

Indian Culture Profile

Indian Culture

Bilhah W. Kiura

Beulah Heights University

SS112 Intercultural Communication

2nd May 2020

Professor Mae Reggy

Indian Culture Profile

Content

1. Introduction	3-4
2. Country Profile	5-6
3. Climate of India	6
4. Population of India	7
5. Racial and Ethnic makeup	7
6. Customs, Etiquette and Courtesies in India.....	7-9
7. Popular foods in India	9-10
8. Communications Styles in India	10-11
9. Education Systems in India	12-13
10. Holidays in India	13-14
11. Festivals	14
12. Challenging my Biases and Assumptions	15-16
13. References	17
14. Sources	18

Indian Culture Profile

INDIAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

Introduction

I decided to base my cultural resume on the India culture for two reasons. Kenya is host to many Indian nationals which dates back many years back. About 30,000 Indian Nationals came to Kenya in the late 1890s. They were brought to Kenya, about a hundred years ago, by the British Government as labor to build the railway line that would link Kenya and Uganda. Although many of them died of Maralia and black fever, many settled in Kenya. The ancestors of today's Indian community started businesses after the railway was completed and they are the largest drivers of the economy today commanding between 30% to 40% of the economy. (edition:CNN.COM/2014).

I found the subject of interest because, as much as the Indian community has been in Kenya for over a hundred years, they still find it difficult to integrate with the Kenyan community. Although there are no conflicts between the Indians and the other communities, integration has been minimal. It would be interesting to study the community and know what makes them keep to themselves.

The Indian Community who number about 100,000 according to census of 2019 were officially recognized as the 44th tribe in Kenya (Kenya Gazette Notice July 22, 2017). This opened many privileges for them, one being able to vote and even participate in elections.

Kenya Government and Indian Government enjoy a healthy bilateral relationships. Trade and Tourism are the main areas of focus. (www.mea.gov.in Portal). Many Kenyan citizens over the years have been going to India in search of Education and cheaper medical facilities. This, therefore, led me to want to learn more about the continent of India and the culture of its people.

Indian Culture Profile

In my presentation, I will discuss the profile of India in the area of climate, people of India and their culture, holidays, natural features, education systems and the structure of Government in India.

Indian Culture Profile

Country Profile

India is located in the Continent of Asia and occupies the greater part of Asia. The country occupies 31,166,391 (SQ. KM). The official name for the country is “Bharat” (Hindi), Republic of India “English”. The capital city of India is New Delhi. This city was built in the 20th Century to serve as an Indian Administrative centre. The country represents a highly diverse population which consists of numerous ethnic groups and many languages. India is the most populous country, after China, with roughly 1/6 of world’s total population.

India Borders Pakistan in the West, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bagladesh in the East, and Sri Lanka in the South. She shares land boundaries with Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan an Afghanistan.

The Government of India

The Government of India is a Multi-Party constitutional Federal Republic. There are two legislative houses which are:

- i) The Council of States (Upper House) with 245 members
- ii) House of People (Lower House) with 545 members.

The Executive is headed by the President who is elected for 5 years which term is renewable and his roll is symbolic. The Vice President is chosen by the President but appointed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government and he is appointed by the President but must command the majority in both houses.

Indian government is divided into states which are headed by a Governor, who is also regarded as a member of Legislative Assembly. Each state has a Legislative Assembly popularly

Indian Culture Profile

lected to serve for five years. Each state is further divided into units known as tehsil, or tarugs or sub-divisions for administrative purposes.

The official language in India is Hindi which is spoken by the majority of people and English which is an associate official language mostly spoken in urban areas.

The Monetary Unit in India is Rupee. The Reserve Bank has the sole authority to issue bank notes and coins in India. The bank notes bear the image of Mohandas Gandhi (1869) – 1948) the leader of the 20th Century movement against British Colonization. GDP per Capita is 2,0099.98 USD (2018 World Bank). (www.britannica.com), (Asian Political Almanac).

Climate of India

Climate of India is primarily controlled and affected by the monsoon winds described as the most prominent of the worlds monsoon systems. The monsoon blows from North East during cooler months and blow to the South West during warmest months of the year. Rains are experienced during the months of June and July. Westerly winds are experienced throughout the year along the Equator. The high sun reaches Equator in late March and clouds and rain are experienced at this time. India experiences the following seasons:

Winter	-	December to March
Summer	-	Pre-monsoon season – March to June
Autumnal Equinox	-	Rainy Season – June to September
Fall	-	Post monsoon ` - October to December

Indian Culture Profile

Population of India

India is one of the highly populated countries in the world. Total Indian population is 1,387,037,000 people (2019). Half of the population of India is under 30 years of age and less than a quarter are 40 years and above. Life expectancy is: Female 70.1 (2017) and Male 67.6 (2017). Urban population is 34% (2018) while rural population is 60% (2018).

