"India is a garden of all kind of flowers, and they know how to live with each other." Afroz Taj

Overview

India is one of the most diverse lands found anywhere in the world with 29 states, each with their own unique languages, traditions, and religions. In this lesson, students will familiarize themselves with some basic facts about India that highlight its diversity. Students will then view excerpts from (or the entirety of) *Remarkable Journey* and utilize the film's information as a jumping off point to learn about various aspects of Indian culture (food, music, film, clothing, dance, and religion.) Yet, despite such diversity, Asian Indian immigrants to North Carolina, fellow strangers in a strange land, often rely on their shared roots to build new and unified communities. Students will discuss this concept then use their discoveries to create a mural that exemplifies the theme: "India: Unity in Diversity."

**Teachers are encouraged to modify the activities and sections throughout this plan, and each section (shaded in gray) is written so that it can be done alone or in conjunction with any and/or all of the other sections.

Materials

- *Remarkable Journey* documentary, available for free K-12 use at https://vimeo.com/237623028; password: **remarkable**
- Accompanying PowerPoint (Slides 13-21), available at http://k12database.unc.edu/files/2017/11/RemarkableJourneyPPT.pdf
    - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
    - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu with the PPT title in the email subject line.
- *Remarkable Journey* full documentary Discussion Guide (optional); available at the end of this Teaching Guide or by clicking here.
- Corresponding worksheets on Religion, Mehendi, Music, and Food
- Exploring India's Diversity, worksheet attached
- Readings about India's culture, attached (Food; Religion; Language; Dance; Film; Music; and Clothing/Fashion)
- "Indian identity is forged in diversity. Every one of us is in a minority," article attached
    - This article is most appropriate for high school students.
- Mural art supplies, such as butcher paper, chart or poster paper, art supplies (markers, paint, glue, etc.)
- Optional: "India Needs The Right System To Protect Its 'Unity In Diversity'" op-ed, attached
    - This article is most appropriate for high school students.

Procedure

Warm Up: Unity in Diversity

1. As a warm up, project slide 13 of the accompanying PPT and ask students silently think about the quote and jot down thoughts regarding what they think it means: "[The] key to India's success is its diversity. Our

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diversity is the core that makes us so unique." - Indian President Ram Nath Kovind (2017). After students have had a few minutes to consider the question, discuss:

- What message is the President conveying?
- What is diversity? What kind of diversity do you think President Kovind is talking about? (Encourage students to consider diversity in terms of religious, political, cultural, etc.)
- How can diversity be the key to a country's success?
- Why do you think India's diversity makes it so unique?

Basic Overview/Review of India

2. Ask students to call out any facts they already know about India then inform them that you want to share some background information with them about India, since they are going to be viewing a documentary (or clips from a documentary) called *Remarkable Journey*, which is about Asian Indian immigrants. Project slide 14 of the PPT, which displays a map of India. Have students review the map for a few minutes and then pose the following questions:

- What is the capital of India? *New Delhi*
- How many states does India have? *29 states and 7 union territories. The Central &state governments share power, similar to the United States*
- According to this map, which area of India has the most states or union territories? *North East India*
- What can you learn, if anything, about India's history or culture from looking at this map? (*Teachers may want to note that the country of Bangladesh is sandwiched between various Indian states.*)

3. Move to slide 15 of the PowerPoint, which displays a map of India's location in Asia and India's size relative to the United States. Give students a minute to review the maps and then discuss

- Is India the largest country by area in Asia? Which countries are larger? *No, Russia is the largest. India is the 3rd largest in Asia and the 7th largest in the world.*
- In terms of area, how much larger is the United States than India? *The US is 3x larger.*
- Judging by population, which do you think is larger, the United States or India? *As of October 2017, India is the second largest country by population with 1.2 billion people. The US is the third largest country with 326 million+. For the latest population statistics, visit https://www.census.gov/popclock/*
- Looking at the map, how might India's location in Asia impacted its history? *Possible answers include: it's location between China, the Middle East, & Europe made an important trading crossroads; it's location in the India Ocean makes it an important place for trade from Africa & Europe.*

4. Move to slide 16, which shows a map of India's geography and a map of its population density. Discuss:

- What physical features (rivers, mountains, plains, etc.) can you identify?
- In your own words, describe the geography of India.
- What major rivers in India can you identify? *Ganges, Narmada, Indus, Godavari, Krishna*
- What mountain range borders India? *The Himalayas.*
- Using information obtained from the map, what do you think Eastern & Western Ghats refers to? *Ghats refer to two converging mountain ranges in south-eastern India, running along the eastern and western seaboards of the country. (Source:* Wikipedia*)*

- What can you tell about India's climate from the geographical map? *Possible answers include: Probably tropical because much of India is below the Tropic of Cancer; areas that fall in the Himalayas could be very cold due to elevation; the area in the Thar Desert could be very arid. For more on climate, go to:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/88/India_climatic_zone_map_en.svg
- What state has the highest population density in India? *Bihar (1102 people per Sq.Km.)*
- What state has the lowest population density? Why might this be the case? *Arunachal Pradesh (17 people per Sq.Km). It's located in the Himalayas.*
- Compare the two maps. What geographic area is the most densely populated? The least? *Ganges Plain is the most densely populated. The Himalayas and the Thar Desert are the least.*

5. After viewing all of the maps, ask students:
   - In what ways do you think all of these factors contribute to India's diversity? How might the size, location, and diverse geography of India impact its diverse culture?

6. Move to slide 17, which depicts the Indian flag. Ask students to brainstorm what the colors and symbols mean. After a minute, ask students to share their responses and then show them slide 18, which explains what the colors and symbols mean.

7. OPTIONAL: Depending on students' prior knowledge, teachers may want to provide some additional basic facts about India, such as those provided on slide 19.

Exploring the Diversity of Indian Culture

8. At this point, teachers can have students watch several clips from *Remarkable Journey* (the most relevant clips regarding the theme of diversity are noted below) or teachers can have students watch the entire film and use the attached viewing guide for start and stop points for discussion. If choosing to view the entire film at once, it is recommended that teachers also choose from the provided discussion questions, based on their own classroom goals, and create a notes sheet for students to fill out while viewing.

   - *Creating Community in North Carolina Despite Great Diversity in India | 18:37 – 20:40*
     - Although Indians, as the narrator states, "came from the world's largest and most diverse democracy – a land of 29 states, each with their own unique languages, traditions, and religions," what leads them to form a strong knit community of support and trust in North Carolina? What are the various aspects of the diverse Indian culture that binds this people together? How do the humorous anecdotes that Parul Shah and Garry Gobind Bhojwani share illustrate this?
     - Moni Sawhney notes, "The fathers of the Indian freedom movement, Gandhi, and Nehru, and Patel…the theme was that 'we're all Indians.' I think without our knowing, we began to come closer to the dreams of the founding fathers of India. We did become 'Indians.'" Why do you think this is the case? (Have students consider the size of the United States and how we still identify with each other as "American" despite great differences and connect this to how Indians also have aspects of shared culture and customs despite great diversity.)

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Remarkable Journey: Founding the Asian Indian Community in North Carolina
A Documentary & Education Film Project by Video Dialog, Inc. | Curricular materials by Carolina K-12 at UNC-Chapel Hill

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Additional clips for viewing:

**Teachers with limited time, whose classrooms have access to laptops and earbuds, may also choose to have students view certain clips independently (i.e., the clips that directly address their assigned topic in the culminating activity described below.) See the attached Discussion Guide (also available here) for detailed discussion question options for each segment.

- *The Four Major Faiths of India | 20:41 – 24:19*
    - *See the worksheet on page ___ for use with this clip.*
- *Other Religions Welcomed in India | 24:20 – 25:19*
- *Indians Maintain Their Religious Practices & Build Faith Communities in North Carolina |*
- *25:20 – 29:50*
- *Festivals | 29:51 – 30:57*
- *Spiritual & Healing Practices - Yoga, Chanting, Meditation, & Ayurveda | 30:58 – 35:10*
- *Art | 35:11 – 37:25*
    - See the worksheet on page 25 for use with this clip.
    - Allow students to further explore Indian art by discussing mehendi and its purpose in marriage/festival adornments; the worksheet allows students to then do their own design.
    - Teachers with access to supplies such as rice, colored sand, flower petals, etc. might also consider having students create their own **Rangoli.** (Teachers can allow students to freely design, or assign a theme, such as "Unity in Diversity.")
- *Music and Dance | 37:27-41:14*
    - See the worksheet on page 26 for use with this clip.
    - Teachers can discuss music/dance as a way of bringing together a community, both in India as well as how these concepts translate into life in North Carolina. Teachers should share (or have students research) information on traditional Indian instruments (sitar, tabla, etc.) along with instruments that are familiar to Western music (violin.) In each box, students can note a few facts and sketch the instrument.
    - Ideally, while working on this sheet, the teacher will play samples of the musical instruments.
    - For an additional source on Indian culture and information on all of the instruments featured on the worksheet go to https://www.milapfest.com/instruments-india/

- *Food | 41:15 – 43:06*
    - See the worksheet on page 27 for use with this clip.
    - Focus on food as a way of maintaining memories and have students utilize the sheet to illustrate their food memory with a written explanation.

