



Cultural History of India- The Living culture of Present Part II

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Structure of the Talk

- Meaning of Culture- in the present
 - Ramlila
 - Music
 - Dance/Festivals
 - Food
 - Conclusions
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What is culture?

- When we talk of culture, we refer to the knowledge of a particular group of people. So it is as much about the past as about the present.
 - There are seven elements, or parts, of a single culture. They are social organization, customs, religion, language, government, economy, and arts.
 - Since 2010, Culture is considered the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development by UNESCO.
 - Culture is never fixed. It is essentially fluid and constantly in motion.
 - Hence culture is as much about the past as about the present.
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Cultural ethnocentrism

- ▶ Cultural ethnocentrism means to judge another culture based on the standard of one's own culture instead of the standard of the other particular culture.
 - ▶ Individuals who are highly ethnocentric identify strongly with their ethnic or cultural group. They also have a strong sense of pride, vanity, and superiority about their ethnic or cultural group.
 - ▶ They tend to examine economic, political, and social events solely from the viewpoint of their own group.
 - ▶ Ethnocentrism, or the belief that one's own set of values and beliefs is superior to others', has always had negative connotations. It is often cited as the main cause of many social problems, such as wars, oppression and slavery, among others.
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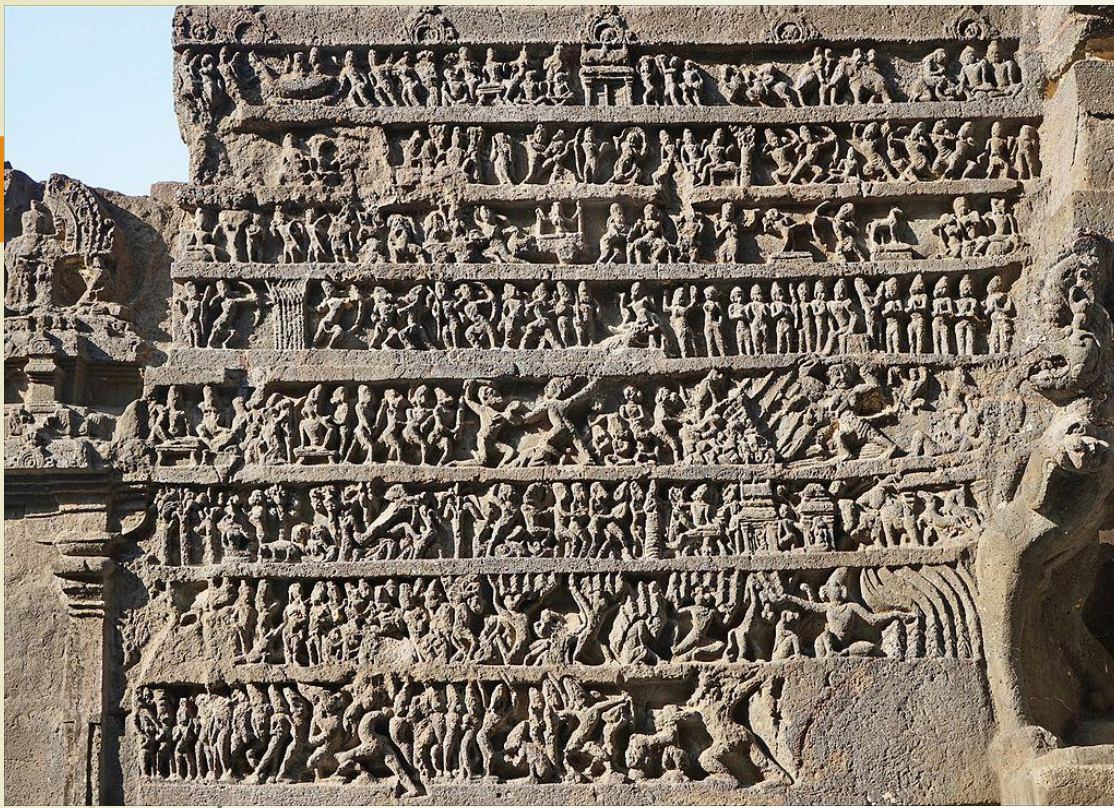
Continuities in culture

- ▶ Culture is transparent and reveals its identity quite easily. One can distinguish between a Punjabi and Bengali through his language, dress up, food, accent and expression.
 - ▶ Indian culture is a significant mix of change and continuity. Indian culture is archeologically accepted one, which existed before Harappan civilization.
 - ▶ Some cultural aspects are still practiced, such as worshipping of Mother Goddess and Pashupati.
 - ▶ We are also following Vedic, Jain, Buddhist, Muslim and Christianity even today.
 - ▶ And on the other hand, one can see skyscrapers of hi-tech cities of our country. A sustainable continuity of the past with the modern changes has clearly distinguished our country from other nations.
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Ramayana

- Rama is the seventh avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu and the central figure of the **Ramayana**, a Sanskrit epic that integrates performance arts with stories driven by ethical values.
- The epic text is dated to 1st millennium BCE, and Ramlila is an adaptation of those stories
- Another 16th century secondary work on Ramayana, **Ramcharitramanas** a verse form composition in the regional vernacular language
- Stories of 'Maryada Purushottam' Ram an epitome of righteousness was prevalent in every corner of India through tradition and culture.
- As many as three hundred versions of the *Ramayana*, are known to exist. The oldest version is generally recognized to be the **Sanskrit** version attributed to the sage Narada, the **Mula Ramayana**. Narada passed on the knowledge to **Valmiki**, who authored Valmiki Ramayana, the present oldest available version of Ramayana.



- The *Ramayana* relief artwork in 8th century **Cave 16 of Ellora**.
- **Baluchari saree** from West Bengal



Ramlila

- The Ramlila festivities were declared by **UNESCO as one of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" in 2008.**



- Ramlila, literally “Rama’s play”, is a performance of Ramayana in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue.
- It is performed in many parts of India during the festival of Dussehra, held each year according to the ritual calendar in autumn.
- Performance arts are an ancient Indian tradition, with the Sanskrit Hindu text Natya Shastra explaining the importance of performance as follows:¹
- Let Nāṭya (drama and dance) be the fifth Vedic Scripture. Combined with an epic story, tending to virtue, wealth, joy and spiritual freedom, it must contain the significance of every scripture, and forward every art.

Chitrakoot Ramlila



- In Varanasi, around 477 years ago, was born the earliest Ramleela known to the world as Chitrakoot ground Ramlila.
- Celebrated for five days every year in the last week of February at Chitrakoot, beginning from the Maha Shivratri day.



Varanasi Ramlila

- The Ramlila festival (October-November) is celebrated with great fevour at Varanasi.
- Jhankis and pageants depicting scenes from the life of lord Rama are taken out.



