



India Culture

Wikipedia, online blogs like moxon.net (surviving India), as well as Globe Aware staff and volunteers.

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People

According to Eugene M. Makar, relatively strict social hierarchy defines the traditional Indian culture. He also mentions that from an early age, children are reminded of their roles and places in society. This is reinforced by the fact that many believe gods and spirits have integral and functional role in determining their life. Several differences such as religion divide culture. However, 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. In recent years, particularly in cities, some of these lines have blurred and sometimes even disappeared. Nuclear family is becoming central to Indian culture. Important family relations extend to as far as gotra, the mainly patrilineal lineage or clan assigned to a Hindu at birth. In rural areas it is common that three or four generations of the family live under the same roof. Patriarch often resolves family issues.

Among developing countries, India has low levels of occupational and geographic mobility. People choose same occupations as their parents and rarely move geographically in the society. During the nationalist movement, pretentious behavior was something to be avoided. Egalitarian behavior and social service were promoted while nonessential spending was disliked and spending money for 'showing off' was deemed a vice. This image continues in politics with many politicians wearing simple looking / traditionally rural clothes.

Personal Space/Interactions

Personal space is a concept that has never been allowed to develop in India. When you have approaching one billion people rubbing shoulders in a country this size, you have two options. The first one, the western choice, is to bury yourself in your newspaper on the train, and to steadfastly ignore other humans when you're walking along the street, creating a concept of personal space that is sacred, unbreachable and almost solid enough to touch. The apocryphal story goes that a couple was having sex on a British train in a crowded carriage of six, but everybody pretended not to notice, looking away as the shrieks of joy throbbed round the train; but when the loving couple had finished and lit up a post-coital cigarette, one of the passengers leaned forward and said, 'Excuse me, would you mind putting that out? This is a no smoking coach.' True or untrue, the very fact that this story is an urban myth demonstrates that the concept of personal space is ingrained into western society, and particularly British society.

But India has no such concept. This manifests itself in a number of ways, but the two most obvious to the visitor are those of staring and conversation starting. Wherever you go you will be stared at, sometimes for hours, sometimes just for a short time, but each stare is penetrating, intense and profoundly unnerving. And as you sit there minding your own business, people will come right up to you, look over your shoulder and stare at what you are reading or writing, oblivious to any concerns for privacy you might have. Often they will come up and start a conversation, just like that, even if you are already talking: it's not uncommon in Anglo-Indian conversations for the Indian to interrupt when he loses interest in what you're saying, or has lost the thread through the language barrier.

You will encounter this sort of thing a lot if you're an obvious tourist and off the beaten track, but how surprising is this? Westerners are conditioned to know about the world from international TV and holidaying abroad, but this is far from the case in poverty-struck India. I'm sure I'd stare if I saw something as strange as a differently coloured person if I hadn't been exposed to them through media, immigration and an ability to explore the world. Staring isn't rude, it's just the locals displaying an interest, but to those of us conditioned not to stare as kids, it takes some getting used to.

It's not just personal, though. India manages to shatter any concepts of generalized privacy by blaring music at high volumes on buses, by cramming you into a bus or train until the sides are splitting, or by forcing you to piss in public through a lack of public toilets (something which is far more of a problem for women than men). I once sat on a train for hours while one man played Hindi film music at full volume on his ghetto blaster; I was cringing and inserting the ear plugs, but nobody else batted an eyelid. If they hated it, they didn't show it, perhaps reflecting that if they'd wanted to play their own music, they could too, and criticising the young man would amount to an invasion of his privacy. Who knows? Whatever, to the westerner this loud abuse of everyone else's personal space appears invasive and amazingly rude, but when there are this many people, what other solution is there? A nation this big full of people with British reserve would be too depressing to contemplate...

Food

The multiple families of Indian cuisine are characterized by their sophisticated and subtle use of many spices and herbs. Each family of this cuisine is characterized by a wide assortment of dishes and cooking techniques. Though a significant portion of Indian food is vegetarian, many traditional Indian dishes also include chicken, goat, lamb, fish, and other meats.

Food is an important part of Indian culture, playing a role in everyday life as well as in festivals. Indian cuisine varies from region to region, reflecting the varied demographics of the ethnically diverse subcontinent. Generally, Indian cuisine can be split into five categories: North, South, East, West Indian and North-eastern India.

Despite this diversity, some unifying threads emerge. Varied uses of spices are an integral part of food preparation, and are used to enhance the flavor of a dish and create unique flavors and aromas. Various cultural groups that entered India throughout history, such as the Persians, Mughals, and European colonists, have also influenced cuisine across India. Though the tandoor originated in Central Asia, Indian tandoori dishes, such as chicken tikka made with Indian ingredients, enjoy widespread popularity.

Indian cuisine is one of the most popular cuisines across the globe.[19] Historically, Indian spices and herbs were one of the most sought after trade commodities. The spice trade between India and Europe led to the rise and dominance of Arab traders to such an extent that European explorers, such as Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus, set out to find new trade routes with India leading to the Age of Discovery. The popularity of curry, which originated in India, across Asia has often led to the dish being labeled as the "pan-Asian" dish.

