

*Indian culture*

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THE INTRODUCTION.

THE INDIAN CULTURE.

CONCLUSSION.

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THESIS STATEMENT: Though different culturally with Indians, we are no different. We can harmoniously co-exist.

Right from my childhood I have been impressed by the Indians' way of doing business. By then I was living at the outskirts of the most industrialized town in Kenya-Thika. Whenever I would go to town the big businesses owned by the Indians attracted my attention. I was also attracted by their women's way of dressing, a thing that I admire up to date. The beautiful marks at their foreface created more curiosity. My small minds could not contemplate this! Now that am a grown up, besides admirable traits, I have noted the vile ones-hectic indeed! Firstly, the Indians unlike Africans, they don't interact and where they seems, they patronize.

I had once been employed by one in his school as a History and Government and Christian Religious Education teacher. Like any other Indian way of remunerating, I was paid peanuts. I used to live a hand to mouth lifestyle. They are so discriminative, that is they don't pay you to develop but to live. At first it was just a here say but it came to be. This may sound biased, but it's the reality. I have quiet low opinion about them. This has made me tackle India in this cultural resume paper to get to know whether India can offer anything better than my primary encounters. More so I have only heard of one Indian lady being married by a Kenyan (black).The word here is to "hear" but not to see. I have as well seen

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one and only one Indian Christian. Though I have not travelled in India, nor do I have a friend or a relative in India, India is worthy my attention!

The republic of India is in southern part of continent of Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country after China. India neighbors Pakistan to the north-west, China, Bhutan and Nepal to the north, Burma to the east and Bangladesh to the

East, Sri Lanka from south-east and Maldives from south-west. (G.I. Godia, Primary Atlas, pg6).

India enjoy varied climate, tropical in the south, temperate and alpine in Himalayan north. The elevated regions receives winter snowfall. The Himalayan ranges and Thar desert highly influences her climate. She has hot summers, humid rainy season and mild winters. From June to August, is totally affected by monsoon winds. The temperatures is 18c or above([www.weatheronline.co.uk](http://www.weatheronline.co.uk)) though south varies with north. July-September it's rainy and wet. April-June hottest period. (Professor G.I. Godia, Primary atlas.)

According to U.N. data, India is 1.3 billion in population. The birth rates is high as opposed to death rates. She has over two thousands ethnic groups. (Professor Godia, primary atlas).

India is a multi-religious state as well as a multicultural one. This has led to a number of holidays that adds to public holidays. India was a British colony. She liberated herself on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 a day she has set to commemorate her independence. They call it independence day. In this day a lot of festivities characterizes the day. There is exchange of sweets. There is Gandhi Jayanti day. It is celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> October in commemoration of the most popular freedom fighters of India mainly Mahatma Gandhi. Republic day-it is celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> January of every year. It's a national holiday that honors the date on which

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the constitution of India came into effect. Mahavir Janma Kulyanak on 6<sup>th</sup> April. This is a religious holiday dedicated to Hindu god Shiva. Date decided according to the Hindu lunar calendar. In this day the unmarried girls prays for good husbands. Budha Purnima-it's Budhas birthday. It's prince Siddhartha Gautama-Gautama Buddha birthday (the founder of Buddhism). Christmas day-This is a christian holiday. It is celebrated on 25<sup>th</sup> December of every year. It is meant to commemorate the birth of their Savior and the son of God, born of virgin Mary. They call him Jesus Christ. Dussehra/Dashain or Vijayadashami-it's a Hindu festival celebrated at the end of Navaratri ( holiday that takes nine nights in honor lord Rama)every year. Diwali (Deepavali)-is a holiday celebrating the victory of the Hindu god rama against the evil lord ravana or a day to honor lord krishna's victory over the demon navakasura. Exchange of sweets climax the day. Eid-this is for Islamic community. It concludes a month long fasting. A lot of feasting is done. Every muslim house hold celebrates, parents gifts their children with clothes. Maha Shivaratri-dedicated to the Hindu god shiva. Unmarried girls visit the Tarakeswar temple to pray for good husbands. (Mr shammi, Indian business man, Nakuru).

