the independent country of Bangladesh [6].

There are major geographic differences in Indian diet. About half the people eat rice as their staple, while the remainder subsist on wheat, barley, maize, and millet. Just as fundamental is the division between those who eat meat and those who are vegetarian. Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and Christians all eat meat. Partly Hindus and all Jains are normally vegetarian, with most even avoiding eggs.

With a large proportion of the population being located in rural areas (73 percent), farming is the largest source of employment; for hundreds of millions of people, this means subsistence farming on tiny plots of land, whether owned or rented [5]. In most parts of the country, some farmers produce cash crops for sale in urban markets.

India has had many traders, transport agents, importers and exporters since the days of the Indus civilization four thousand years ago. Market places have existed since that time, and coinage has been in circulation among urban people for 2500 years [7]. In modern times, an expanding investment scene, combined with continuing inflation, has formed the background to an extensive import and export trade. The major trading partners are Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany [8]. Political animosities have long ensured that trade with neighbouring South Asian countries remains minimal, although there is

now considerable transborder trade with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Bhutan [5].

The modern infrastructure was created by the British administration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The country still relies on a vast network of railroad track.

Saying about social stratification we should mention that the caste system is more elaborate than that in any other Hindu or Buddhist country. A caste is the largest kin-based group, an endogamous unit with its own traditional occupation and rank. There are several thousand of castes in India. Society is so fragmented into castes that there can be twenty or thirty distinct castes within a village. A caste is made up of a number of clans, which are also kin-based but are exogamous and often intermarrying units. The clan in turn is made up of smaller and more localized groups called lineages, which are also exogamous. A caste may include hundreds of lineages of varying size and status, depending on how many generations of depth they claim. Major lineages commonly are composed of minor lineages, but the smallest are so localized that they are made up of a number of neighbouring and closely related extended or nuclear families. Thus, a caste is endogamous, but all the kin-based units below it are exogamous and follow rigid rules of intermarriage [5].

The highest category of castes is those people called Brahmanism the Hindu system; they were traditionally priests and intellectuals. Below them in rank were castes called Satriya, including especially warriors and rulers. Third in rank were the Vaisyas, castes concerned with trading and

land ownership. The fourth-ranking category was presented by the Sudras, primarily farmers. Below these four categories and hardly recognized in the ancient and traditional model, were many castes treated as "untouchable" and traditionally called Pancama. Outside the system altogether were several hundred tribes, with highly varied cultural and subsistence patterns. The whole system was marked not just by extreme differences in status and power but by relative degrees of spiritual purity or pollution [8].

India also has the largest tribal population on the planet, most depending on agriculture, fishing and hunting for their daily existence. Each tribe has its unique lifestyle, dressing, traditions and beliefs. Some of the most popular and culturally beautiful tribes include the Santhals of Bengal and Bihar, Mundas of Jharkhand, Khasis of Meghalaya, Angamis of Nagaland, Bhils of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Drokpas and Dards of Ladakh and the Maldhari tribe of Kutch [7].

The major cities in modern times – Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai), Calcutta (Kolkata), New Delhi, and Bangalore – were essentially residential creations of the British administrators. Architecturally, professionally, and in other ways, they are therefore the most Westernized cities in India today [4]. As a consequence, there are many modern cases of intercaste marriage in all the cities, although this practice remains almost unthinkable to the great majority of Indians.

Although the different regions and religions have considerable variety in marital arrangements, the arranged marriage is a traditional

feature of virtually every community; today, except among the urban middle classes, it still is widely practiced. Marriages that are not arranged by the couple's parents, often termed "love marriages," are looked down on as impulsive acts of passion. The more usual style of marriage unites a couple who have barely met beforehand. It is through the institution of arranged marriage and its correlate, caste endogamy, that parents exercise control not only over their adult children but also over the social structure and the caste system [8].

The written will is largely unknown except in modern urban areas. The tradition has always been that sons inherit property and status from their fathers and that daughters can hope to receive a dowry at the time of their marriage. However, there is much local and caste variation in precisely who inherits. In some groups, the oldest son inherits everything and then makes an accommodation for his younger brother and provides his sisters' dowries. In other groups, the brothers may inherit equal shares, except that the youngest brother inherits the house. Other patterns occur, but in general, although modern law states that daughters should inherit equally with their brothers, this almost never happens except in Islamic families [9].