- *"Culture from Both Sides" – Indian AND American | 51:22 – 56:27*

OPTIONAL: Exploring India's Diversity Student Teaching Activity

9. After viewing the clips and discussing as a class, tell students that they will be focusing a little bit more on one particular aspect of India's rich and diverse culture in a group activity. (Teachers who do not have class time to devote to this group study can simply provide a brief overview in lecture format.) Divide students

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into 7 groups and provide each student with the attached "Exploring India's Diversity" handout and each group with one of the attached handouts dealing with a different aspect of India's culture:

- Food
- Religion
- Language
- Dance
- Film
- Music
- Clothing/Fashion

10. Provide groups time to read the handout and work together to complete the questions and deliberate the five most important/interesting facts. After the allotted time, each group should report out to the remainder of class, teaching everyone else about their assigned topic. All students should fill in the appropriate portion of the chart on the "Exploring India's Diversity" worksheet. As students share, pose questions to address any aspects of each topic overlooked or needing clarification.

11. Once all groups have presented, discuss:
- India's culture is one of the oldest in the world and it's impossible to learn about every aspect of it in one class. What's one aspect of India's culture you would like to know more about and why? Is there anything you are confused about and/or have additional questions about?
- What did you find most interesting about India's culture? How would you describe India overall and why?
- After learning about India's culture, what do you think it would be like to travel there?
- In what ways are the US and India similar? In what ways are they different? Given this, what do you imagine would be most of an adjustment for Indian immigrants to North Carolina?
- Given the great diversity of India, in what ways do shared cultural aspects unify Indians?

India: Unity in Diversity

12. Project the quote by Afroz Taj on slide 20 of the accompanying PPT for students to discuss: "India is a garden of all kind of flowers, and they know how to live with each other." Ask students to compare this message to the quote by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind the lesson opened with: "[The] key to India's success is its diversity. Our diversity is the core that makes us so unique." To ensure students understand this concept, teachers can refer to the attached article "Indian identity is forged in diversity. Every one of us is in a minority," by former UN undersecretary general Shashi Tharoor. Depending on the competency level of students, students can either be provided the article as a handout to read and discuss individually or in partners, or teachers can summarize the concepts discussed for students and then discuss using questions such as:
- What was unique about Prime Minister Deve Gowda's Independence Day address? What message was he sending in his choice of language? Could you imagine an US president doing the same? Why or why not?
- What is pluralism and how was the President affirming this concept with his choice?

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- What does the author mean when she writes, "the simple fact is that we are all minorities in India?" How might this idea make it easier for Indians to find commonalities and connections, and feel united as Indians, despite people's many cultural differences?
- What does the idea "nationalism of India has always been the nationalism of an idea" mean? How is the nationalism of the United States similar?
- What does the author ultimatly believe unites Indians, despite great diversity?
- Can you think of any motto of the United States' that connects to this concept?
    - Allow students to weigh in and then project slide 21 which contains the phrase *E Pluribus Unum.* See if any student can translate its meaning (Out of Many, One),and discuss what this means. Allow students to debate whether or not they think the US has realized this motto or not.
- How is the US motto similar to the idea of "Unity in Diversity?"

The Diversity and Unity of India Mural

13. As a culminating activity, instruct each group that to synthesize their exploration of the diversity of India, as well as the shared cultural aspects that unify Indians, each of their groups will work together to plan, design, and create a mural that visually represents their topic. Go over the general instructions provided in Step V on the attached worksheet, adding in any specific steps for completion needed for your classroom's competency level. A few considerations:
    - Teachers can have students design for the same topic they read about, or can mix it up and have groups now focus on a different topic that they learned about from their classmates.
    - Ideally teachers will have art supplies on hand that students can preview (everything from butcher paper and paint to magazines, tissue paper, sequins, yarn/string, and any other kinds of found items that can be collaged together for a creative mural.) Teachers may want to chat with the school's art teacher about ideas and/or a potential collaboration.
    - Teachers will need to determine how much class time to provide for completing the mural; projects like this can be simple or in depth.
    - If time permits, teachers may want to project various examples of Indian art, or provide time for students to browse examples on the Internet. This can help guide students in terms of color and design options.
    - Let students know that upon completion, all groups' artwork will be combined into one beautiful wall mural with the title "India: Unity in Diversity." If time permits, teachers may want to work with the class to combine their various pieces of the mural and add additional art work to connect all of the components once it is hung.

14. **Optional High School Activity:** Distribute the attached op-ed, "India Needs the Right System to Protect Its 'Unity In Diversity," and ask students read the article individually in pairs and then discuss the attached questions.

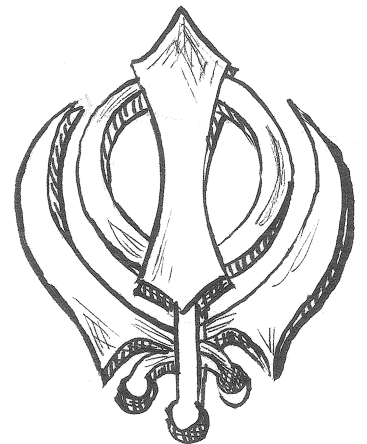# India: Birthplace to Four of the World's Major Religions
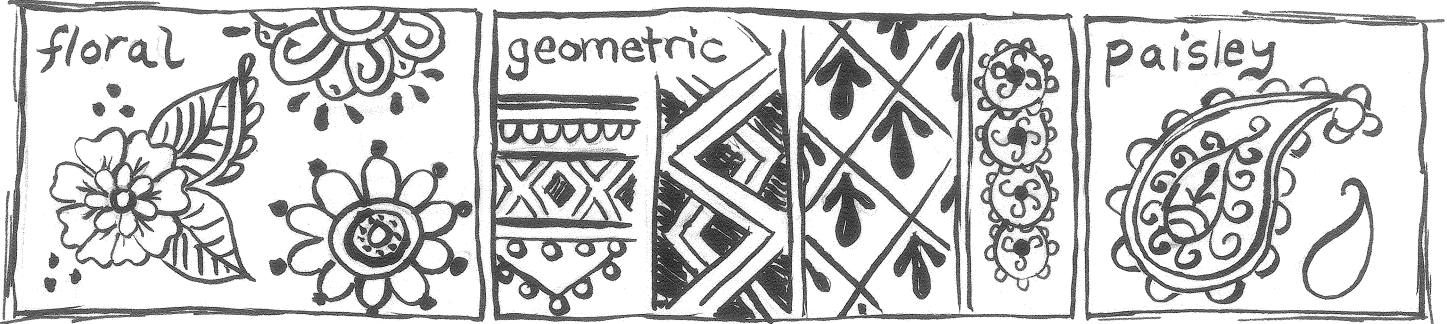
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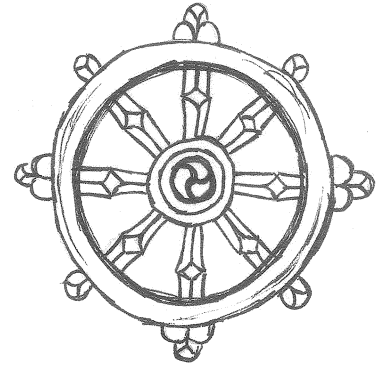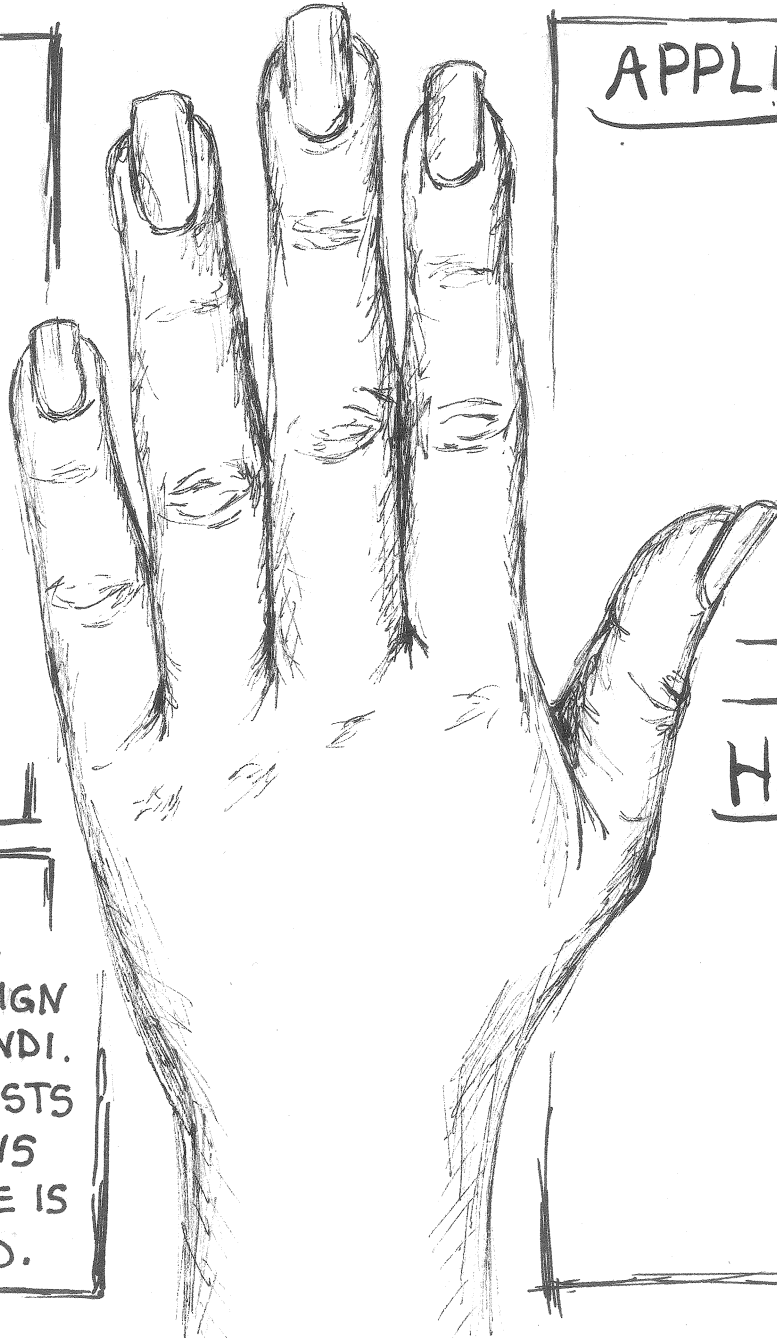
Hinduism
Jainism