235 year Old Ramnagar Ramlila

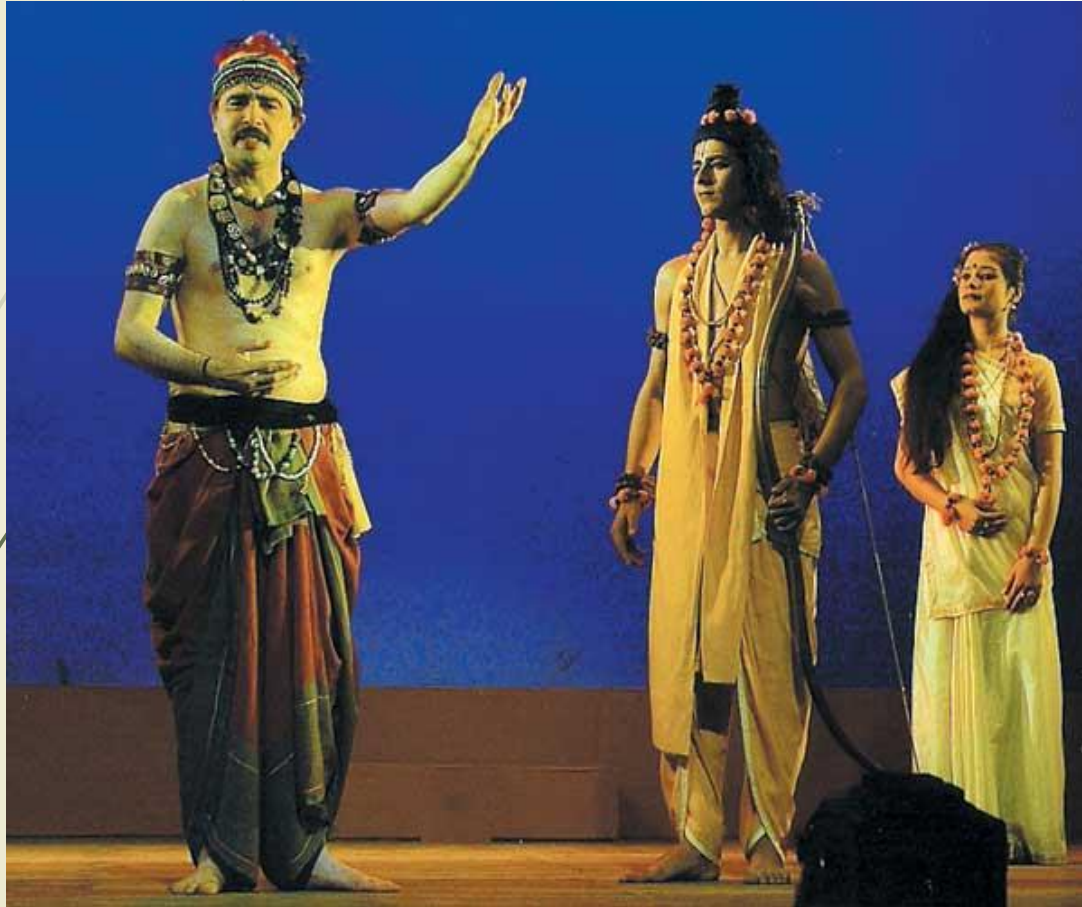


Ramlila at Ayodhya

- Ayodhya is popular for mandali Ramlilas.
- The performance is dialogue, based and presented on a platform stage.
- High standard of performance is complemented by songs and kathak dances and eyecatching décor.



Kumaoni Ramlila



- The festival of Dussehra is celebrated with great pomp and show all over Kumaon.
- Various Ramilas are enacted depicting the story of lord Rama's victory over the demon king, Ravana.
- The Almora Dussehra procession is unique with huge effigies of gods, heroes and demons paraded through the streets.

Garhwal Ramlila



Women Ramlila in Uttarakhand



- ▶ A group of women from hills of Garhwal in Uttarakhand have been pushing the boundaries of patriarchy and reclaiming spaces. More than 30 women have come together from different villages of Garhwal hills to organize a women led Ramlila performance in a traditional male domain.
- ▶ Unlike the traditional Ramlila, this one begins after Dussehra when men are done with their performances.


Significance of Ramlila

- Ramlila not only about staging of the ancient Hindu epic – Ramayana, but is a social platform involving lakhs of people cutting across all political, caste, religious and economic barriers.
- Over the centuries, Ramlila has evolved into a highly venerated art form, and has travelled to far corners of the globe, through Indian Diaspora, not as acts of "cultural recovery", rather as fresh expressions of a persistent faith.
- Ramlila depicts the victory of good over evil, apart from providing a strong feeling of brotherhood and common bonding.
- Muslims participate in a large numbers.



Kinds of Musical instruments

There are four basic kinds of instruments. They are:-

1. Tata Vadya (Chordophones) – stringed instruments like Sitar, Veena, Santoor, etc.
 2. Sushira Vadya (Aerophones) – wind instruments like flute, Shehnai, Nadaswaram, etc.
 3. Avanaddha Vadya (Membranophones) – percussion instruments like Mridangam, Tabla, Dholak, etc.
 4. Ghana Vadya (Idiophones) – solid instruments that don't require tuning (mostly used as accompaniments for tribal and folk music and dance).
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Music

- Vedic Age (2000-1000BC) mentions a number of musical instruments
- Sama Veda gives three types of notes – *Udatta*, *anudatta* and *swaritha*
- Mention in Rig Veda of – *Veena*, *Vanshi* (Flute) and *Damaru*
- It appears that a form of music – *Jati* music came into vogue and Buddhist and Jain scriptures refer to it
- Kalidasa's *Abhignana Sakuntalam* clearly shows an attempt in blending poetry with Classical music



Origin in Religion

Carnatic Music originated in the Bhakti movement, while Hindustani music originated during the Vedic period. Therefore both have a great link with religion. Both the music developed with Sanskrit language scripts in itself and through Vedic traditions.

The main vocal forms of Hindustani music are Dhrupad, Khayal, Tarana, Thumri, Dadra, and Gazals. The Carnatic music embraces much creativity comprise of Alpana, Niraval, Kalpnaswaram and Ragam Thana Pallavi

- Carnatic Music – gave scientific basis to classical Music
- Hindustani Music – gave prominence to aesthetic aspect



Characteristics of Hindustani Music

1. Emphasis on the moral construction of the song (Nadi and Samvadi swars).
2. The singer recites the clap at a fast pace, which is known as 'Joda'. Taal is not accompanied afterwards.
3. Full swars are considered to be complete, after which the distorted swars are introduced.
4. The thaat of pure swars is called 'Tilawal'.
5. There is range and flexibility in the swars.
6. Time limits are followed. There are different ragas for morning and evening.
7. Taals are normal.
8. Ragas are based on gender differentiation.
9. There is no ratio in Hindustani music while switching the ragas.