India has a tradition of medical healing, teaching, and research that goes back more than two thousand years to the two basic medical treatises written by Charaka and Sushruta [7]. Today the country has four major medical systems as well as dozens of localized and tribal ones that depend on herbal treatments. The oldest of the four systems is still widely followed

under the name of Ayurveda, meaning "science of long life" [7]. It is highly developed, with its own hospitals, clinics, pharmaceutical factories, and medical textbooks. It depends primarily on non-invasive herbal treatments. The diagnosis and treatment emphasize a holistic approach. Sidda is a distinct tradition that developed in south India and follows principles of physiology close to those of Ayurveda [8]. Diagnosis depends on a careful reading of the pulse. Treatment is mostly herbal and psychological. A third medical tradition is called Unani. This system came to India with Muslim travellers and was developed under the patronage of the Mughals. It emphasizes holistic diagnosis and treatment, but the theory of human physiology is distinct [5]. All three of these systems attribute disease to an imbalance between underlying constituents. The fourth and most widely favoured system is biomedicine, or scientific medicine. It has been used in the cities for three centuries and is practiced in the best hospitals and training colleges [5].

India has about 140 medical colleges. Public health is a major concern of every state government because of the continuing incidence of epidemic diseases, high rates of infant mortality, and the need for family planning (usually sterilization) to control the growth of the population [9].

Indian classical music boasts of a long-standing tradition, an accumulation of centuries of heritage dating all the way back to the 4th century AD [9]. Music in India can be divided into the Carnatic Sangeet of the South and the Hindustani music of the North. While the Hindustani music was deeply influenced by the west and countless civilisations who

invaded the country, Carnatic Sangeet still holds regional influences and a single, unabashed style [9]. The musical instruments used in the country also vary from one region to the other. The tabla and sitar are immensely popular in the northern parts of the country while the veena and violin are still favoured in the South.

Many believe that the dance forms of Northern India adapted to the Muslim invasion, but the dances of the South managed to retain their ancient originality. India was one of the first societies to see dance as a form of expression, and even though the country boasts of approximately 111 forms of dance, they all follow one principle: they're immensely colourful and incredibly expressive. Some of the common dance forms of the North include Kathak, Manipuri, Chhau and Odissi while Bharatanatyam and Kathakali are the two main superstars of the South [9].

To experience the true culture of India, one has to become a part of its many festivals. Festivals play a huge role in the Indian culture, with each region, every religion and most communities having their own festivals. Each festivity is marked by pomp and colour and exotic cuisines, music, dance and dressing up in traditional attires are integral ingredients of any celebration.

Regional fairs are a common feature in the country as well. The grand Pushkar fair of Rajasthan which hosts the largest market on the planet needs no introduction, its legendary charm and appeal attracting tourists from far and wide. A similar, yet incredibly different, celebration is the Sonepur Mela of Bihar, the largest livestock fair in Asia [6].

Diwali, Eid and Holi are celebrated in most parts of the country, but there are regional superstars such as the Vaisakhi celebrations of Punjab, Navaratri in Gujarat, Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra, Pongal in the South and Durga Puja in Bengal as well [8]. No matter which month of the year one choose to visit India, one's sure to come across a grand celebration that boasts of modern influences but rigorously holds onto its ancient beliefs and rich heritage.

Modern India isn't just a country; it's a way of life. It is a belief that joins a billion people having different religions, dissimilar languages, individual beliefs, conflicting cultures, unique ways of living, a million gods and inconsistent cuisines. It is an ideology that makes all these communities and cultures live together in peace and harmony, proud of their rich diversity and harmonious existence.

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YOUTH IN MODERN WORLD

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Today's time may be also named as a time for bold measures. Franklin D. Roosevelt said: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future" [1]. Youth is often considered to represent the future as they bring new ideas and energy to add to the pool of knowledge that currently exists. They can bring enthusiasm and vitality which can lead to new discoveries and developments that can benefit society or even the world at large. Although

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