Buddhism
Sikhism

MEHNDI
One of the oldest forms of body art

floral

geometric
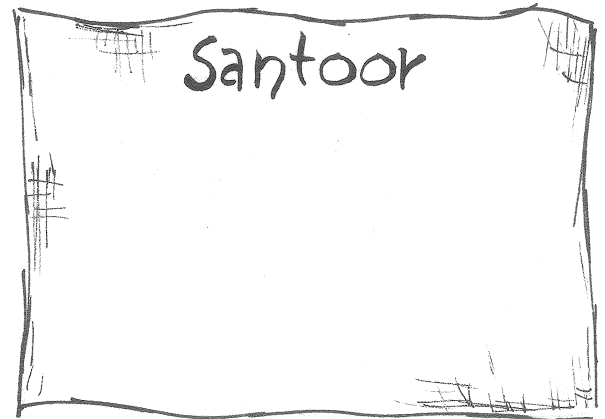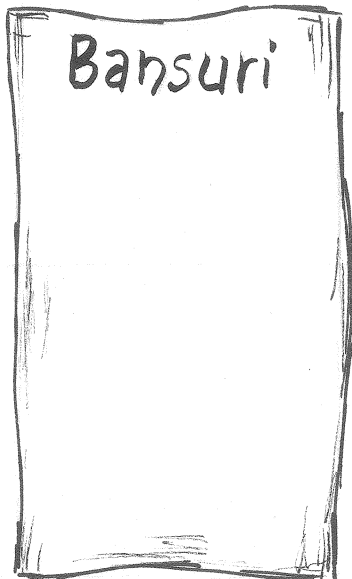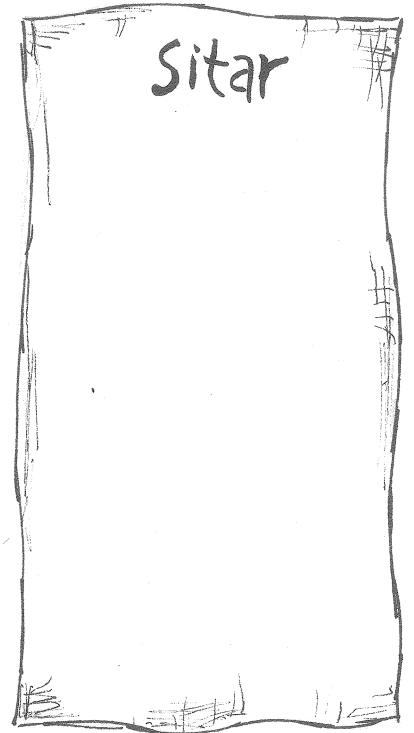
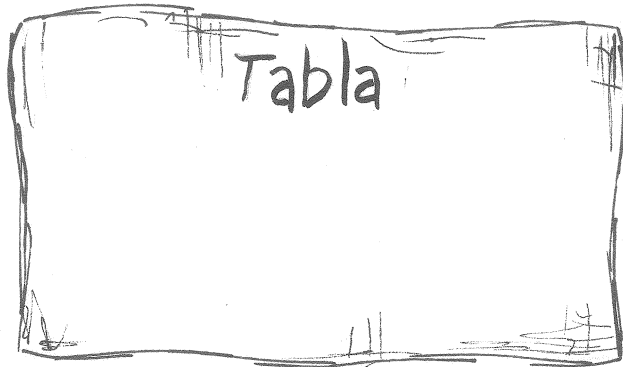paisley

TRADITIONS

APPLICATION

HENNA

USE THE SAMPLE STYLES AND YOUR OWN IDEAS TO DESIGN AN ORIGINAL MEHNDI. TRADITIONAL ARTISTS FREEHAND DESIGNS UNTIL THE SURFACE IS FULLY DECORATED.

The Dance and Music of India

Tabla

Sitar

Bansuri

Violin

Santoor

Mridangam
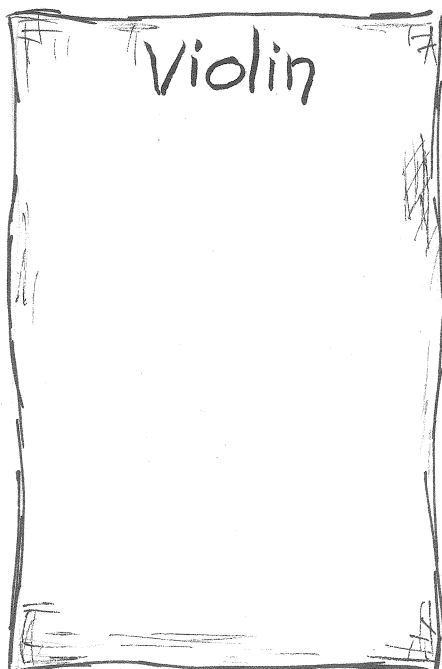
The Flavor of Memory

I feel like everything I make is a memoir on a plate. And I just think if I cannot eat in India, the memories will keep me alive and this food is an expression of everything I am.

—Vimala Rajendran, Curryblossom Cafe

Chicken Chettinad

Lentil Dahl

Basmati Rice

Kachumber Salad

Aloo Gobi

Naan

The taste, texture, and smell of certain foods or spices can effectively trigger memories of meals, events, and even places from the past. What is one food that you associate with a certain place, event, or person? Use the space below to illustrate or explain that memory.

Exploring India's Diversity

Name _____ **Topic:** _____

I: Read your assigned handout about an aspect of Asian Indian culture. Answer the following questions on a piece of notebook paper.

- What did you learn about your aspect of Indian culture from your assigned reading?
- Are there any images or maps on your handout? What did you learn from examining them?
- How is your aspect of Indian culture similar to American culture? How is it different?

II. Considering the information from your reading, the *Remarkable Journey* documentary, and any additional research, your group should determine five of the most interesting and/or important things you think your classmates should know about your topic. Write your final choices in your topic's section below. Be prepared to teach this information to the remainder of class. (Each group member should share at least one of your 5 facts.)

III. As you listen to your classmates share information about the other categories of India's diverse culture, complete the appropriate section of the chart.

IV. After learning about various aspects of Indian culture, you and your groupmates will create a mural to represent the phrase "India: Unity in Diversity." Each person will be responsible for creating a section of the mural about their assigned topic; however, all the sections should be combined to create one unified piece of art.

Topic	5 Important Facts
Food	
Religion	
Music	

Fashion/Clothing	
Language	
Film	
Dance	

V. Create a class mural. As a culmination to our exploration of the diversity of India, your group will work together to plan, design, and create a mural that visually represents your topic. Upon completion, all groups artwork will be combined into one beautiful wall mural with the title "India: Unity in Diversity."

- **Visual representations of your topic.** These can be created by hand, printed pictures, found materials, etc.
- **Text.** Layer in words and phrases, written by hand, printed, or combined from found materials, that provide textual information representing your topic.
- **Be creative and be colorful!** As you determine how to represent your topic, consider the overall artistic design.