Characteristics of Carnatic Music



1. The intensity of sound can be controlled in this style.
2. Use of helical (Kundali) swaras is evident.
3. Free and typical style of raga.
4. The singer recites the 'aalap' and 'taanam'.
5. The distorted swars are named according to the shrutis. They are started afterwards.
6. The purity of swars are based on less shrutis, meaning high purity.
7. The thaat of pure swars is called 'mukhari'.
8. The time durations are well-defined in the Carnatic music. Madhya is twice of 'Vilamba' and the 'Dhruta' is twice of Madhya.






Difference Between Carnatic and Hindustani Music

Carnatic	Hindustani
72 ragas	6 major ragas
Veena, Mridangam and Mandolin	Tabla, Sarangi, Sitar and Santoor
Indigenous	Afghan Persian and Arab
Only one particular prescribed style of singing	Several sub-styles
Freedom to improvise	Scope to do variations and improvise
Both have equal importance	More importance to vocal music



Carnatik Music in South India

- References to Music could be seen in Sangam literature
 - Carnatic music – played a significant role in the courtly life of the kings – gave lot of impetus to dance and music
 - Bhakti movement – Post 10th century saw the growth of Hymn singing in temples as temples became a important cultural centers
 - Carnatic Music – gave scientific basis to classical Music
 - Hindustani Music – gave prominence to aesthetic aspect
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Vijayanagar Period

- Vijayanagar period saw the music at its zenith – Pillars of Hampi known as **saptaswaras**- give seven notes of music – **Sa ri ga ma pa da ni**
- Post Vijayanagar period saw the rise of Tanjore, Madurai and Mysore Nayakas
- Tanjore – famous as musical center



Festivals

Vaisakhi in Punjab, Nabanna in Bengal,

Magh Bihu in Assam, Pongal in Tamil Nādu,

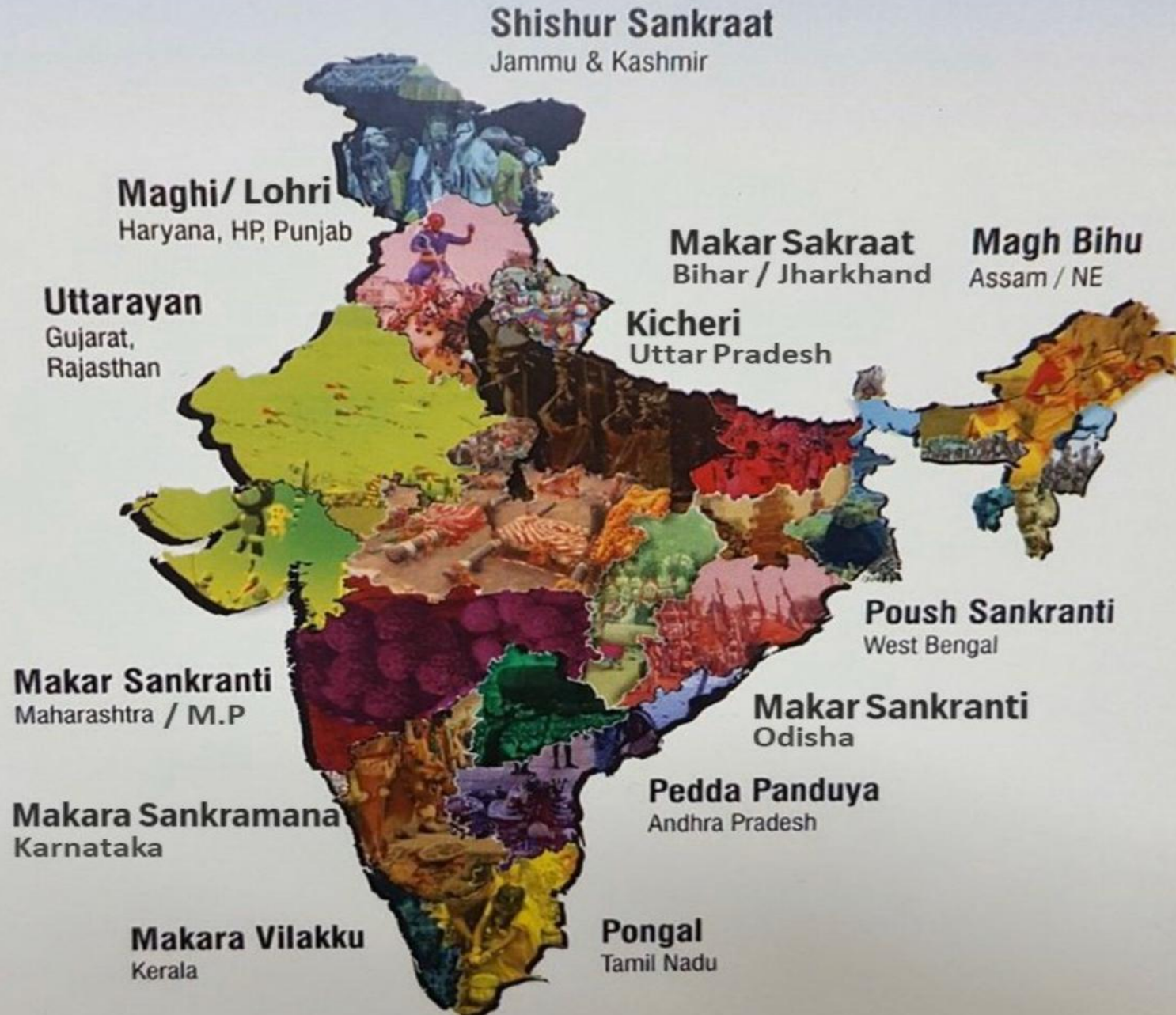
Onam in Kerala, Nuakhai in Odhisa

Sankranti in Telangana/Andhra Pradesh

All are celebrated as harvest festivals.



One festival- Different Names



MANY NAMES, ONE FESTIVAL

Makar Sankranti is one of the many names given to the winter harvest festival



**One festival
Different Names**

Bharatanatyam , Kathak

- Sangeet Natya Academy, recognizes eight traditional Classic dances
- **Bharatanatyam**, from Tamil Nadu.
- It is known for its grace, purity, tenderness, and sculptural poses. Lord Shiva is considered the god of this dance form.
- **Kathak**, from Uttar Pradesh and western India.
- Being the only classical dance of India having links with Muslim culture, it represents a unique synthesis of Hindu and Muslim genius in art. Further, Kathak is the only form of classical dance wedded to Hindustani or the North Indian music.



Kathakali and Kuchipudi

- **Kathakali**, from Kerala. It is a "story play" genre of art, but one distinguished by the elaborately colorful make-up, costumes and face masks that the traditionally male actor-dancers wear.
- **Kuchipudi**, from Andhra Pradesh. It is a dance-drama performance, with its roots in the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text of Natya Shastra. It developed as a religious art linked to traveling bards, temples and spiritual beliefs, like all major classical dances of India.