India is reach in culture, traditions, heritage buildings, temples, forts and palace. Examples of this are old churches of Goa-exampled by Basilica of Bom Jesus. It is over four hundered years of age. Temples are like Harmandir Sahib-a golden temple in Amritsar, one of the holiest place in India. A pligrimage sites of Sikhs. Taj Mahal-this is one of the eight wonders of the world. It is in the city of Agra on the banks of the river Yamuna in uttar Pradesh state. (Father James Maina, Roman catholic Padre).

Lakes in India, add to her natural beauty. There are fresh water lakes, salt water lakes, natural lakes, oxbow lakes, man-made lakes and crater lakes of all these we have Vembanad as the largest among all. Indians use them for irrigation, domestic purpose,

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recreational activities, navigation and fishing among other socio-economic activities. (G.I Godia, primary school Atlas).

India is a home of varieties of food. The most used food stuff is Biryani-It is mixed rice dish which can include any kind of meat, eggs or vegetables. There is dosa, butter chicken, butter panear, tandoori meats, vegetables and bread, samosa, chaat, makhni among many others. Some of the said food is a must not miss stuff in festivals. (Mr shammi Indian businessman, Nakuru.)

The bigger the number of cultures represented in India the bigger the number of dialects. It's said that there is probably over two hundred dialects, however there are the most used ones. The official languages are Hindi and English. Hindi is the widely spoken. Others are Bengali Marathi, Urdu, Gujarati, Panjabi, Kashmiri, Rajajthani, Maithili and Odia Morati,Tamil. (Mr. Shammi, Indian business man, Nakuru).

No country is without customs and courtesies. The Namaste-This is greeting that has its traces in Hindus religious book-Vedas. In this joined hands are put at the chest. Due to diverse cultures and diverse religiosity the country is always in a festive season. Hundreds of festivals are celebrated annually. Indians are fond of living together. This is where the nuclear, extended and even other relatives jointly lives together. Fasting are numeral- It is an integral part of Hindu. It's meant to express gratitudes or sincerity to gods or goddesses. In India cows are holy. They are taken holy with lord Krishna being the chief harder. In India most of the marriages are arraged. The relatives match the couples. Unlike Africans, in India the bride has an upper hand in choosing the suitor. (Mr. Shammi, Indian business man, Nakuru).

The Indian traditions and scriptures contain various signs and symbols which has multiple meanings. Firstly, we have the dressing-saris for women, beautiful in my eyes, I

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admire it. pyjama or sherwani for men. In this I came to learn majority of what is done in India has a cultural meaning. It is culture by itself. “Tika” my childhood admiration is the mark on their forehead. Tikas in women forehead is a symbol to communicate to all that she is a married lady. To men, it communicates the same but usually Shammi told me men like any other men in the world rarely put it to hide their marital status for what he called an ‘obvious reason’. White clothes are worn by windows. This is either to notify well wishers that she needs help or even for a windower or any other interested man of a possible bride. The windows don’t put tikas. The unmarried ladies cannot put tikas as well. The marriage outside the Indians is highly dis allowed. This has made them preserve their culture and as well contributed to some retrogressive behaviors such as organized marriage and eating while using hands (shammi). Dances are as well part of Indian traditions. They represent a particular culture of origin. It’s a dance drama narrating a story symbolically through gestures. Food also speak of Indians. There is a high use of spices and herbs in food. The cooking styles varies from region to region. And, dishes differ from region to region. There is also Indian Martial Arts. This can be traced from the days of old. Some use weaponry whereas others don’t. Today it is used for self-defense or body fitness. Though seemingly unhygienic way of life, Indians use hands while eating. Right from the days of old, eating with hands has been a common thing. They use the right hands for eating for the left hand is considered dirty. (Mr. shammi, Indian business man, Nakuru).