Indian Food

While people all over the world relish Indian food, most people are not aware that Indian food is as diverse as its culture. Every region of India has its own forms of food which each with a distinctive characteristic. Going into the culinary intricacies of each region is very long winded and time consuming, so, we give you an introduction to the basic food varieties available in India

Broadly speaking, the cuisine of India can be divided into four categories: North Indian, South Indian, East Indian and Western Indian food.

North Indian – North India is the wheat belt of the nation. The staple meal of this region consists of *rotis* – unleavened bread roasted over an open flame- with an assortment of vegetable dishes, lentils, curd and pickles. While some parts of Northern India have people who love their meat, there is also a section of society which is purely vegetarian. They get their protein from milk, curd and cottage cheese, all of which are heavily consumed in this region. Everyday foods in Northern India are lightly spiced and mostly stir fried. However, rich foods are found in plenty too and they make generous use of ginger, garlic, and cream to add flavor to the dish.

Eastern India – Eastern Indians are primarily non-vegetarians, with fish being a very popular ingredient. Food flavors are simple and majority of the dishes have a runny consistency. The liberal use of chilies in Eastern Indian food gives their cuisine a hot edge. This is the most fertile part of India which means vegetables are consumed as much as meat and seafood. Rice is the staple accompaniment to the various curries, stews and stir fries that are enjoyed by the people here.

Western India – Western India is largely desert land. The climate being dry and arid, the food here is cooked with minimum water. Use of lentils is widespread in this region, vegetables less so, as not much produce grows here. Lentils in the form of *dal* - spiced lentil gravy - are as popular as dishes made of ground lentils. Foods are steamed or roasted with dry spices for flavor. Preserves like *chutney* and pickles are also had at every meal. Non vegetarian food here is rare and the few dishes that do exist are cooked with lots of red chilies and spices.

Southern India – Food in Southern India is mostly steamed or roasted. Rice is the basis of every meal and is usually served with a thin soup called *rasam* and a spicy lentil gravy called *sambar*. Tamarind, curd and coconut are three ingredients used generously in most South Indian foods. All foods of this region are heavily flavored with curry leaves, a fragrant herb native to this region. Another characteristic of Southern Indian food is rice mixed with curd. Every South Indian meal includes curd rice as a part of the traditional diet. Various savory chutneys, made of vegetables are also popular throughout Southern India. Also, much like Northern India, there are both non-veg lovers as well as strict vegetarians in this region too.
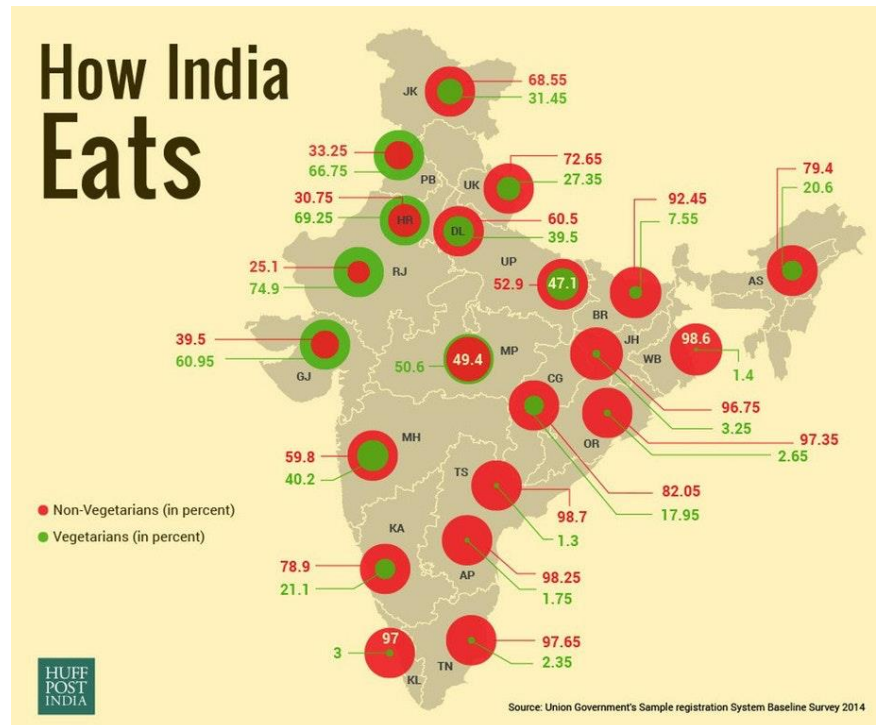
Religion in India

India is a land of diversities. This diversity is also visible in the spheres of religion. The major religions of India are Hinduism (majority religion), Islam (largest minority religion), Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and the Bahá'í Faith. India is a land where people of different religions and cultures live in harmony. This harmony is seen in the celebration of festivals. The message of love and brotherhood is expressed by all the religions and cultures of India.

Whether it's the gathering of the faithful, bowing in prayer in the courtyard of a mosque, or the gathering of lamps that light up houses at Diwali, the good cheer of Christmas or the brotherhood of Baisakhi, the religions of India are celebrations of shared emotion that bring people together. People from the different religions and cultures of India, unite in a common chord of brotherhood and amity in this fascinating and diverse land.

Buddhism
At present Buddhism is one of the major world religions. The philosophy of Buddhism is based on the teachings of Lord Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (563 and 483 BC), a royal prince of Kapilvastu, India. After originating in India, Buddhism spread throughout the Central Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Southeast Asia, as well as the East Asian countries of China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

Christians
Christianity is one of the prominent religions in India. At present there are about 25 million Christians in India. It is interesting to note that the Christian population in India is more than the entire population of Australia and New Zealand or total population of a number of countries in Europe.

Hinduism
Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. Hinduism is world's third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is the dominant religion in India, where Hindus form about 84 per cent of the total population. Hinduism is also known as "Sanatan Dharma" or the everlasting religion.

Islam
One of the prominent religions of India, Islam forms about 12 per cent of India's population. Though India's contact with Islam had begun much earlier, the real push came in the 8th century when the province of Sindh was conquered. Though the Muslims form only 12 per cent of the total population of India but the influence of Islam on Indian society is much stronger.

Jainism
Jains form less than one percent of the Indian population. For centuries, Jains are famous as community of traders and merchants. The states of Gujarat and Rajasthan have the highest concentration of Jain population in India. The Jain religion is traced to Vardhamana Mahavira (The Great Hero 599-527 B.C.).

Sikhism
Sikhs form about 2 per cent of Indian population. In comparison to other religions, Sikhism is a younger religion. The word 'Sikh' means a disciple and thus Sikhism is essentially the path of discipleship. The true Sikh remains unattached to worldly things.

Zoroastrian
Though the total number of Zoroastrians in Indian population is very less yet they continue to be one of the important religious communities of India. According to the 2001 census, there were around 70,000 members of the Zoroastrian faith in India. Most of the Parsis (Zoroastrians) live in Maharashtra (mainly in Mumbai) and the rest in Gujarat.

Guru Nanak Dev
Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji is credited with starting the Sikh religion. He was the first Guru of the Sikhs and is worshipped next to God. His sole aim in life was to unify the Hindus and Muslims and form a universal religion of brotherhood and compassion. He believed that true salvation could be achieved only by devotion of thought and excellence of conduct.
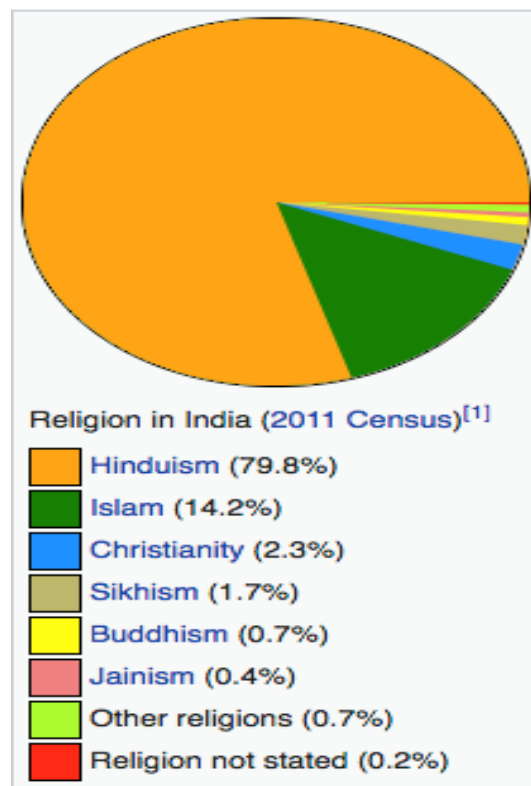
Lord Mahavira
Lord Mahavira is often credited with the advent of Jainism in India. However, Jainism existed even before Lord Mahavira was born. He is supposed to be the twenty-fourth (last) Tirthankara according to the Jain philosophy. A Tirthankara is an enlightened soul who is born as a human being and attains perfection through intense meditation.