Racial and Ethnic make up of India

India is a diverse multi-ethnic country. Racial and ethnic make up of India is: Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Urdu, Kannada, Odia, Malayalam, Punjabi, Assamese, Maithili and others. India has 22 languages with many dialects. Hindi is the Official Language and it is spoken in many urban areas while English is an associate official language.

There are many religious groups in India who display different cultures with a religious bias. The religious groups are Hindus, Christians, Islam, Sikh, Buddhism, Jainism and others.. Islam remains the largest ethnic group in India.

Customs, Etiquette, and Courtesies in India

The family

Family in India is the most important social unit with a strong preference for extended family. Indians live together and it is common for two or three families to live together sharing finances and using a common kitchen. In this family set up, there is social precedence influenced by gender and age. The senior male, either grandfather, father or uncle becomes the head of the family. His wife regulates tasks assigned to female members of the family. Generally males enjoy higher status than women.

Indian Culture Profile

Marriage

Almost all marriages are arranged by the family elders on the basis of caste, economic status, education and astrology. Dowry is paid to the boy's parents and once the couple is married, the woman moves to the man's house. Divorce in Indian marriages is very rare. It is important to note that, in the modern world, love marriages are increasingly being witnessed.

Dinning Etiquette

Indians normally eat with their hands and rarely use cutlery. They are, therefore, expected to wash their hands and dry them thoroughly before meals.. The right hand is used for eating since the left hand is considered unclean and offensive. The left hand can only be used for drinking water or passing dishes. The food is normally served by the host – there is no self service.

In rural homes, food is put in one container and the family share. The convention of eating in India reflects the countries varied traditions and cultures with a few dissimilarities.

Greetings

The form of greeting in India is “Namaste” which literally means “I bow to the divine in you”. “Namaste” is used to convey greeting, to indicate departure and also as a way of seeking forgiveness. The greetings are done by bringing the hands together with palms touching in front of the chest in a graceful fashion.

Indian Culture Profile

Clothing/Dressing

Indian men wear broad cloth known as “dhoti” which is a loose skirt loin cloth or “Lungi” which is tight wraparound. The body remains bare above the waist. However, men may wear a shawl when it is cold or a turban when the weather is hot. Women wear sari, how but wrapping varies from one region to another. In special occasions, they wear pajama like trousers and a long tailed shirt. Ones status is portrayed by the way a person is dressed.

With education and modernization, tailored clothes such as trousers and jackets are increasingly being worn.

Popular Foods in India

India offers the most popular cuisine in the world. In an ordinary Indian family home, women spend a lot of time preparing food normally very nutritious and well spiced. Some of the common Indian dishes are:

- i) Chapati which is very popular and which is served with different vegetables and meats.
- ii) Samosas which is made of dough stuffed with savory filling sealed and deep fried to a crisp golden color.
- iii) Chaat is one of the favorite Indian dishes and includes a variety of savory eats and refreshments.
- iv) Daal Makhim is a popular dish with Punjab and people from the North India. It is made with black lentils and kidney beans. The dish is eaten with rotis and hot rise.
- v) Butter Chicken/Butter Paneer. This is the most popular dish in India. Each household in India has his own recipe for making the Butter Chicken.

Indian Culture Profile

- vi) Biryani which is a mixed dish which may include any kind of meat, egg or vegetable.

The list is not exhaustive since India boasts of wide variety of dishes.

(www.britannica.com)

Communication Styles in India

Verbal Communication

As stated earlier, India boasts of many languages and different dialects. Verbal communication therefore defines each groups culture and becomes an expression of identity, an avenue of putting forward ones imaginative expressions and emotions.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is commonly used in India through the use of symbols, gestures or facial expressions. In some Indian cultures, for example American Indians, silence is golden and often silence says more than words, especially where status is concerned. Information is also passed through sign language, art and dancing/music.

This form of communication was very popular in olden days where they would form intricate sign language systems to allow them communicate with people from other tribes. They would use rock painting with images (Pictographs) and carvings (Petroglyphs) to commemorate events depicting ceremonial practices and recorded maps of hunting events. Markers were also used to show who had passed a certain place and which direction they are headed.

Indian Culture Profile

Electronic Communication

Just like any developed country, India uses the electronic mode of communication as outlined below:

- i) Email Communication which transmits messages instantly electronically all over the world and operates day and night.
- ii) Fax which sends recorded messages in form of a letter, statement or receipt as the writer intended.
- iii) Internet services which enables one to download information from the internet any time of the day.

Other forms of communication

- i) Courier Services which are privately owned firms used to render services for sending letters and parcels by charging a commission.
- ii) Mass Media communicates through Radio, Television and Newspapers. The reporters source information and provide the latest information in form of news and advertisements.
- iii) Transport system in India also plays a big part in moving goods and information from one place to another. Railway, road and inland water transport is extensively used.

