

Hello learners. Welcome to the Indian Culture – part 2 session.

You learned about culture, its qualities, and its significance in the last session.

In this chapter, we'll look at how culture has changed over time.

The emphasis will be on Indian culture across the ages of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India.

Introduction to Culture

Culture is a way of life for many people. Culture includes the foods you consume, the clothes you wear, the language you speak, and the God you serve. In short, culture is the embodiment of the way we think and act.

Looking at the map of India we can see the diversity in social and environmental life.

Diversities are seen in speaking different languages, following different religious practices and rituals, food habits, dress patterns, music, dance, etc.

The distinct traits of Indian culture have been well-regarded from ancient times and are being followed now.

Culture in Ancient India

We will now have a look at the culture from Ancient India.

Let me post a question?

Do you believe that Indian culture has remained consistent throughout history?

The answer is “NO”

It has gone through numerous changes.

Any idea, how these changes have taken place?

This is because every dynasty, every invader that comes to the land and settles leaves their imprint on the culture.

Harappan Civilization

Let's start with the Harappan civilization.

Indus Valley Civilization also known as Harappan Civilization is an ancient Indian civilization that flourished more than 4000 years ago in the north-western parts of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

It derived its name from the River Indus, which is the main river of the region.

Harappan Civilization is known for urban culture in India.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Harappans who were living in rural areas.

The transition from rural to urban life took place through remarkable features of Harappan culture.

Here are some of the features of Harappan culture.

Great cities emerged.

They built double storied houses of burnt bricks with a bathroom, a kitchen and a well.

Underground drainage system connecting all houses to the street drains which were covered by stones or bricks.

Cooking was done in the courtyard.

Women were given respect and treated equally.

Harappan civilization is based on archaeological evidence alone.

Knowledge on personal hygiene.

Worshipped trees and animals.

Believed in ghosts and evil forces and used amulets as protection against the evil spirits.

Slowly, the Harappan culture started declining and there is no evidence of its deterioration.

Aryan Culture

A new culture flourished in the same known as the Aryan culture.

There were significant differences between this culture and the culture which preceded it.
Aryans settled along the banks of the Indus which is Sindhu and Saraswati now extinct rivers.

They wrote hymns in praise of the gods and goddesses they worshipped.

The Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda were the four Vedas that compiled these hymns.

The Aryans had a major influence on Indian culture in 3 major areas:

Religion: Hinduism

The Aryans carried with them a religion known as **Vedism**.

This Vedism meshed with the Harappa culture to give a history to the **Vedic period**.

This Vedic period saw the inception of what has come to be known as Hinduism, one of the largest religions in today's world.

Written language: Sanskrit

Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, the most ancient Hindu script.

Social Structure: Caste system

According to the social-historical theory, the origin of caste system finds its origin in the arrival of **Aryans** in India. The four primary castes are **Brahmin**, the priests; **Kshatriya**, warriors and nobility; **Vaisya**, farmers, traders, and artisans; and **Shudra**, tenant farmers and servants.

Some people were born outside of and below the caste system; they were called "untouchables" or Dalits—"the crushed ones."

This culture was patriarchal in nature.

Men in the family were given power and women lost their political rights.

Women cannot own property.

Child marriage was not prevented, and women's remarriage was not allowed.

Over a period, Aryan culture merged with the local culture.

Education was given to the upper caste.

Gurukula was famous where pupils stayed with their teachers at gurukula.

Women were not allowed or sent to gurukula.

Religious sacrifice was given importance.

The priesthood became a profession and a hereditary one.

Domination of priests, against sacrifices and rituals, led to the rise of **Jainism and Buddhism to protect against the prevailing Hinduism.**

Ancient India

This period of ancient India ended with the rise of the Mauryan empire.

Inscriptions and coins are important sources of information for understanding the early history of Indian culture.

Archaeology as a source of information yielded considerable data on the material cultures of the Ganga valley.

The **Gupta** era is often regarded as the high point of Ancient Indian culture called “a golden age” – few mentioned this as a period of renaissance.

It was a **period** of great achievements in art, literature, and science.

It was also a time of transition, as Indian culture progressed from its ancient form to its more modern one.

India has a stunning culture that astounds visitors from all over the world.

People have admired India's culture for thousands of years.

The culture of ancient India is incredibly diverse and rich.

Medieval Period in India

Let's now look at the Medieval period in India.

Developments in the field of religion, folk art, and language in India during the medieval times have been important milestones in the evolution of the composite culture of India.

The composite cultural characteristic of the medieval period is amply witnessed in these fields.

A new style of architecture known as the Indo- Islamic style was born out of this fusion.