Adi Shankaracharya
One of the greatest philosophers of India, Adi Shankaracharya founded the Advaita Vedanta, which is one of the sub-schools of Vedanta. Adi Shankaracharya whole-heartedly believed in the concept of the Vedas but at the same time advocated against the rituals and religious practices that were over exaggerated.

Total Population of India	1,210,854,977
Hindu	966,257,353
Muslim	172,245,158
Christian	27,819,588
Sikh	20,833,116
Buddhist	8,442,972
Jain	4,451,753
Other religions and persuasions	7,937,734
Religion not stated	2,867,303

Religion in India (2011 Census)[1]

- Hinduism (79.8%)
- Islam (14.2%)
- Christianity (2.3%)
- Sikhism (1.7%)
- Buddhism (0.7%)
- Jainism (0.4%)
- Other religions (0.7%)
- Religion not stated (0.2%)

India is a perfect example of unity in diversity. Take geography for example – from the snow-capped Himalayan mountain peaks in the north to the arid deserts of Rajasthan in the west. Then there is a multitude of religions – Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism – and even religions within religions called sects. And then comes the linguistic diversity of our country – to be precise, India has 22 major languages, written in 13 different scripts, with over 720 distinct dialects. This was aptly surmised by the eminent sociologist A R Desai when he said: *'India presents a spectacle of museum of tongues.'*
Image courtesy: India Charts

Most Widely Spoken Indian Languages
Languages by Number of Native Speakers

83m — Bengali
60.7m — Tamil
71.9m — Marathi
33m — Oriya
Urdu
51m
Hindi — 422m
Telugu — Punjabi — Gujarati — Malayalam — 33m
74m — Kannada
29m
46m
37.9m

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True that. And this spectacle we are talking about is on the verge of celebrating 70 years of its independence from the British rule. That makes it 70 whole years of Indian languages revamping, progressing and evolving themselves. Why? Well, as speakers of a particular language change from generation to generation, so do their needs. For instance, English was spoken back in 1947 when India attained independence and so is it spoken now – the two having a world of a difference between them. The English in the olden times was the common functional language of the masses, and today it is a combination of many regional varieties (including, of course, Hinglish words and the popular SMS (texting) lingo).

Five Fun Facts about Indian Languages
1.Which is India's national language?
A. Surprisingly enough, we don't have one! We have designated 'official' languages, specified 'classical' languages but no national language.

2. Which Indian language(s) boast of more speakers in the whole world than French or German?
A. Hold your breath – it's Hindi, Bengali and Punjabi. Individually.

3.Which word is the second longest palindrome in the English language?
A.Our very own – MALAYALAM of Kerala.

4.Which is the most computer-friendly language?
A.According to NASA scientist Rick Briggs, Sanskrit is the most precise, predictable and computer-friendly language.

5.Which is the fourth most spoken language in the world, even more than English?
A.Hindi, our official language (after Mandarin).

<u>English, English everywhere…Really</u>?

All the time and everywhere? Well, not really, except if you're a student of one of the so-called elite private English medium schools in the country which take upon themselves the responsibility of reprimanding you even if a single non-English word escapes your lips.

It is a fact that the English language is akin to our window to the whole world, thanks to the 21stcentury revolution which involves the internet, emails and mobile phones. Also, effective English communication is considered to hold us in good stead on the professional front too.

However, it won't be wrong to say that we're coming a full circle in terms of the importance of other regional languages catching up. By way of illustration, have a look at these headlines from leading National dailies in the months gone by:

- 2014: PM Narendra Modi greets the nation in 18 languages on the occasion of India's 68th Independence Day (from Gujarati to Kannada, Punjabi to Assamese – the address had them all).
- 2015: Hike Messenger, India's first home-grown messaging platform, adds support for 8 Indian vernacular languages (users would now be able to choose and access a keyboard in the selected local language).
- 2016: DU aspirants opting for modern Indian languages stand to gain up to 10% additional marks (the modern Indian languages include Punjabi, Tamil, Urdu, Telugu and Bengali).
- 2016: Microsoft and Google to provide email in Indian languages (we might just be able to have our email ID in our own Indian language soon!).

Messaging and emailing started initially in English, but now it is branching out to the vernacular languages. We were taught to speak in English and only in English in school, but now universities are offering additional marks as an incentive to move on to other languages. And logging in to our email accounts using our own language rather than English? The icing on the cake!

This Independence Day, let us also celebrate the linguistic diversity of India in addition to independence. There would be no better way than to sum it up with the words Shashi Tharoor, famed India politician and writer, penned down when India was celebrating its 61st Independence Day in 2008:

> *'Indian nationalism is a rare animal indeed. The French speak French, the Germans speak German, the Americans speak English – but Indians speak Punjabi, or Gujarati, or Malayalam, and it does not make us any less Indian.*
>
> *It is a reality that pluralism emerges from the very nature of our country; it is a choice made inevitable by India's geography, re-affirmed by its history and reflected in its ethnography. Let us celebrate our Independence on August 15 in a multitude of languages, so long as we can say in all of them how proud we are to be Indian.'*

Dance in India

India witnesses a diverse and varied culture. Adorned by endless varieties of cultural patterns, the landscape of India is beautified with lovely traditions. Different states have different languages, eating habits, customs, religion, etc. Like all other aspects of life, the **dances of different states in India** are also distinct. The uniqueness of **dances of India** binds the entire country together. Going back to ancient times, this art form was considered as a way to celebrate, worshiping and as a gesture of thanksgiving to the deity. **Dances of India** reflect its cultural richness.

Dance is a unique way of communication using your body, eyes, expressions, etc. We can broadly classify the **dances of India** into three categories: **classical dances, folk dances,** and **tribal dances** of India. Classical dances are more religious and spiritual in nature, whereas folk dances are more celebration oriented.

Few Famous Classical Dances of India

1. **Kathak | State :** Uttar Pradesh
 The word Kathak is originated from the word Katha which means storytelling. Traditionally this dance was more religious in nature, typically narrating the stories of Radha and Krishna. The dancers dance to the rhythm of table or pakhawaj.

2. **Odissi | State :** Odisha
Performed by 'Maharis' or female temple servants, this dance form have a close association with the temples and temple sculptures. Odissi stands out from other forms of dances because of its Tribhangi posture, dealing with three body parts, i.e. head, bust, and torso.

3. **Manipuri | State :** Manipur
Manipuri dance is one of the famous **dances of India**. The main characteristics of this dance are colorful decoration and costumes, charming music, gentle and swaying petal-soft foot movements and delicacy of performance. This traditional dance is mainly inspired by the rich culture of Manipur. For all the religious and other socio-cultural ceremonies, this dance is a must.

4. **Sattriya | State :** Assam
When you are on your Assam tour, make it a point to watch this **traditional Indian dance**. It is an art which represents dance-drama performances with a unique combination of hand gestures, footwork, expressions, and body movements. Most of the themes of dance relate to Ram and Sita or Krishna and Radha. The main characteristics of Sattriya dances are rich and varied melodies, lyrics and rhythm.

5. **Bharatnatyam | State:** Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
This **Indian classical dance** tops the list of famous **dances of India**. The centuries old dance teachers and temple dancers hand over this beautiful dance form to us. It is a delightful combination of four elements i.e. expression, music, beats, and dance. The accompanying music in Bharatnatyam is classical Carnatic. The costumes are similar to Indian sarees with vibrant colours and made of Kanchipuram silk and Banaras silk.

6. **Kathakali | State :** Kerala
Kathakali is another popular **Indian dance form**. Kathakali means story play; hence the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata act as a source for a lot of performances. This form of dance is known for its heavy, intense makeup and costumes. The kind of character represents the facial makeup of dancers, like green color makeup is used for kings, heroes, and divinities; while black color is used for evil.

A Few Famous Folk & Tribal Dances of India

1. **Bhangra | State:** Punjab
Bhangra is one of the most popular folk **dances of Punjab.** Men folks perform this, especially during Baisakhi. It is full of enthusiasm and energy. Men are dressed in lungis and colorful turbans. This form of dance uses a lot of feet movements on the beats of drums.

2. **Giddha | State:** Punjab
Another popular **dance of Punjab** is Giddha, which is performed by women folks. They perform this art during social occasions and especially during Teeyan festival as a gesture of welcoming monsoon (rainy season). It displays female grace and elegance along with high energy levels. In this form of dance, one dancer sits in the center to play the drum, while others dance in a circle surrounding her.

3. **Sirmour Nati Dance | State:** Himachal Pradesh
Sirmour Nati is a popular folk dance in the North. Traditionally this dance was performed for 4 to 5 hours and wouldn't stop till the performers and musicians are exhausted. It is similar to Kathak dance. Rhythm plays an important role in this dance. Musical instruments like drums, shehnai, and cymbals accompany the performances.