Indian Culture Profile

Education Systems in India

Education in India is universal and compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 – 14. The Government has made education a fundamental right of every Indian citizen. The school system in India has 4 levels, that is:

Age 6 – 10	Upper Primary	(Five standards)
Age 11-12	High	(Two standards)
Age 13-15	Higher	(Three standards)
Age 17-18	Secondary	(Two Standards)

Twenty Eight states implement the 4 level education systems.

The bodies that manage the education systems are:

- i) Policies on school education and curriculum are done at the National Level.
- ii) Monitoring and evaluation of education policies and programmes are done by The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) set up in 1935.
- iii) National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) which plays a key role in developing policies and programmes and preparing the National Curriculum framework.

There are three main streams in Education:

Indian Culture Profile

- i) The Central Board of Secondary Education who conduct their own examinations.
- ii) The Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) who started as a replacement for Certificate of Cambridge School Certificate. They conduct their own examinations.
- iii) University of Cambridge local examination syndicate who also conduct their own examinations.

Public schools are managed by the Government of India but there are a few exclusive expensive schools privately managed but offering curriculum that lead to the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education. A few private schools break away from the normal education system with a view to promoting role learning and implementing innovative systems like Montessori method.

Holidays and Festivals in India

Holidays

There are two main National Holidays in India:

- i) Independent Day which is a National Holiday that is celebrated on 15th August. The celebrations mark the end of British rule which ended in 1947 and the division of the sub-continent into two countries, that is, India and Pakistan.
- ii) Republic Day is also a National Holiday celebrated on the 26th January. It commemorates the adoption of the constitution in 1950 and the declaration of independence in 1930.

Indian Culture Profile

The two holidays are celebrated throughout India with the main celebration being held in Delhi, the Capital City of India. The celebrations are normally elaborate and they include, singing of the National Anthem, hoisting of the National flag, Presidential Speech, parades, gun salute and presenting of awards for outstanding performance. The two holidays are celebrated throughout the Country.

Festivals

Festivals in India are celebrated within religious groups. Some of the festivals are:

- i) Diwali – This is a five day Hindu festival held in late October or early November. It marks Lord Rama’s victory over demon ravan. The festival is celebrated by decorating homes and streets with lights, candles and small clay lamps. New clothes are worn and gifts exchanged.
- ii) Holi – Holi is a Hindu festival that lasts two days. This festival takes place during the full moon. The festival celebrates the triumph and the abundant spring harvest. The celebrations include partying, dancing, sprinkling of water and colored powder to each other.
- iii) Pushkar Camel Fair. The festival is held during the full moon which comes in November. It is an annual congregation of camels held in Rajasthan desert town of Pushkar. The event attracts about 300,00 people who come to buy and sell camels, hop at bazaars and handicraft stalls, enjoy food and have fun.
- v) Christmas Holiday – Celebrated on 25th December to mark and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

There are numerous festivals in India all of which are aligned to religious groups.

Indian Culture Profile

Challenging my Biases and Assumptions

The Indian community as indicated in my introduction has been in my country for many years. It has been my belief that they are a people who do not like mixing with others. My assumption was that, since Indians in Kenya are in the upper scale of economy, they do not like mixing with the rest of the communities because of their status. After my research, I realized that the nature of their culture prevents them from interacting with other people. Indians are an in group and they are governed by their cultural customs. When we consider the cultural behavior towards the caste system, a system that dominates aspects of social organization, I realized that it is the nature of their culture that hinders them from interacting freely with other cultures.

The Indian family unit, which dictates that many families live together, also limits their interruption with outside their circles. My study of intercultural Communication has helped me to appreciate other cultures and try understanding them.

Indian community has over the years preserved their cultures and this has helped them preserve their traditions. This is an area where Kenyans can identify with. Most communities in Kenya observe their cultures and traditions and this helps communities live together in harmony and respecting one another considering age.

In a home set up, the Indian family stay together with their extended families. The eldest male takes charge of the family while his wife oversees the ladies in the house. The respect they accord each other is remarkable. This is something I admire and would wish it was the same in my country.

Indian Culture Profile

I had this misconception that all Indians are wealthy but after my research, I learnt that there are Indians living in very poor conditions just like we have such people in Kenya.

India boast of many cultural groups with different languages and many dialects. This is an area Kenya identifies with since Kenya has forty two tribes each with its own languages and many dialects.

I now have a completely different view of the Indian community and whenever I can, I will reach out to them.

Indian Culture Profile

References

Asian Political Almanac By Chris Cook

www.britannica.com

CNN.COM/2014 (Edition)

www.mea.gov.in (Portal)

**Madhu Ranjan Kumar,
Graduate School of Management
South Cross University**

Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5901, USA

Indian Culture Profile

SOURCES

CHRIS COOK

Asian Political Almanac

www.britannica.com

CNN.COM/2014 (Edition)

WWW.MEA.GOVER

MADHU RANJAN KUMAR, DBA STUDENT, SOUTH CROSS UNIVERSITY,
AUSTRALIA (Research Paper)

Indian culture