In India twenty two languages are enshrined in the constitution. According [www.theclassroom.com](http://www.theclassroom.com). A number of communication styles are applied in either verbal or in a non-verbal form. In either, the old are highly respected for they are taken as custodians of knowledge and wisdom. You cannot look direct on their eyes while conversing. Looking at an elder direct on the eyes is an indication you are dis-respectful. One has to keep an arm stretch from an elder. There must be no interruptions as an elder speaks. Non-verbal

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communication has been highly acknowledged means of communication that has been forerun by silence which is taken as to say more than words. Looking at an elder as he speaks was considered rude. Right from the days of old, rock painting or rock art especially pictographs has been used variedly as a means of communication. (Mr. Shammi, Indian businessman Nakuru).

“India was a British colony up to 1947 when it gained independence. Before independence both India and Pakistan were ruled as one unit. The split between India and Pakistan was because of their difference in religion. Pakistan was predominantly muslim while India was Hindu. India achieved independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi of the Indian Congress Party, who became the first prime minister of India. At independence Indian constitution provided for federal system of government to guard its territorial and cultural diversity. New Delhi was made the capital city for government of independent India” (G.I. Godia History and Government Form Four student book, Kenya literature Bureau pg150)

“The republic of India is the seventh largest country by area. The second populous country in the world after China and the most populous democracy in the world. It is federal parliamentary democratic republic in which the president is the head of the state and the prime minister is the head of the government. India is made up of twenty nine states and six union territories. Political parties are either national parties or a state party.” (Professor Godia).The two main parties are Indian National congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).India has been narrowing gender disparities. This is by including more women in the governance where over thirty percent are women. The country is working on 50/50 representation especially in the federal government as well as the federal parliament.(Felix kiruthu, Jecinta Kapiu,Wilson kimori, The Evolving World, History and Government, Form four student book, pg 226-227).



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India educational system has four levels, that is lower primary, upper primary, High secondary and higher secondary. Under fourteen is funded by central, state, or local authority with the exception of private schools. The primary school (under fourteen) education is compulsory. (Shammi).

India, though she has made great strides in development it is not without challenges. There was formation of India peacekeeping force after entered into Sri Lanka accord. In 1998 A.B Vajpayee becomes the prime minister. He led India to declare herself as a nuclear power. In 2004 elections sees no majority over a single party. I.N.C forms a coalition called UPA. This ended in 2014 after their two terms. 1991-liberalisation of economy due to BOP and trade crises as well as devaluation of Indian rupee. 1947-India gains Independence and got in a war with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. Lastly, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. (Felix Kiruthu, Jacinta Kapiyo, Wilson Kimori, *The Evolving World, History and Government* form four student book, pg. 227.)

There are a number of challenges that faces India of which education is not among them since it is a fundamental right for children aged six to fourteen years of age and it's enshrined in their constitution article 42. The major challenge is children trafficking. As per national crime bureau a child disappears in every eight minutes. "Anti slavery activist say thousands of children are going missing from some of India's remote tribal areas as human trafficker respond to a surge in demand for domestic child labor in booming urban district..... Trafficking for sex and other purposes has always existed in India, but trafficking children for domestic slavery is a relatively new development," says HS Phoolka, a senior advocate at India's Supreme court and human rights lawyer and activist. ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015).