4. **Dumhal | State:** Jammu and Kashmir
Among many **traditional folk dances of Indian states**, one popular dance form is Dhumal. Men folk of the Rauf tribe perform this form of dance. A unique characteristic of this dance form is the banner inserted into the ground while performers dance surrounding the banner. The music is produced from drums and dancers themselves sing in chorus. The costumes are very vibrant and colourful with long robes and tall conical caps flecked with beads and shells.

5. **Saang | State:** Haryana
Saang is another **traditional folk dance of Indian state** and represents true culture of Haryana. It is performed by an even number of dancers. Saang means to impersonate i.e. to pretend to be another person. So you will find a lot of male dancers dressing up like females to perform their part. Saang reflects a lot of religious stories in their performances.

6. **Dandiya | State:** Gujarat
 another energetic and enthusiastic **dance of Gujarat** is Dandiya. Performers dance with the help of sticks in hands. These sticks (dandiyas) represent swords of Goddess Durga. Women folks wear extremely colourful and embroidered dresses (ghagra choli) dazzling with small mirror work. Men folk wear kedias and turbans.

7. **Chholiya Dance | State :** Uttarakhand
Chholiya is a popular folk dance performed in Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. It is performed with a sword and often linked with marital traditions of the people in Kumani region. During Kshatriya's era, it was usually performed when the marriage processions were held at the point of swords. But now chholiya dance is a common performance on many important occasions. It has religious significance and is believed to protect from evils.

8. **Atta Karagam | State:** Tamil Nadu
Atta Karagam is a popular folk dance in South. Performers perform this dance by placing pots on the head and balancing them. Dancers perform in temples and during festive occasions. Atta Karagam symbolizes joy. It was traditionally performed by the people of villages to praise the Rain Goddess, Mari Amman and Gnagai Ammana, the River Goddess.
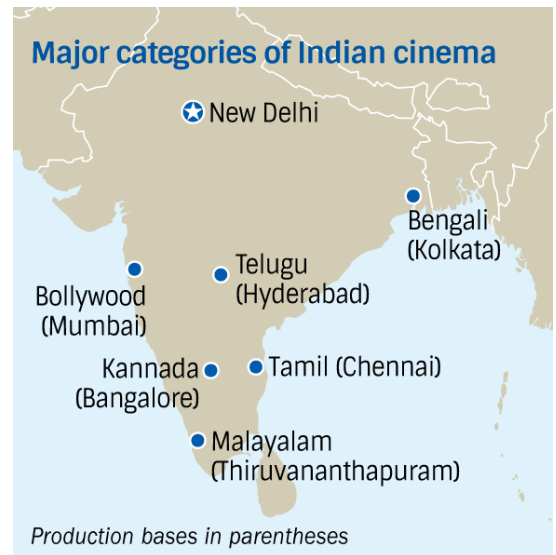
Edited for clarity & content by Carolina K-12 from the following source: http://travel-blog.waytoindia.com/different-dance-forms-of-india-with-states/

Indian Film

Although Indian cinema is one of the oldest world cinemas, and the largest in terms of films made each year, its evolution in parallel to the West with little crossover until very recently leaves a lot of Western moviegoers with the impression that it's daunting and inscrutable. But with a few simple guidelines, any American movie buff should be able to explore Indian cinema, particularly when it comes to the massive Hindi-language industry based in Mumbai commonly known as "Bollywood."

There's More To Indian Cinema Than "Bollywood"
The term "Bollywood," though often inaccurately used to represent Indian cinema as a whole, refers just to the Hindi-language industry in the city of Mumbai. There are several different regional film industries throughout the country, each in a different language; the most prominent ones are Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Kannada languages. The regional cinemas share a variety of common tropes or themes (music, dancing, fabulous costumes, high melodrama, etc.), with noticeable differences; in a general sense, the south cinemas, Telugu and Tamil in particular, are more excessive and rowdy than the comparatively restrained Bollywood industry. The highest paid star in Asia after Jackie Chan is the Tamil-language star Rajinikanth, also known as "Superstar Rajinikanth" — who, when such things were in vogue, featured in the Indian version of Chuck Norris jokes.

Major categories of Indian cinema
New Delhi
Bengali (Kolkata)
Telugu (Hyderabad)
Bollywood (Mumbai)
Kannada (Bangalore)
Tamil (Chennai)
Malayalam (Thiruvananthapuram)
Production bases in parentheses

Know Your Indian History
A great deal of the creative isolation of early Indian cinema, and the development of its own set of rules largely separate from those of the other world cinemas, dates back to regulations the British government established to promote British films over American ones (in the days when Britain ruled India). After winning political independence from Great Britain in 1947, the national film industries, already independent, remained that way.

Beyond the aesthetic impact of politics, the thematic content of many Indian films naturally reflects Indian history and politics. Countless films deal with rebellions against the British, or remember rebellion against the British fondly. The partition between India and Pakistan is a frequent subject as well, with political tensions between the two countries providing stories for everything from Cold War-style espionage between the two countries to doomed romances between an Indian boy and a Pakistani girl, to — this being India — both at the same time.

Masala: What Is It and Why Is It So Awesome?
Not all Indian films are masala films, but masala films are uniquely Indian. Masala films are the cinematic equivalent of the mixture of spices used in Indian cooking that provide the name. Every conceivable genre is thrown into the pot — meaning the screenplay — and cooked up by the director. It makes perfect sense: In making a movie for the whole family to see, what Hollywood calls a four-quadrant blockbuster, why not throw every existing film genre into the mix?

With multiple genres happening simultaneously — let's say, a romance subplot, a comedy subplot, and a melodrama subplot all alternating under the auspices of an action adventure main plot — there are, invariably, tonal shifts that can take some getting used to. Everything is heightened: the hero's heroism, the heroine's beauty, the villain's evil.

In 2009's "Wanted," hero Salman Khan saunters into a warehouse full of bad guys and proceeds to very thoroughly beat up of every last one of them, single-handedly. He then saunters back out of the warehouse

and lip-syncs a song about being a tough guy, with dozens of backup dancers, bright colors, and a drop-in by fellow movie star Anil Kapoor (who doesn't appear at all in the rest of the movie, he's just coming by to say hi). At the end of the song, Salman Khan is successfully established as The Star.

Songs in Indian cinema don't necessarily have anything to do with the story, though they can, but they're usually just there because…well, who doesn't like music and want to see stars dancing? A special subset of this is the item number, a showcase for a particularly attractive female performer who may — but more often may not — appear in the rest of the movie. These are mainly for marketing coups for certain music labels, but when done well can be works of art in themselves.

The Release Schedule Has, Let's Say, Some Quirks

Some aspects of the release calendar may look familiar to American audiences: Big holiday blockbusters come out on Eid (the holiday commemorating the end of Ramadan), sort of like the way they do during U.S. holidays. Less familiar is the way Bollywood in particular basically shuts down during cricket season. While the Indian Premier League is on, very few releases of any consequence hit theaters, a dry period comparable to January in the American film industry.

Parallel Cinema: Indies and Arthouse Cachet

Ironically, a lot of Western film lovers have an easier time with Indian arthouse and indie fare, both of which are known as "parallel cinema" in India. These titles favor naturalistic/realistic approaches. Some filmmakers known as parallel cinema filmmakers will employ elements of pop cinema, like songs and movie stars. One such example is Mani Ratnam's 1998 film "Dil Se," which starred Shahrukh Khan, and blended serious political commentary with a lyrical romantic tragedy.

It All Comes Down to Family

In too many mainstream Hindi films to count, the big tough hero who can throw cars with his mustache and is master of all that he surveys comes home to find his mother yelling at him about his lack of responsibility, his need to get married and other day-today concerns. It's not just something that's played for laughs, either. Generally (in mainstream films at least), in a choice between an individual and either a literal family or a group standing in for one, the moral point of view expressed is that the family/group should come first and nearly always does. For Americans, maybe the most individualistic people in history, this is occasionally a tough pill to swallow — but more than any of the other items on this list, it's essential that one understands the source of this ingredient before approaching these films.

Indian Music

Sitar To Bollywood: Sounds Of The Subcontinent
What many people casually refer to as Indian music is actually the
classical music of the north of the Indian subcontinent. **Karnatic
(south) Indian music** is older and represents the Hindu tradition
before the Afghan and Mughal invasions of the north created one of
the great hybrid musical styles of the world.

Raga is a pattern of notes that forms the basis of both the **Hindustani
(north Indian)** and **Karnatic or Carnatic** musical systems. In the south, it goes under the name of ragam.
Absolutely central to a great performance is the way in which the musicians play the raga or ragam with a
sense of their own identity or personality while observing strictly defined rules. Improvisation frequently
occurs.