Architecture

The architecture of India is rooted in its history, culture and religion. Indian architecture progressed with time and assimilated the many influences that came as a result of India's global discourse with other regions of the world throughout its millennia-old past. The architectural methods practiced in India are a result of examination and implementation of its established building traditions and outside cultural interactions.

Though old, this Eastern tradition has also incorporated modern values as India became a modern nation state. The economic reforms of 1991 further bolstered the urban architecture of India as the country became more integrated with the world's economy. Traditional Vastu Shastra remains influential in India's architecture during the contemporary era. Indian architectural styles consist of many eras –

- Mehrgarh culture—Indus Valley Civilization (7000 BCE—1500 BCE)
- Vedic period—Post Maha Janapadas period (1500 BCE—200 CE)
- Dravidian Style
- Early Common Era—High Middle Ages (200 CE—1200 CE)
- Late Middle Ages (1100 CE—1526 CE)
- Islamic influence and Mughal Era (1526 CE-1857 CE)

- Colonial Era (1857 CE—1947 CE)
- Republic of India (1947 CE—present)

Whether glorious temples or majestic palaces, the architectural traditions of India are deep and breathtaking. You can find out more by googling for these styles or “Indian architecture” in general.

Transportation

Transport in the Republic of India is an important part of the nation's economy. With a land area of 3,287,240 km² (1,269,210 sq mi) and an estimated population of 1,028,737,436, transport in India is both a necessity as well as a convenience. Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s, development of infrastructure within the country has progressed at a rapid pace, and today there are a wide variety of modes of transport - by land, water and air. However, the relatively low GDP of India has meant that access to these modes of transport has not been uniform. Only around 10% of households own a motorcycle (about 102,873,744 people). Cars are owned by the wealthier few — around 0.7% of households owned one in 2007 (about 7,201,163 people). Public transport still remains the primary mode of transport for most of the population, and India's public transport systems are among the most heavily utilized in the world.

Despite improvements, several aspects of transport are still riddled with problems due to outdated infrastructure and a burgeoning population, and demand for transport infrastructure and services has been rising by around 10% a year. Taxes and bribes are common between state borders, and Transparency International estimates that truckers pay annually \$5 billion in bribes. Although India has only 1% of the world's vehicles, it accounts for 8% of the world's vehicle fatalities. India's cities are extremely congested — the average bus speed is 6–10 km/h in many large cities. Because of the congestion in Indian roads the fuel efficiency of the vehicles is also very low. This increases the overall fuel consumption of the country besides creating huge pollution since the engines run very inefficiently at such low speeds. India's rail network is the longest and fourth most heavily used system in the world. India's growing international trade is putting strain on the ports in India. The country's overburdened airports have just begun to get a makeover, with modernization work and greater investment in the aviation sector. In general, public transport suffers from outdated technology, incompetent management, corruption, over staffing, and low worker productivity. According to recent estimates by Goldman Sachs, India will need to spend \$1.7 Trillion USD on infrastructure projects over the next decade to boost economic growth of which \$500 Billion USD is budgeted to be spent during the eleventh Five-year plan.

Education System

Education in India has a history stretching back to the ancient urban centers of learning at Taxila and Nalanda. Western education became ingrained into Indian society with the establishment of the British Raj. Education in India falls under the control of both the Union Government and the states, with some responsibilities lying with the Union and the states having autonomy for others. The various articles of the Indian constitution provide for education as a fundamental right. Most universities in India are Union or State Government controlled.

India has made a huge progress in terms of increasing primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two thirds of the population. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India. Much of the progress in education has been credited to various private institutions. The private education market in India is estimated to be worth \$40 billion in 2008 and will increase to \$68 billion by 2012. However, India continues to face challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 40% of the population is illiterate and only 15% of the students reach high school. As of 2008, India's post-secondary high schools offer only enough seats for 7% of India's college-age population, 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree. As of 2007, there are 1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000, plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education.

Although no Indian university made to the top 300 of the Chinese-conducted Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2006, three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities — Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006. Six Indian Institutes of Technology and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science - Pilani were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by Asiaweek. While

the NIIT has been renowned as the largest provider of Information Technology training and education company in Asia and among the top 15 global head of education. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 15 in global MBA rankings by the Financial Times of London in 2009[12] while the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognized as a global leader in medical research and treatment.

Language

The official languages of the Republic of India is Hindi & English (**the official language of Jaipur, where Globe Aware's programs take place, is Rajasthani.**) The languages of India belong to several major linguistic families, the two largest being the Indo-European languages—Indo-Aryan (spoken by 70% of Indians)—and the Dravidian languages (spoken by 22% of Indians). Other languages spoken in India come mainly from the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic families, in addition to a few language isolates.

Individual mother tongues in India number several hundred (the 1961 census recognized 1,652 SIL Ethnologue lists 415). According to Census of India of 2001, 29 languages are spoken by more than a million native speakers, 122 by more than 10,000. Three millennia of language contact has led to significant mutual influence among the four language families in India and South Asia. Two contact languages have played an important role in the history of India: Persian and English.