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It is worthy noting India like Kenya was under the British as our colonial masters. It was then my great assumptions that they dropped their Hindu for English, to my surprise, Hindu is widely spoken. In Kenya English is the official language. We sacrificed our “sweet” Kiswahili language. Though English is learnt in Indian schools, it is only taken like any other subject but not a controlling language. Majority of Kenyan sicklings go to India for medication. It was then in my mind that Indians are dedicated to life saving. Mr. Shammi eluded that, one of the reason behind children trafficking is for organs that are sold in local hospitals to save the lives of rich and mighty as well as to make money. The books that I had learnt previously about children trafficking at such a high rate made me to discredit them, I doubted till the time I met Shammi the Indian business man who is now here in Kenya for five years and admitted it to be so. What ailed my heart is when he told me children trafficking is done in the bayd to sell their organs, besides other reasons. I as well thought that India being in the middle East majority are muslims. Though to this I had some percentage of doubt. Firstly, the Calmness the country is enjoying, a thing which is not common in muslim nations. Secondly, I wondered whether India is in middle East really for I didn't knew the countries that makes middle East. Surprisingly I came to know that Hinduism is the dominant and many more religions have their space there.

Am not sure whether this is a biases or just a truth. All along I have known Indians as being non accommodative especially to the out-group. The information gotten from their employees and my personal encounter/experience this was almost counter confirmed while I was doing my research, I dared ten and all were not willing. In fact eight were not willing to share a word including my former Employer Mr. Sigh. The other two gave a “pin” information-very minute (decimal information) till the time I met Mr. Shammi. He salvaged my situation. Though shammi was so informative, friendly and learned he is just one out of eleven. This is a small percentage. The research for now did not change my biases in fact it

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was as if it confirmed. Am however not at war with them since interpersonal cross culture course came to their rescue. I learnt that no culture is the standard of all the others. It is only that they are different. Still, I was not able to separate individuals' rudeness and the dictates of the culture.

The meeting of Mr. Shammi softened my stereotypes especially when he told me the reason why majority of Indians keep a distance. He said that they do so due to wealth accumulated. They do not want to be bothered. He used a biblical text to explain this when he talked about the three sons of Lot when Ham (Africans) have to serve the other two. He told me that, that is majority Indians know-how. We are not in the same "league".

Am now sensitive whenever I will be handling Indians. I should respect them whatsoever. Their culture is different but that does not mean they are less human or super-human. I have to improvise ways to forge good relations. Mainly I have learnt and should learn more. Understanding helps. There are similarities of the people of India visa vi Kenyans. Firstly, English can be used as a media of communication. They are committed as Kenyans. They are religious as Kenyans. They have varieties of food stuff. Differences featured as well. Indians are not as accommodative as Kenyans. Secondly Indians have particular clothing like sari while in Kenya "your cloth your choice" principle rules. Planned marriage is not allowed in Kenya. In India it is the norm, with few and quiet few choosing their own suitor. Looking at an elder directly while speaking portrays respect in Kenya but in India it's abhorred.

I have learnt a lot from Indian people. The respect they have for the elderly. Africans and more so Kenyans have a no match respect for the elderly. Majority are left to languish in poverty. The old are custodians of wisdom, that is for fact, though highly ignored in Kenya. The communal oneness is quiet helpful. They give aid to each other in times of need. More so

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they boost each other in business. The planned marriage prevents one from marrying a relative I suppose.

Communication sets the basis of a culture. Verbal or non-verbal. Whenever I will be communicating with an Indian words and mostly gestures (non-verbal) must be well thought. I must be sensitive, I have to send the intended message. I must protect hurting or sending the wrong information.

My minds is now opened up. I can relate with those out of my culture. Observation before acting or talking shall form my base in cross culture communication. Cultures are diverse. They call for respect. We can co-exist. In case I will find myself in a dominant culture, it will be prudent of me change and fit them as opposed to dare change them. I might look primitive. In a situation where am not able to conform it is then prudent to remain natural. They too might learn from me. My culture is also rich and educative.

In all this I was very careful of that deep-seated repugnance for people of India (other) culture that could have appeared to form a negative believe or attitude- the cultural antipathy for it could have hindered excavation of reality. Thanks to globalization, I have not only leant about Indians but have interacted with them. I can now live in their homeland without much hustle. For sure nobody is better than the other. Ethnocentrism must not be the way. The preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of my culture was not a hindrance either. I needed to understand Indians. I have, though much more is yet. True, culture is not necessary good or bad but different.

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