Odissi and Sattariya

- **Odissi**, from Odisha. performed predominantly by women, and expressed **religious** stories and spiritual ideas, particularly of **Vaishnavism** (Vishnu as **Jagannath**).
- **Sattariya**, from Assam. It is a dance-drama performance art with origins in the **Krishna**-centered **Vaishnavism** monasteries of **Assam**, and attributed to the 15th century **Bhakti movement** scholar and saint Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev



Manipuri and Mohiniyattam

- **Manipuri**, from Manipur. It is particularly known for its Hindu **Vaishnavism** themes, and exquisite performances of love-inspired dance drama of Radha-Krishna called Raslila. However, the dance is also attributed to regional deities such as Umang Lai during Lai Haraoba
- **Mohiniyattam**, from Kerala. Mohiniyattam dance gets its name from the word **Mohini** – a mythical enchantress avatar of the Hindu god **Vishnu**, who helps the good prevail over evil by developing her feminine powers



Folk dances

- Folk dances and plays in India retain significance in rural areas as the expression of the daily work and rituals of village communities.
- **West Bengal**-Kathi, Gambhira, Dhali, Jatra, Baul, Marasia, Mahal, Keertan.
- **Punjab**-Bhangra, Giddha, Daff, Dhaman, Bhand, Naqual.
- **Rajasthan**-Ghumar, Chakri, Ganagor, Jhulan Leela, Jhuma, Suisini, Ghapal, Kalbeliya.
- **Jammu and Kashmir**- Rauf, Hikar, Mandjas, Kud Dandi Nach, Damali.
- **Uttarakhand**- Kajari, Jhora, Raslila, Chappeli. Garhwali, Kumayuni.
- **Goa**- Tarangamel, Koli, Dekhni, Fugdi, Shigmo, Ghode, Modni, Samayi nrutya, Jagar, Ranmale, Gonph, Tonnya mell.



Tribal Dances

- ? Tribal Dances in India are inspired by the tribal folklore. Each ethnic group has its own distinct combination of myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, ballads, folk songs, folk dance, and folk music
- Santhali Dance, West Bengal, Jharkhand & Odisha.
 - Bamboo Dance, Mizoram. ...
 - Kalbelia Dance, Rajasthan. ...
 - Elelakkaradi Dance, Kerala. ...
 - Bhagoria Dance, Madhya Pradesh. ...
 - Chhau Dance, West Bengal, Jharkhand & Odisha. ...
 - Dhimsa Dance, **Andhra Pradesh**. ...
 - Shad Suk Mynsiem, Meghalaya.

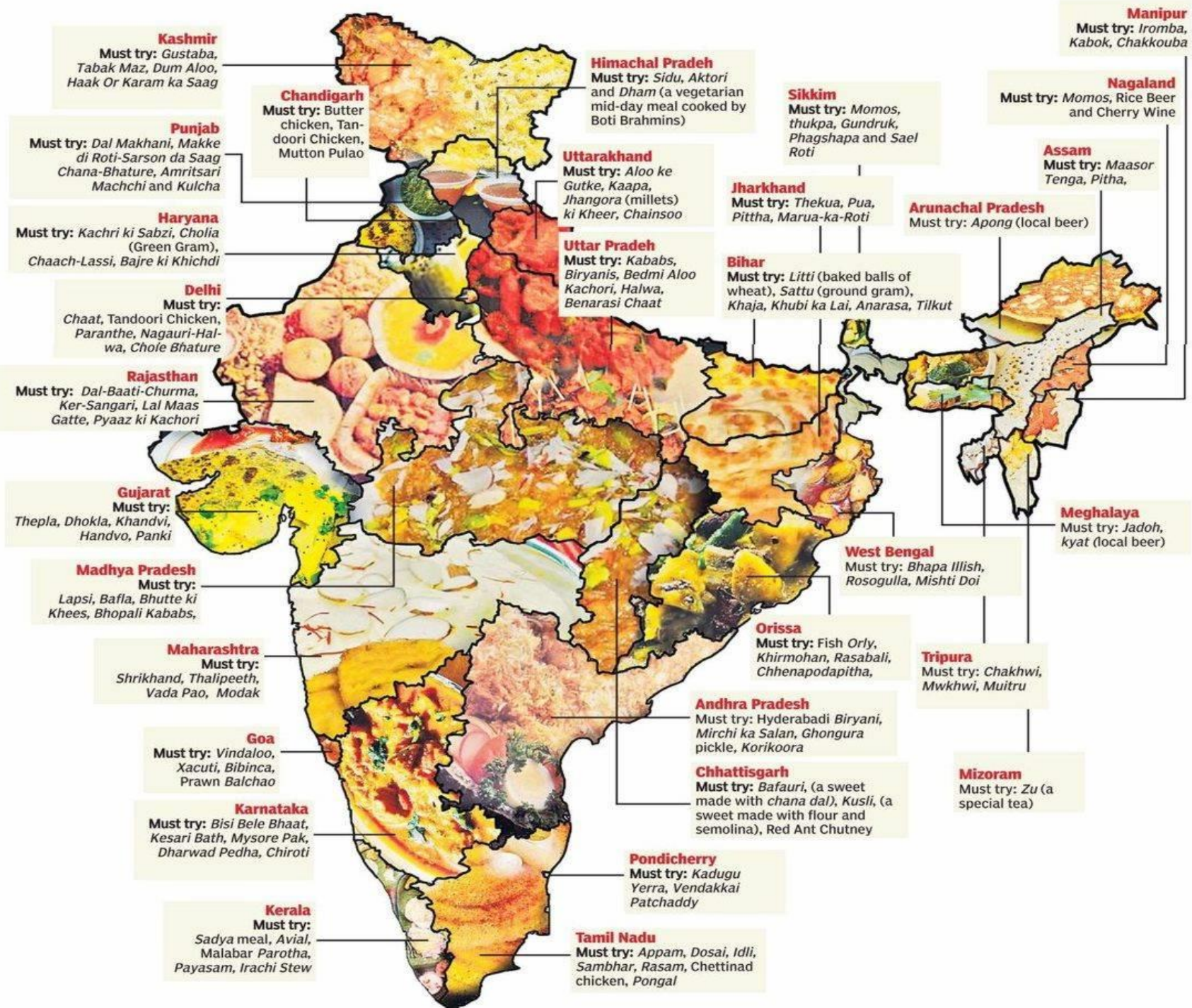


Indian food

- ❓ India can be divided basically into two parts the rice eating part, i.e. the South India and the wheat eating part, i.e., the North India.
- ❓ Another uniting factor is that throughout the country people use spices and a great variety of vegetables.
- ❓ The north Indian cuisine is very rich and there is a lot of influence of mughlai food in their cuisines. Many types of flour are used to making breads like chapattis, rotis, phulkas, puris and naan.
- ❓ Rajasthan and Gujarat being desert areas there is scarcity of water so fresh vegetables are not found. The cuisine here uses lentils and preserves in form of achar to be consumed with every meal.
- ❓ The food from Tamil Nadu uses lots of tamarind, while the food from Andhra Pradesh uses lots of chili.