The distinctive features of Indo-Islamic architecture were the dome, lofty towers or minarets, arch, and vault.

The medieval Indian culture represents the synthesis of Indian and Persian philosophy, literature, art, and architecture.

In the religious sphere, Sufism and Bhakti traditions influenced each other. They provided an opportunity for understanding the religious traditions of Hindus and Muslims at the people's level.

The emergence of Urdu as a new language is the best example of interaction and synthesis.

The medieval period represents an important era of dramatic change in the world of religion and art in South Asia.

The growing popularity of Sufism played an important role in the popular acceptability of Islam and in the course of establishing unique Islamic traditions in the subcontinent.

Islam had a great influence on Indian society.

There were two important religious movements during this period – The Sufi and the Bhakti movements.

The Sufis with their attitude of piety, tolerance, sympathy, and concept of equality had a deep impact on the Indian people.

The Bhakti movement played a similar role in the development of Hinduism.

Another important development during the medieval period was the growth in vernacular literature.

Growing regional identities helped create new literary and art forms.

The growth in regional languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Telugu was a very significant development.

The popularity of translations further widened readership and helped in the exchange of ideas.

During this period, two new religious faiths flourished in India. They were Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

The exchange of ideas also ushered in the new development in music.

The use of the Sitar and new styles of music further enriched the medieval period.

In the realm of art, one witnesses the development of new styles of painting associated with the patronage of the Mughal and the Rajput style.

There was a change in the character and stylistic representation.

The synthesis of the medieval period is best seen in the development of new architectural styles.

Many forts, palaces, temples and Mosques can be dated to this period are examples of the new styles.

The use of decorative motifs and the adaptation of the dome are examples of the architectural traditions of this period.

The Cholas conquered parts of Bengal and Indonesia. They introduced democratic institutions at the village level. In the Chola region, the Tamil language was popular.

On the political front, the thirteenth to sixteenth century saw the decline of an all-powerful state and the rise of a number of provincial and regional states.

The increase in commerce can be seen in the increase of coinage as a result of the transfer of stored silver and gold into minted money.

The cultural stream in India continued to assimilate all the newcomers and the resulting cultural interaction gave Indian culture its characteristic of being multidimensional, multilingual, multireligious and yet composite in nature.

Modern India

India is a fascinating country that has intrigued Westerners for millennia.

Spices, rich stones, and enigmatic architecture have all come from this area. It boasts a gorgeous and culturally diverse culture.

Traditional Indian practices, British heritage, and various modern influences from throughout the world combine to form modern Indian culture.

Language- Hindi and English are the two official languages. However, because they are not spoken by everyone, over 20 other languages have been given official status. There are about 1,000 dialects spoken in the area.

Religion- A large number of the population follows Hinduism. About 80 per cent of the population are Hindus. This faith is a blend of several religious ideas and traditions that is widely seen as a way of life. Islam is the world's second most popular religion, with Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, and other faiths.

Festivals- There is no definitive list of Indian festivals because the country celebrates over 50 festivals by people of various cultures and religions. Indian festivals are an important element of the country's rich cultural legacy.

Family- Family structure is changing from joint family culture to nuclear families.

Food - Indian cuisine has gained international recognition. India's cuisine is recognised for its spiciness. Spices are abundantly used in Indian cuisine, whether in North or South India.

Clothing- In India, modern clothing incorporates both western and indigenous aspects. Many women also wear a bindi (a colourful dot in the centre of the forehead), and they frequently wear jewellery and makeup. Traditional henna tattoos are still a popular kind of body art for special occasions.

Social stratification - In India, caste is one of the most essential sets of role cards and still exists.

The most important feature is Urban India and Rural India.

Urban India is the India of modern industry, national politics and foreign policy, government planning, the national media, the major universities, business, the armed forces, science and technology. Its best products are frequently as good as the best in the world, its orientation is cosmopolitan.

Rural India is the India of age-old patterns where tradition is the principal dynamic of society, where outsiders come and go but life continues, often without much change.

When urban and rural India are united, by extending education, reducing illiteracy, improving the average lifespan, introducing some basic health care, and maintaining a democratic government system, India would be a flourishing country.

Unity in diversity is one of the major characteristics of Indian culture which makes it unique.

A synthesis of various cultures came about through the ages to give shape to what is recognised as Indian culture today.

Spirituality and a value-based lifestyle is the core of Indian culture.

The culture of India is the living expression of the simplicity and profundity of the people.

Thus, the distinctive **features of Indian culture** and its uniqueness are the precious possession of all Indians

With this, we come to the end of our session. In today's session, we discussed the culture of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India.

I hope you would have got a fair understanding of Indian Culture.

Thank you and Happy Learning!