In Hindustani tradition, a performance consists of several sections: alap, jor, gat, or jhala. The **alap** is
played by the soloist in free rhythm accompanied by a drone, one note played over and over. The music
winds down briefly, and then introduces a slow, almost lazy pulse for the so-called **jor** section. The **gat** is a
fixed musical figure; the same melodic phrases can be heard again and again. In the **jhala**, quick-fire
"question and answer" exchanges between instrumentalists can occur towards the end – a great
opportunity for witty performers, especially when a drum imitates a melody instrument.

It's a subtly different experience if the musicians belong to the traditions of south India. Performances are
shorter and they rarely linger in a slow tempo for any length of time.
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Vocal Music

More than any other classical genre, **dhrupad** is regarded as a sacred art – an act of devotion and
meditation rather than entertainment. It is an ancient and austere form which ranks as the Hindustani
system's oldest vocal music genre still performed. Traditionally, dhrupad is performed only by men,
accompanied by tanpura and the pakhawaj barrel drum. A dhrupad lyric (usually in a medieval literary
form of Hindi called Braj Bhasha) may be praising a Hindu deity (god) or local royalty, or it may dwell on
noble or heroic themes. The twist is that this most Hindu of vocal genres is dominated by Muslims.

The bhajan is the most popular form of Hindu devotional composition in north India. Lyrically, bhajans
eulogize a particular deity and frequently retell episodes from the Hindu scriptures. In the South, bhajans
tend to retain their original Hindustani raga but are set in Karnatic talas (rhythm).
or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

Folk Music

Folk music in India is often described as desi (or deshi), meaning "of the country", to distinguish it from art
music, known as marga (meaning "chaste" and, by extension, classical). Desi, a catchall term, also
embraces folk theatre and popular music of many colors. While there is extraordinary folk music to be
found all over India, there are three areas where it is particularly rich and easy to access as a visitor –
Rajasthan, Kerala and Bengal, where the Bauls are the inspirational music providers. Rajasthani groups
and Baul musicians are popular performers on the world music circuit.

The harvest is celebrated in every culture and in the Punjab it gave rise to bhangra, a folk dance which, in
its British commercial form, has morphed into a form of Asian pop. Following on from the crossover
success of bhangra, dandiya, a new folk-based genre, has emerged as a new phenomenon with a club-
based following in India.

Film Music - Bollywood

Indian films often succeed because of their songs. Stars get stereotyped and rarely find roles outside, say, romantic lead, swashbuckler, comic light relief, baddie and so on. What's more, these highly paid actors and actresses lip-synch to pre-recorded songs sung by vocal superstars such as Lata Mangeshkar and S.P. Balasurahmaniam, off-camera.

The leading trio which dominated the Hindi cinema for over thirty years were Mukesh (1923–76), Mohammed Rafi (1924–80) and Lata Mangeshkar (b. 1929). Dreamy strings provide the lush backings, an Indianized account of Hollywood strings, but bursting with touches that could only come from the subcontinent. The Los Angeles of the Indian film industry is Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, hence the common shorthand Bollywood – a film industry in-joke that stuck and went international.

Modern Indian Music

In the present day, there are far less people who enjoy Indian classical music as they feel it is too slow for them. Many youngsters go a step further terming classical music to be boring. But then, enjoying music is a personal journey and purely depends on the moods. However, in keeping with times and demands, today, most music composers have shifted from the classical to newer forms, whereby they imbibe the Indian melody and tunes with the western beats.

Some examples of modern Indian music are:
- Remixes, where old tunes are blended with faster beats making them popular amongst the younger generation. These are generally played at discos and parties. In 2002, *Mundian To Bach Ke*, a remix of a bhangra song featuring Jay-Z became a world-wide hit.
- Fusion is that type of music where Indian classical music is combined with the western music forms to create a musical mix of east and west
- Indi pop, which is basically the Indian version of the western pop music. There are number of young artists who sign up with music companies to cut an album of pop songs in Hindi and other regional languages.

There are many, many, other popular styles of Indian music, including Rock, Hip Hop, Pop, and more. To read more about them you can visit:
http://factsanddetails.com/india/Arts_Culture_Media_Sports/sub7_5c/entry-4250.html

To listen to Indian music, visit
- https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/multimedia/series/AudioStories/music-of-india
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/music/world_music/music_india1.shtml

Traditional Indian Instruments

The culture, religion, languages spoken and attire of the people of India are as diverse as the landscape of this vast country. Due to its diversity, this cultural hub does not have just one dress, which can be called as the National Dress or Indian Dress. If in northern part we find more of the Muslim influence, in the southern part of India Dravidian style of costumes dominate.

Clothing for most Indians is also quite simple and typically untailored. Men (especially in rural areas) frequently wear little more than a broadcloth dhoti, worn as a loose skirt like loincloth, or, in parts of the south and east, the tighter wraparound lungi. In both cases the body remains bare above the waist, except in cooler weather, when a shawl also may be worn, or in hot weather, when the head may be protected by a turban. The more-affluent and higher-caste men are likely to wear a tailored shirt, increasingly of Western style. Muslims, Sikhs, and urban dwellers generally are more inclined to wear tailored clothing, including various types of trousers, jackets, and vests.

Although throughout most of India women wear saris and short blouses, the way in which a sari is wrapped varies greatly from one region to another. In Punjab, as well as among older female students and many city dwellers, the characteristic dress is the shalwar-kamiz, a combination of pajama-like trousers and a long-tailed shirt (saris being reserved for special occasions). Billowing ankle-length skirts and blouses are the typical female dress of Rajasthan and parts of Gujarat. Most rural Indians, especially females, do not wear shoes and, when footwear is necessary, prefer sandals.

The modes of dress of tribal Indians are exceedingly varied and can be, as among certain Naga groups, quite ornate. Throughout India, however, Western dress is increasingly in vogue, especially among urban and educated males, and Western-style school uniforms are worn by both sexes in many schools, even in rural India.

Sari

The most well-known type of Indian clothing has to be the sari. Saris vary in their size, depending upon their intended use, but they typically are long enough to wrap around the waist or torso. Women drape saris different ways, and then add a blouse, called a ravika or a choli, for a complete outfit. Saris often come in bright colors, such as pink, orange and gold, and may also be patterned.

The different styles of draping a sari are:

- **North Indian:** It is the widely used style in which Sari is draped around a waist once and then pleats are tucked in the waistband. The remaining portion of Sari, known as Pallu is put across the left shoulder and is allowed to fall behind.
- **Gujarati:** This style of Sari is known as Seedha Pallu Sari. In this style Pallu is taken to back side and is then put across the front side of the right shoulder.
- **Bengali:** A pleatless style of draping a sari.
- **Maharashtrian:** for this style of sari you need a sari which is longer than the usual one i.e. 8-9 m long. In this style sari is passed through legs and one portion of it is tucked at the back providing room for greater freedom of movement.

Kurta

A kurta is a tunic-like shirt that extends to the knees. It has a loose fit and is often made of natural fibers, making it ideal to wear in warm or humid weather. Many Indian men wear kurta s, often pairing them with a pyjama, which is a lightweight trouser that has a drawstring waist.

Dhoti

The dhoti is the masculine version of the sari. It is comprised of unstitched, lightweight cloth that measures five yards. Indian men wear the dhoti wrapped around the waist and the legs, knotting it around the waist. Its name varies according to the region of India. In Punjabi, the dhoti is called laacha, and in Malayalam it is known as mundu.

Pashmina

Pashmina wool shawls have been one of India's great crossover hits in Western fashion. These richly dyed shawls feature a soft cashmere fabric, made from the wool that grows on the Capra Hircus goat's underbelly. Women wear these shawls in many different ways, tying them around their shoulders, wrapping them around their waists, doubling them up for interesting color contrasts or using them as coverups for swimsuits.

Salwar

In northern part of India Salwar Kameez is prevalent among women. Salwar is a type of loose trouser, which is worn with a kurta known as Kameez. This Indian dress is usually accompanied by Dupatta, a kind of veil used to cover head or chest. This Indian dress is the favorite of North Indian women as it is hassle free to wear and easy to maintain and allows complete freedom of movement which is necessary for hard working women whether in an office or helping her husband in fields.

Headgear

The cap and dupatta are the main headgears used by Indian men and women respectively. Muslim men use a special type of cap known as 'Topi' to cover their heads whereas turban, locally known as 'Pagadi' in Punjab, is an integral part of a Sikh men.

Turban or Pagadi

Pashmina

Salwar

Various Dupattas

Indian identity is forged in diversity. Every one of us is in a minority
Shashi Tharoor | The Guardian

"You can be many things and one thing."

When India celebrated the 49th anniversary of its independence from British rule in 1996, its then prime minister, HD Deve Gowda, stood at the ramparts of Delhi's Red Fort and delivered the traditional independence day address to the nation. Eight other prime ministers had done exactly the same thing 48 times before him, but what was unusual this time was that Deve Gowda, a southerner from the state of Karnataka, spoke to the country in a language of which he did not know a word. Tradition and politics required a speech in Hindi, so he gave one - the words having been written out for him in his native Kannada script, in which they made no sense.