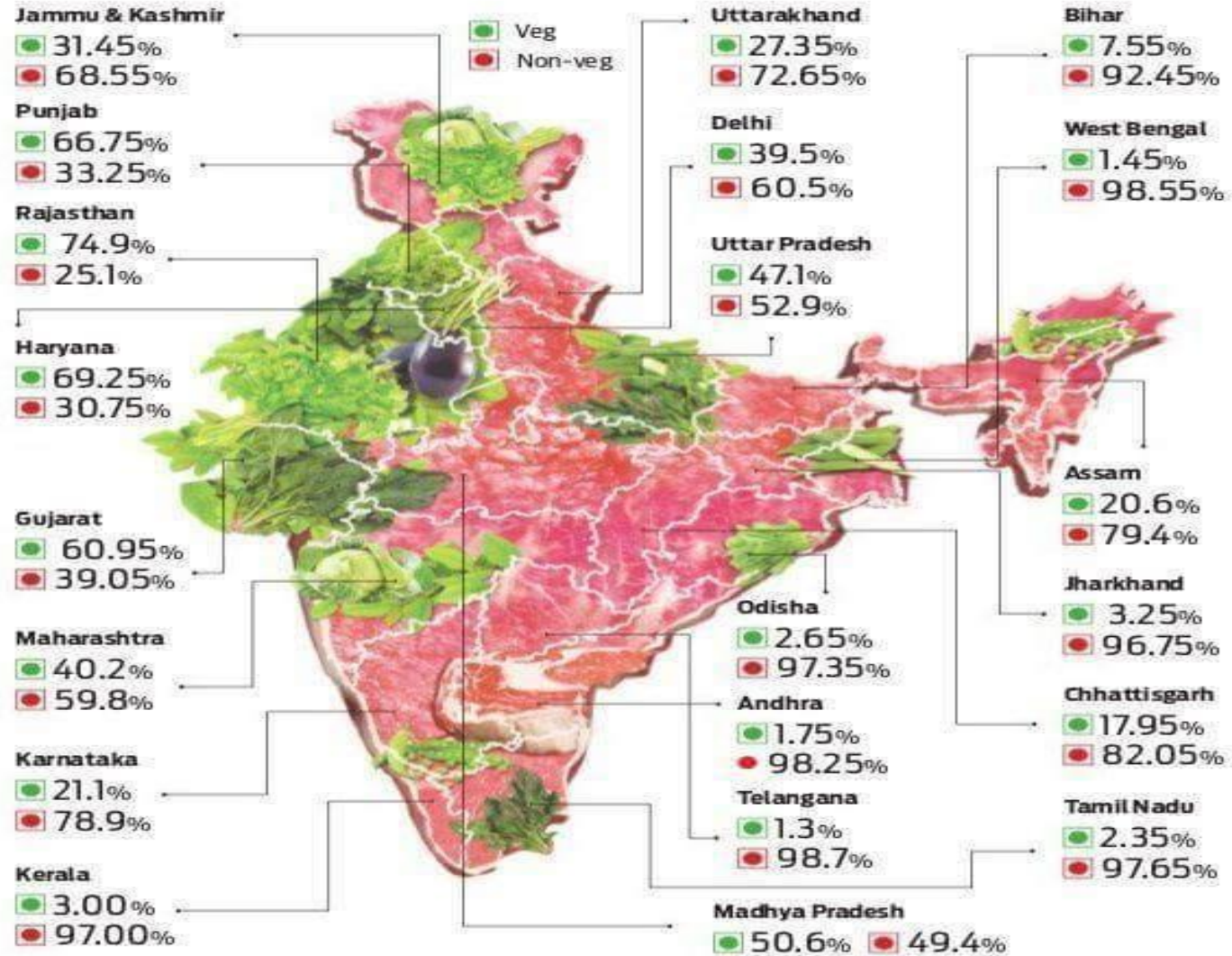


India's Food Map



Settling the debate forever on India's dietary preference being predominantly vegetarian, the data released by the Union government's Sample Registration System Baseline Survey has thrown open some interesting results. A look

HOW THE NATION EATS






Fusion and Food

- Today every very well-known Indian dish is the product of a long history of invasion and the fusion of different food traditions.
- The food that we Indians have been eating has been, over the millennia, steadily evolving both in variety and taste(Zayka)
- The food habits and preferences of Indians have changed in stages over the last 4000 years, from the Indus Valley days through the Vedic times and after the influence of Buddhist and Jain thought, and their impact on the Dharma Sutras and Arthasastra of around 300 BC, to Mughals, Europeans and British.



Indus Valley Civilization

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- ❖ At the various sites in Mohenjodaro and Harappa we have found wheat and barley.
 - ❖ They were also familiar with chickpea, Masur dal and horsegram, Chana.
 - ❖ They were also familiar with fruits like pomegranate, coconuts and banana.
 - ❖ Wheat was used by making into stew, soup or flat bread called chappati.

Vedic period



- ❖ The Rig Veda mentions neither rice, nor wheat but only barley.
- ❖ The Yajurveda mentions all the three besides panicum cereal, oil seed and pulses such as masha (urad), masura (masoor), mudga (mung) and Kalya (matar).




Eating and cooking practices and rules of pollution

- ❖ It was during this period that the concept of pollution became intimately woven to the cooking and eating practice.
- ❖ It would be unthinkable for a cook or house wife to taste any dish during the course of its preparation.
- ❖ Water must never be sipped from a tumbler but poured into the mouth from above since one's own saliva is polluting.
- ❖ Water used for rinsing the mouth must be cast out never swallowed.
- ❖ In many rituals sprinkling of water has a strong connotation of purification on the leaf before eating.



Philosophy of food

- According to the traditional Indian medical system **Ayurveda**, food is of three kinds.
 - **sattvic**
 - **rajasic**
 - **tamasic**
 - Depending on its character and effect upon the body and the mind.
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Satvic food



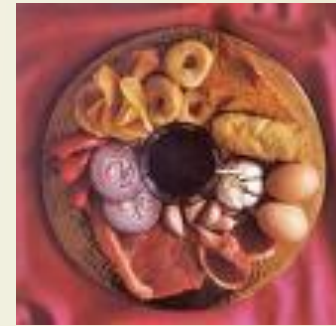
- ❖ Satvic food is most simple and easiest to digest type of food.
- ❖ The food contains most of its nutritional values as it is cooked by using minimal heat and modest processing.
- ❖ It provides the necessary energy to the body without taxing it.
- ❖ It is also considered as a foundation of higher states of consciousness, that is why saints and seers survive on satvic foods.
- ❖ Satvic food should be taken fresh or immediately after it is prepared.
- ❖ Fresh juicy fruits, vegetables (that are easily digestible), milk and milk products, whole soaked or also sprouted beans, grains and nuts, many herbs and spices consumed in their natural and near-natural forms are good examples of satvik food.
- ❖ Common spices like ginger, turmeric, coriander, cardamom, cinnamon, and aniseed are highly recommended in Satvic diet

Rajasik food



- ❖ Rajasik food is rich in flavour but heavy to digest.
- ❖ It is suitable for people who do arduous physical work.
- ❖ Vegetables cooked in excess butter, with spicy and strong flavoring agents, are typical examples of rajasik preparation. Cooked fresh, rajasik food is rich in nutrients with minimum dilution with water.
- ❖ Such food is heavy on salt and sugar and takes longer period to digest than sattvic food.
- ❖ It calls for extended sleeping hours and is sexually stimulating. Sattvic foods that have been fried in oil or cooked too much or eaten in excess, specific foods and spices that are strongly exciting, bitter, pungent, hot and dry are examples of rajasik food.
- ❖ A rajasik food eater is usually aggressive and overflowing with energy as the rajasik food increases the speed and excitement of the human organism.

