

Features of Indian Culture & Society

1. The Merging of Tradition with Modernism

Globalization might have brought with it a surge of modern values and practices, but traditionalism is still prevalent and preserved in India. The traditions of Indian society have also made its way to the outside world through the same gates of globalization.

Few examples:-

- **Dance and music:-** Indian dance/music forms are equally popular as its western counterparts. Indo-western fusion has been a popular theme in performing arts.
- Gyms might have become an important part of the Indian lifestyle, but yoga has also attained celebrity status.
- Nuclear families have become common, but children still live with and take care of parents in their old age.
- International cuisines and food habits are equally popular as local ones.

2. The Indian Society is Syncretic and Dynamic

- As mentioned earlier, our society promotes accommodation as well as assimilation.
- Over the years, multiple tribes have lost their core indigenous culture due to assimilation into the major population of Indian society. Such contacts with different cultures also gave birth to newer practices. The society is dynamic as it is changing everyday.

Assimilation examples

- The number of PVTG (particularly vulnerable tribal groups) is increasing.
- Many ethnic tribes like the Naga are struggling to protect their culture from the outside world.

Syncretism examples

- Urdu comes from both Arabic and Hindavi

The Rashtrapati Bhawan is an architectural splendor created from the fusion of European, Rajput and Mughal design.

The Sufi movement and the Bhakti movement were complementary to each other.

3. The Underlying theme of Unity is Diversity.

- Indian society has challenged the skepticism of many political thinkers post-independence that were doubtful regarding India's amalgamation as one nation amidst vast differences and big numbers of ethnic groups, languages, culture and diversity.
- The core values in the constitution, the reorganization by the state on the basis of language as well as the efforts of the government to protect the interest of minorities has helped in keeping up this unity.
- **Example** – Inter-state migration, Mutual celebration of religious festivals despite religious difference, Cosmopolitan culture in metros.

4. Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a family system within which the supreme decision-making power rests with the male head/members of the family.

Women are treated as second-class citizens in a patriarchal society. This system is degrading to women; it hinders the social and emotional development of the fairer sex of the society.

Gender discrimination is a universal deterrent for women.

5. The Society is Largely Agrarian and Rural

- For more than half of the population of India, agriculture remains the sole source of livelihood. An estimated 70% of our population lives in rural territories.

- Agrarian festivals celebrate the harvest of the crops and are celebrated in the form of Holi, Lohri, Pongal, Onam, Sankrant, etc.
- Many rural art forms like Madhubani (Bihar), fabric weaves like Khadi, and handicrafts of bamboo are just as popular in the urban areas.

6. Class and Caste Divide

- The modern caste system is the result of the age-old varna system.
- Economic reforms have led to flourishing urban areas. Here people are categorized based on class (such as income) rather than their social identity.
- The emerging class system though closely resembles the caste hierarchy. It has also provided downtrodden sections an opportunity for upward social mobility.
- Co-existence through inter-caste marriages and endogamy are examples of this. The divide is evident in the economic structures (poverty, education, income, asset ownership, trades and professions etc.)
- It holds collective values above individual achievements.

7. There is Tolerance and Mutual Respect

- The Indian society has survived in the face of diversity, thanks to its accommodative values of tolerance and mutual respect that have existed from the early times.
- The multitude of invaders who made India their home led to the mixing and co-existence of many different cultures.
- In ancient period, Indus valley civilization was a secular society and traded peacefully with societies like Mesopotamia, importing their culture too.
- Buddhism and Jainism promoted these values through ancient texts. “sarva-dharma-sam-bhava” represents such secular values.
- The co-existence of various philosophies including atheistic, religious and materialistic, symbolizes the society that must have existed in those times.
- During the medieval period, the repeated invasions and trade led to fusion of multiple cultures.

The mixing of Nagara and Dravid styles into Vesara style, Arabic and Hindavi into Urdu, Bhakti and Sufi movements (Teachings of Kabir, Guru Nanak, Khwaja Chisthi etc.), Din-i-Ilahi of Akbar are good examples of mutual respect.