The northern Indian languages from the Indo-European family evolved from Old Indo-Aryan such as Sanskrit, by way of the Middle Indo-Aryan Prakrit languages and Apabhraṃśa of the Middle Ages[5]. There is no consensus for a specific time where the modern north Indian languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Saraiki, Punjabi, Sindhi, Bengali, Oriya and Assamese[6] emerged, but AD 1000 is commonly accepted.[7] Each language had different influences, with Hindi/Urdu and closely related Hindustani languages being strongly influenced by Persian.

The Dravidian languages of South India had a history independent of Sanskrit. The major Dravidian languages are Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada [8]. The Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India also have long independent histories.

Employment and the Economy

The economy of India is the twelfth largest economy in the world by market exchange rates and the fourth largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). In the 1990s, following economic reform from the socialist-inspired economy of post-independence India, the country began to experience rapid economic growth, as markets opened for international competition and investment. In the 21st century, India is an emerging economic power with vast human and natural resources, and a huge knowledge base. Economists predict that by 2020, India will be among the leading economies of the world.

India was under social democratic-based policies from 1947 to 1991. The economy was characterized by extensive regulation, protectionism, and public ownership, leading to pervasive corruption and slow growth. Since 1991, continuing economic liberalization has moved the economy towards a market-based system. A revival of economic reforms and better economic policy in 2000s accelerated India's economic growth rate. By 2008, India had established itself as the world's second fastest growing major economy. However, the year 2009 saw a significant slowdown in India's official GDP growth rate to 6.1% as well as the return of a large projected fiscal deficit of 10.3% of GDP, which would be among the highest in the world.

India's large service industry accounts for 54% of the country's GDP while the industrial and agricultural sector contribute 29% and 17% respectively. Agriculture is the predominant occupation in India, accounting for about 60% of employment. The service sector makes up a further 28%, and industrial sector around 12%. The labor force totals half a billion workers. Major agricultural products include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry and fish. Major industries include textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, information technology enabled services and software.

India's per capita income (nominal) is \$1070, ranked 142th in the world, while its per capita (PPP) of US\$2,900 is ranked 129th. Previously a closed economy, India's trade has grown fast. India currently accounts for 1.5% of World trade as of 2007 according to the WTO. According to the World Trade Statistics of the WTO in 2006, India's total merchandise trade (counting exports and imports) was valued at \$294 billion in 2006 and India's services trade inclusive of export and import was \$143 billion. Thus, India's global

economic engagement in 2006 covering both merchandise and services trade was of the order of \$437 billion, up by a record 72% from a level of \$253 billion in 2004. India's trade has reached a still relatively moderate share 24% of GDP in 2006, up from 6% in 1985.

Despite robust economic growth, India continues to face many major problems. The recent economic development has widened the economic inequality across the country. Despite sustained high economic growth rate, approximately 80% of its population lives on less than \$2 a day (nominal), more than double the same poverty rate in China. Even though the arrival of Green Revolution brought end to famines in India, 40% of children under the age of three are underweight and a third of all men and women suffer from chronic energy deficiency.

Volunteers in India will notice poverty that may exceed anything they ever imagined. Gigantism. Forcibly or purposefully disabled beggars. The lengths to which their poverty has driven them and others can be shocking and, for a few gutwrenching.

Religion

Throughout the history of India, religion has been an important part of the country's culture. The vast majority of Indians associate themselves with a religion, and religious tolerance is established in both law and custom.

Indian census has established that Hinduism accounts for 80.5% of the population of India. The second largest religion is Islam, at about 13.4% of the population. The third largest religion is Christianity at 2.3%. The fourth largest religion is Sikhism at about 1.9% of India's population. Stating the hospitality of Hinduism towards all other religions, John Hardon writes, "However, the most significant feature of current Hinduism is its creation of a non-Hindu State, in which all religions are equal."

Other native Indian religions are Buddhism, Jainism. Ancient India had two philosophical streams of thought, the Shramana religions and the Vedic religion, parallel traditions that have existed side by side for thousands of years. Both Buddhism and Jainism are continuations of Shramana traditions, while modern Hinduism is a continuation of the Vedic tradition. These co-existing traditions have been mutually influential.

Zoroastrianism and Judaism also have an ancient history in India and each has several thousand Indian adherents.

Though inter-religious marriage is not widely practiced, Indians are generally tolerant of other religions and retain a secular outlook. Inter-community clashes have never found widespread support in the social mainstream, and it is generally perceived that the causes of religious conflicts are political rather than ideological in nature. India's religious diversity extends to the highest levels of government. The Constitution of India declares the nation to be a secular republic that must uphold the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion or faith (with activities subject to reasonable restrictions for the sake of morality, law and order, etc).

Music

The music of India includes multiple varieties of folk, popular, pop, classical music and R&B. India's classical music tradition, including Carnatic and Hindustani music, has a history spanning millennia and, developed over several eras, it remains fundamental to the lives of Indians today as sources of religious inspiration, cultural expression and pure entertainment. India is made up of several dozen ethnic groups, speaking their own languages and dialects, having very distinct cultural traditions.

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