Tamsic food



- ❖ Tamsic food is considered the worst among all types of food.
- ❖ Dry, unnatural, overcooked, stale, decaying and processed food makes for a Tamasic diet. Tamaasic diet consumes a large amount of energy while being digested.
- ❖ Refined food - be it cereals, oils or hydrogenated butter, stimulants and beverages like tea, coffee and soft drinks, fast and ready-to-cook food, canned or frozen food, precooked and warmed food items like burgers, pizzas, pastries, and chocolates, incompatible food as well as intoxicants like tobacco and alcohol are tamasic examples of tamasic food.
- ❖ Tamasic diet is foundation of ignorance, doubt, pessimism and leads a person to sick and painful life.
- ❖ A tamasic person always at serious discomfort with himself and forgets to lead healthy a happy life

DELHI SULTANATE

- Delhi Sultanate rule comprised of many dynastic rule. (Slave Dynasty, Khilji's, Tughlaq, Sayyid and Lodhis).
- Sultans of Delhi generally sought to emulate the tradition of the Shah's of Persia.
- Generally food of aristocrat's include sweet sherbet, Nan i tandoori (bread filled with a sweet paste and dried fruit), roasted meat (shiwawoon), Sambusa or samosa, mutton, halvas, Sweet beverage, wine(fuqqa), and followed by the betel quid or Tambul.



Medieval Rulers

- They have appointed Chasnigir,(taster of the food) Whose works was to ensure food cooked properly and free from poison. Most of the nobles also had their own private kitchens(Matbakhs).
- Dastarkhan culture also becoming more popular in the Delhi Sultanate. (A Persian word means elaborate table cloth and a lavish meals of many dishes).
- Khichari(Indian dish which later becomes favorite of Mughals), Nahari(a meat stew with aromatic gravy).
- **Meals.** Pulao, Murg muslam, biryani, thin and round breads, meat cooked with onions, ghee, and green ginger.



Kulfi the Mughal way

- Kulfi is a contribution of Mughals.
- The delicious cold kulfi was made at court by freezing a mixture of khoa, pista nuts and zafran essence in a metal cone after sealing the open top with dough. (The only modification today is to use aluminium or plastic cones with their own caps).



Falooda

- Jahangir, unlike his father, enjoyed meat, but will be remembered for popularizing falooda (a jelly made from boiled wheat strainings mixed with fruit juices and cream).






Commoners food

- The common people eat sufficient quantity of food for the survival and to keep up their strength to fight against the changes in the weather.
- They consumed so little as it seems that they survive by the air.
- Free eating houses on the basis of different communities.
 - a. Khairapurah (hindus)
 - b. Dharmpurah (muslims)
 - c. Jogipura (jogis)
- Even Bulghur Khana and Langar khana opened for all the people.



Portuguese

- During this period the Portuguese introduced foods from the New World.
 - They brought potato, tomato, tapioca, groundnuts, corn, papaya, pineapple, guava, avocado, rajma (kidney bean), cashew, sapota (chiku), and of course capsicum and chilli in all its forms.
 - Perhaps the cauliflower and cabbage came from Europe or Latin America too, but certainly a particular form of cottage cheese did come from the Portuguese.
 - It was this that became the chhana of Bengal and Orissa — the base for many Bengali sweets (Sandesh in its modern form, and of course inventions called Rasogolla, Khirmohan, Mouchak, Pantua, Sitabhog, Chhena Puda, and so forth).
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British attitude to Indian food

- Indian food, whether the robust fare of Punjab and the North East Frontier or the delicate, light flavours of the South Indian cuisine, remained essentially the "food of the natives" who, according to the foreign rulers, ate pungent, chilli-spiked curries and rice or rotis like some uncivilised pagans.
- The British were not in India to learn. They, as well as other Europeans, were here to "civilise" the backward masses of India and their looking down on the food of India was but a natural corollary.
- The *memsahibs*, whether they were British, French or Portuguese, employed Indian *khansamas*, cooks and bearers but taught them their own cuisines rather than eat Indian meals at their innumerable parties or in their family meals.
- Most British officers and civil administrators who came to India, looked upon the native cuisines of India as unhygienic and unpalatable because of the high content of spices and herbs.

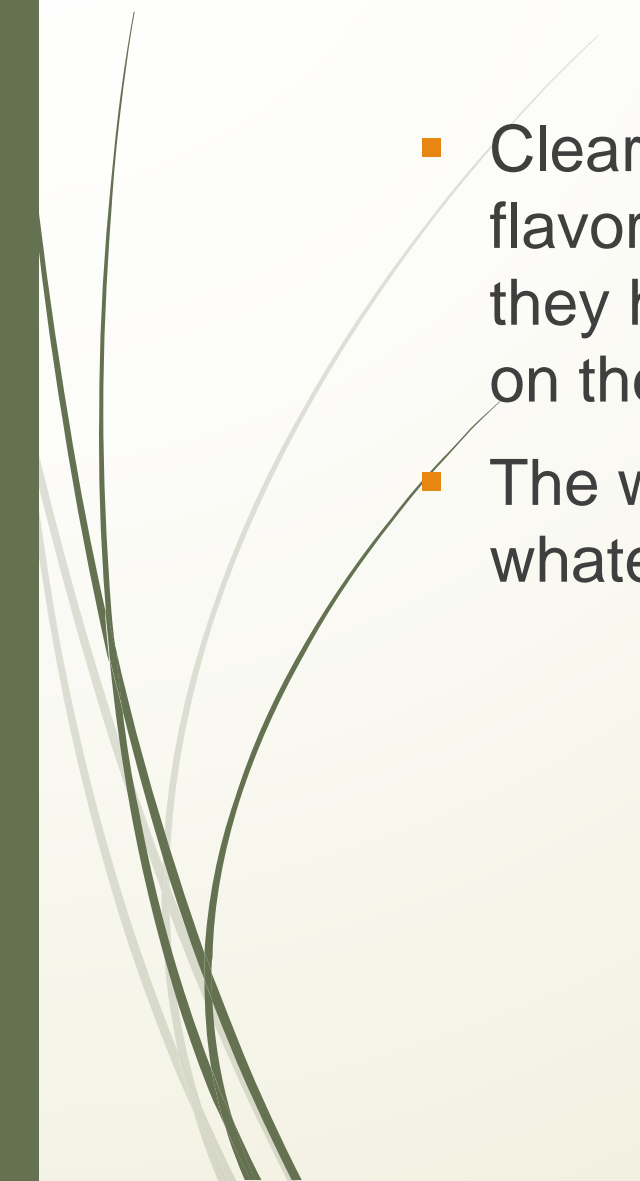


Shiqar festivals

- The only concession they made was when they attended the shikar feasts of the *maharajas* or ceremonial royal meals in the opulent, chandeliered dining halls of the *riyasatis* where food was served by turbaned waiters from gem-studded gold or silver vessels.
- Throughout the colonial period too many new, hybrid cuisines developed because the *khansamas* of the *memsahibs* innovated food which combined some of the flavours of India with those of Britain, France or Portugal.
- Thus, as a legacy of the Raj era, we have the remnants of an Anglo-Indian, Indo-French or Indo-Portuguese cuisine.
- These flourish in parts of India and in Britain or Europe where nostalgic memories of the Raj linger on.



When the British left

- Clearly the sahibs and memsahibs fell in love with the flavors of India. When they returned to the homeland, they had their cooks grind up a mix of spices to sprinkle on their staid British staples.
 - The world now knows this as "curry powder" and whatever is cooked with it is "curry."
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British contribution to Indian food

- British made little contribution to Indian food.
- Fish and chips or Yorkshire pudding pale in comparison to what we got from the Arabs, Portuguese and Moghuls, but the British did sensitise us to at least one fruit, namely the apple.



Apples

- Local varieties of apple are recorded to have occurred in Kashmir (called amri, tarehli and maharaji), and Dalhara in 1100 AD talked about a "ber as big as a fist and very sweet, grown in North Kashmir", which is likely an apple.
- But it was the colourful Britisher Frederick "Pahari" Wilson who established a flourishing apple farm in Garhwal, where they grow red and juicy Wilson apples to this day.





After independence

- Only when Independence came, did Indians realise that they were one nation and that they would have to work above all towards a homogenous culture, lifestyle and national awareness.
- The divide and rule days of the British were at last over.
- The French had vacated Pondicherry, Mahe and Karaikal and the Portuguese were soon to be forced out of Goa, Diu and Daman.



Food Revolution

- The first signs of the imminent, massive food revolution were visible when Mumbai, the most cosmopolitan city of India, welcomed hordes of Sindhi and Punjabi refugees who migrated to the city.
- They entered the building and film industries and began to assert their culture in the metropolis.
- Punjabi *dhaba* food from the North West Frontier became popular in Mumbai in the Sixties.
- Mumbaites, who had hitherto relished non-vegetarian food in the many street-corner Irani restaurants and *khanawals* serving the fish and meat dishes of the Konkan coast and Goa, pounced on the luscious *kebab* and *tandoori* cuisine which was new and exciting.

Spices

- Japanese sushi relies on the freshness of the meat
- Chinese food relies on the various sauces to impart the right flavor and taste
- Indian food relies on the spices in which it is cooked.
- Spices have always been considered to be India's prime commodity





Indian Policies and Philosophy

- The concept of coexistence is a central feature of our culture.
- It has not been confined to the geographical and political boundaries of the country.
- India has a universal outlook and it has been promoting the message of peace and harmony to the entire world.
- India has been raising a strong voice against racialism and colonialism.
- It has protested against the formation of power blocks in the world. In fact India became one of the founder members of the non-aligned movement.
- India is committed to the development of other underdeveloped nations.
- India has been discharging her responsibilities as a part of the world fraternity and has been contributing to the progress of the world.



Geographical Elements of Unity in Diversity

- ❓ India has diverse geography. At broadest level, the country can be divided into several regions viz. Himalaya, northern plains, plateau of central India and Deccan, Western & Eastern Ghats, Thar Desert etc. Each of them has different climate, temperature, vegetation, fauna, people and so on.
- ❓ Despite of this diversity, India has been defined as a distinct geographical unit since ages. A sloka in *Vishnu Purana* defines *Bharata as the land which is south of snowy mountains and north of ocean*. The country was time and again unified by different imperialist forces taking into consideration its geographical distinctness. There was a time two kings were known as Uttarapathpathi {Harsha} and Dakshinapathpathi {Pulkeshi}, thus giving a notion of only two parts of this vast country. The medieval sultans and mughals tried to consolidate their empire from north to south, geographically. British also did the same.
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Religious Elements of Unity in Diversity

- ❓ India has multitude of religions including majority Hinduism and minority Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Bahá'í Faith and so on. The religious diversity has been one of the main divisive force in the country leading to problem of communalism, yet this diversity has many a times kept the country united in difficult times. Religious unity is particularly visible when a war or a disaster happens. Time and again, India has stood united in crisis, and that is what religious unity in diversity of India is.
- ❓ This apart, we see everyday examples of religious harmony such as use of *Ganapati Pandal* as a makeshift mosque for Muslims; and Hindus participating in Eid festivities [{reference}](#); Sikhs building mosques for Muslims; Muslims kids robed as Krishna for Janmasthanmi festivals and so on. There are some religious centres in the country {Ajmer Sharif, Bodhgaya, Golden Temple in Amritsar etc.} which have acquired a character that goes beyond one religion.
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Cultural Elements of Unity in Diversity

❓ The Cultural unity in diversity of India is generally denoted with the phrase “*Ganga-Jamuni Tahjeeb*” or India’s composite culture. Despite of diversity, there are numerous cultural elements and factors that have shaped India’s composite culture. Some of them are as follows:

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Indian Music



❓ The best example of India's composite culture is our music, particularly the Hindustani Classical Music. It has ancient origins, yet emergence of a highly developed and enriched music of northern India could not have been possible without Muslim contributions and its patronage. Emergence of Khayal from Dhrupad, Tabla from Pakhawaj / Mridangam are some of the key examples. Indian Veena and Persian Tambura merged to emerge as Sitar. Similarly, Ghazals and Qawwalis have played a unifying factor between the people of Indian sub-continent.

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Daily Life



Each religion has influenced other in its customs, manners, rituals, etiquettes, dress, consumes, cooking, fairs, festivals, games, sports and so on. For example, *Nisbat, Mehendi, Haldi, Tel, Mandwa, Jalwa, Barat, Kangan* etc. are the Muslim adaptation of Hindu ceremonies. Similarly, when lower Hindu caste people converted to Islam during Sultanate and Mughal era, they kept their livelihood / vocational practices attached to the caste, thus we have Muslim castes as well including Julahas, Ansaris and so on.

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Literature

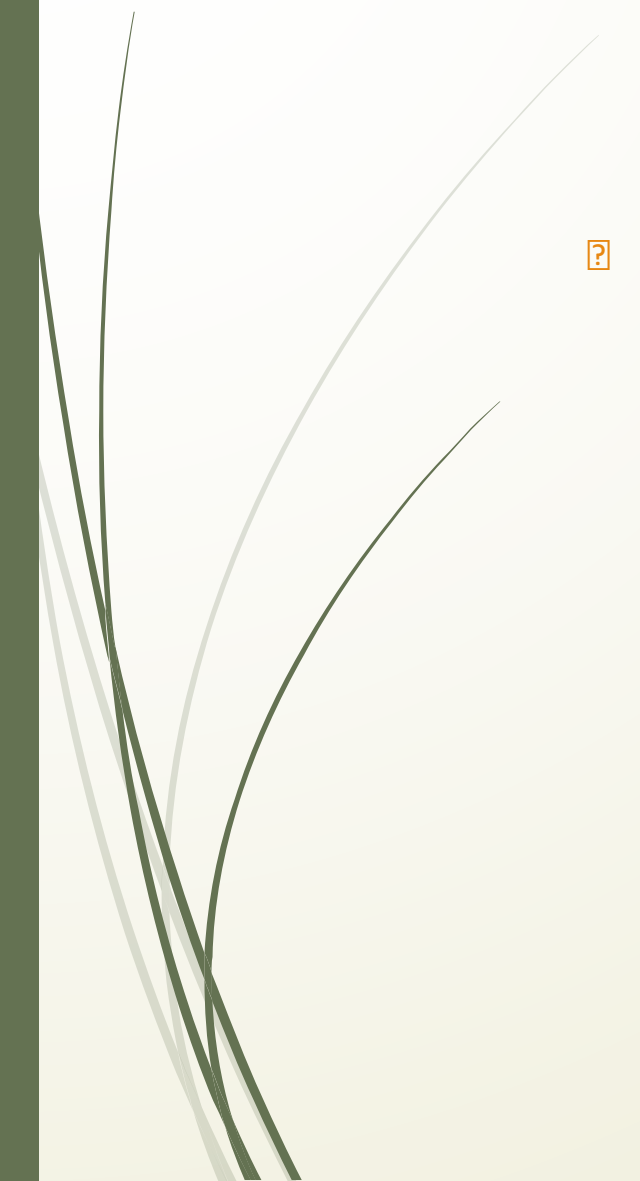


❓ Different regions of India contributed to the promotion of literature and higher learning to the composite culture of India. For example, Vedas were developed in North-West {Sapta-Sindhu region}, Yajurveda and Brahmana in Kuru-Panchal region; Rajatarangini in Kashmir; Upanishads in Magadha; Gita Govinda in Bengal, Charyapadas in Odisha, West Bengal and Assam; Mahakavyas and dramas of Kalidasa in Ujjaini; Bhavbhut's works in Vidarbha; Dasakumarcharita of Dandin in Deccan; Sangam Literature in South and so on. Similarly, Taxila, Nalanda, Varanasi, Vallabhi, Vanvasi, Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda, Kanchi, Madurai and Odantapuri are shining examples of seats of higher learning in India.

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Political Elements of Unity in Diversity

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- ❓ Though it is believed that India's continuity as a civilization was social and cultural rather than political; yet idea of bringing entire country under one central authority has been dream of great kings, sultans, emperors and rulers. This idea was put into practice by Chandragupta; Asoka; Harsha; Akbar and British rulers. Despite this, India was never a well organized political unit. Even during British India, there were 600 princely states which were internally autonomous. Then, our current form of democracy and government draws its existence from different political parties, political ideologies and so on.




Linguistic Elements of Unity in Diversity

While three fourth of India speaks Indo-Aryan Languages, Dravidian languages are spoken by one fourth of Indians. India has 122 major languages and 1599 dialects, thus making it one of the most linguistically diverse nations around the world. The languages have been a divisive as well as adhesive force in the country. English emerged as lingua franca of the country and serves as medium of communication between two people who have different mother tongue. Similarly, Hindi has also, to a great extent, served to keep the country united. Despite major issues such as demand of linguistic states, status of minority, anti-Hindi movements etc. have posed major challenges to governments from time to time.

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Institution of Pilgrimage as element of Unity in Diversity


- ❑ One of the important source of unity in India is its pilgrimage culture, reflected in network of religious shrines and sacred placed. For example, Badrinath, Kedarnath in North, Dwarka / Somnath in West, Rameshwaram in South, Puri in Eas and holy rivers across the length and breadth of the nation have fostered the sense of India as one unit.
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Accommodation within Hinduism as element of unity in diversity


❓ Hinduism is not a homogenous religion with one God, one book, one temple and so on. It is a federation of faiths with multiple deities, multiple Holy Scriptures and multiple of faiths and philosophies including atheism. Its elastic character of Hinduism that has accommodated and adjusted with various faiths, religions etc. and has allowed coexistence of several faiths in India.

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Tradition of Interdependence as element of unity in diversity

- ❓ Despite the fact that ours is a caste ridden society, India has a remarkable tradition of inter-dependence, which has kept it united for centuries. One example is the Jajmani System or functional interdependence of various castes. *Jajman* or *Yajman* is the recipient of certain services. This system initially developed in the villages between the food producing families and the families which supported them with other goods and services. The entire gamut of social order developed with Jajmani links with multiple types of payments and obligations. None of the caste was self sufficient and it depended for many things on other castes. Thus, each caste worked as a functional group and was linked with other caste via the mechanisms of Jajmani system.
- ❓ Though Jajmani system represented the inter-linking of Hindu caste yet, in practice this system crossed the boundary of religion and provided linkages between different religions also. For example, Hindu's dependence on Muslim weaver or washerman or Muslim's dependence on Hindu trader / tailor / Goldsmith etc. is a manifestation of that mechanism only, though not called so.
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Conclusions

- Indian culture, has been molded for thousands of years and it is not a monolith culture. It is liberal and has a lot of space for every one.
- From time to time we had various movements that questioned the existing hierarchies and achieved a space for themselves.
- There have been two guiding principles of our culture,
- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**, a Sanskrit phrase found in Maha Upanishad, which means "the world is one family".
- ***Vaishnava Jana to tene kahiye , Pir parayi jane re.***, a bhajan, written in the 15th century by the poet Narsinh Mehta. Call those people Vaisnava , who feel the pain of others.
- Help those who are in misery, but never let conceit enter their mind.



Summing up

- Contemporary India reverberates with the echoes of the past and gives them new shape and form each day.
 - Indian culture is a composite culture, because it has been impacted by Hinduism on the one hand and Islam and other cultures on the other.
 - From the past societies, to the present, it had accepted many ideas and influences from the different civilizations of the world, with which it came in touch and adopted many features of these as its own.
 - India is a secular country with different religions, faiths, ideas, belief systems etc.
 - We need to protect this in the interest and vibrancy of our culture.
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