Such an episode is almost inconceivable elsewhere, but it was a startling affirmation of Indian pluralism. For the simple fact is that we are all minorities in India. A Hindi-speaking Hindu male from Uttar Pradesh may cherish the illusion he represents the "majority community". But he does not. As a Hindu, he belongs to the faith adhered to by four-fifths of the population. But a majority of the country does not speak Hindi. And, if he were visiting, say, my home state of Kerala, he may be surprised to realize that a majority there is not even male. Worse, this stock Hindu male has only to mingle with the polyglot, multicolored crowds - and I am referring not to the colors of their clothes but to the colors of their skins - thronging any of India's major railway stations to realize how much of a minority he really is. Even his Hinduism is no guarantee of his majority-hood, because caste divisions automatically put him in a minority. (If he is a Brahmin, for instance, 90% of his fellow Indians are not.)

If caste and language complicate the notion of Indian identity, ethnicity makes it worse. Most of the time, an Indian's name immediately reveals where he is from or what her mother-tongue is: when we introduce ourselves, we are advertising our origins. Despite some intermarriage at the elite levels in our cities, Indians are still largely endogamous (marrying within a specific social group, class or ethnic group), and a Bengali is easily distinguished from a Punjabi. The difference this reflects is often more apparent than the elements of commonality. A Karnataka Brahmin shares his Hindu faith with a Bihari Kurmi, but they share little identity with each other in respect of their dress, customs, appearance, taste, language or even, these days, their political objectives. At the same time, a Tamil Hindu would feel he has much more in common with a Tamil Christian or a Tamil Muslim than with, say, a Jat from the state of Haryana with whom he formally shares the Hindu religion.

What makes India, then, a nation? As the country celebrates the 60th anniversary of its independence today, we may well ask: What is an Indian's identity?

When an Italian nation was created in the second half of the 19th century out of a mosaic of principalities and statelets, one Italian nationalist wrote: "We have created Italy. Now all we need to do is to create Italians." It is striking that, a few decades later, no Indian nationalist succumbed to the temptation to express a similar thought. The prime exponent of modern Indian nationalism, Jawaharlal Nehru, would never have spoken of "creating Indians", because he believed that India and Indians had existed for millennia before he articulated their political aspirations in the 20th century.

None the less, the India that was born in 1947 was in a very real sense a new creation: a state that made fellow citizens of the Ladakhi and the Laccadivian, divided Punjabi from Punjabi and asked a Keralite peasant to feel allegiance to a Kashmiri Pandit ruling in Delhi, all for the first time.

So under Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister Nehru, Indian nationalism was not based on any of the conventional indices of national identity. Not language, since India's constitution now recognizes 22 official languages, and as many as 35 languages spoken by more than a million people each. Not ethnicity, since the

"Indian" accommodates a diversity of racial types in which many Indians (Punjabis and Bengalis, in particular) have more ethnically in common with foreigners than with their other compatriots. Not religion, since India is a secular pluralist state that is home to every religion known to mankind, with the possible exception of Shintoism. Not geography, since the natural geography of the subcontinent - framed by the mountains and the sea - was hacked by the partition of 1947. And not even territory, since, by law, anyone with one grandparent born in pre-partition India - outside the territorial boundaries of today's state - is eligible for citizenship. Indian nationalism has therefore always been the nationalism of an idea.

It is the idea of an ever-ever land - emerging from an ancient civilization, united by a shared history, sustained by pluralist democracy. India's democracy imposes no narrow conformities on its citizens. The whole point of Indian pluralism is you can be many things and one thing: you can be a good Muslim, a good Keralite and a good Indian all at once. The Indian idea is the opposite of what Freudians call "the narcissism of minor differences"; in India we celebrate the commonality of major differences. If America is a melting-pot, then to me India is a thali, a selection of sumptuous dishes in different bowls. Each tastes different, and does not necessarily mix with the next, but they belong together on the same plate, and they complement each other in making the meal a satisfying repast.

So the idea of India is of one land embracing many. It is the idea that a nation may endure differences of caste, creed, color, conviction, culture, cuisine, costume and custom, and still rally around a consensus. And that consensus is around the simple idea that in a democracy you don't really need to agree - except on the ground rules of how you will disagree.

Geography helps, because it accustoms Indians to the idea of difference. India's national identity has long been built on the slogan "unity in diversity". The "Indian" comes in such varieties that a woman who is fair-skinned, sari-wearing and Italian-speaking, as Sonia Gandhi is, is not more foreign to my grandmother in Kerala than one who is "wheatish-complexioned", wears a salwar kameez and speaks Urdu. Our nation absorbs both these types of people; both are equally "foreign" to some of us, equally Indian to us all.

For now, the sectarian Hindu chauvinists have lost the battle over India's identity. The sight in May 2004 of a Roman Catholic political leader (Sonia Gandhi) making way for a Sikh (Manmohan Singh) to be sworn in as prime minister by a Muslim (President Abdul Kalam) - in a country 81% Hindu - caught the world's imagination. India's founding fathers wrote a constitution for their dreams; we have given passports to their ideals. That one simple moment of political change put to rest many of the arguments over Indian identity. India was never truer to itself than when celebrating its own diversity.

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India Needs The Right System To Protect Its 'Unity In Diversity'- It's currently in peril.
By [Bhanu Dhamija](#) | [Huffington Post](#) | 08.21.2017

India's celebrated "unity in diversity" is in peril. Even as the country marks its 70th year of independence, there are nearly a dozen festering insurgencies or secessionist movements. The outgoing Vice President Hamid Ansari has just announced that the nation's minorities are insecure. Easterners have been attacked in the west, and southerners feel unwelcome in the north. People of some states have tried to expel entire ethnic communities: Pandits from Kashmir, Bengalis from Assam. Every caste is demanding special treatment through reservations or financial subsidies. And the states have been fighting among themselves for everything under the sun—water, territory, capital city, language, flag, and so on.

The problem is India never developed a good system to manage its diversity. The ad hoc approach only led to appeasement, violence, and alienation among communities. If the country had a system of government rooted in proven principles of national integration and supremacy, local autonomy and accountability, and equality before law, it would be more unified.

National integration: one nation-one Constitution
The people of each state must pledge allegiance to India's Constitution. Our Constitution was adopted without requiring that it be ratified by the states. By contrast, in the United States, this was a necessary condition for the adoption of their constitution. This requirement not only generated a feeling of national unity, but it brought about useful changes, such as the Bill of Rights.

Each state, including Kashmir, must affirm that cessation is not an option under our Constitution, and that it adheres to its every provision. This is not farfetched, even for Kashmir, considering the rest of my proposal. Besides, we cannot allow one state of the union to deny the rest of the country the benefits of unquestioned allegiance to the principle of one nation-one Constitution.

National supremacy: Centre laws over state laws
India's Parliament must hold supremacy over state assemblies. It was only recently that the Supreme Court ruled that in the event of conflict central legislation overrides state laws. But such conflicts arise frequently because India's Constitution follows the impractical approach of assigning many powers to Centre as well as states. This often results in central laws imposing financial burdens on states, leaving them little flexibility to modify laws according to their needs; or worse, directly infringing on their rights.

We must remove our Constitution's Concurrent List. It's causing tremendous harm, for it not only allows governments to shirk responsibility, it makes many laws impracticable. M.R. Madhavan, head of PRS Legislative Research, has written that India needs "a detailed public debate on federalism and treatment of items in the concurrent list."

India will do well by granting only essential powers to both central and state governments, similar to the US Constitution. Powers only to tax, borrow, charter banks and corporations, establish courts, and acquire property for public good.

But more importantly India's Constitution must also declare national supremacy. Madhav Khosla, constitutional expert, has said that "the Indian Constitution may give the Union more powers than it gives the states, but it does not establish the supremacy of the Union." By contrast, "national supremacy" is one the basic principles of the U.S. Constitution. Its Article VI declares laws and treaties passed under the Constitution "supreme law of the land."

Local autonomy: all powers—all branches of government
State and local governments must be free to conduct their own affairs so that they can be held accountable. Without local autonomy—which means only self-government (swaraj), not self-determination— it is impossible to hold states solely responsible.

However for this principle to work state government powers must not overlap with those of the Centre. Also, states must be self sufficient, and their governments accountable only to the people, not to a central authority or party bosses.

As the basic principle of democracy, we must trust the people to know what is best for them.

Let me just expound on distribution of powers. India's Constitution grants the Centre more than 140 specific powers, as well as all those not specifically assigned. This gives the Centre a huge role in all areas of governance which inevitably interferes with local and state governments.

We would be better served by doing the opposite. Assign more powers to the states and leave them all residuary powers. This is precisely what the US Constitution does. The national government is given only a handful of exclusive powers: regulate interstate and foreign commerce, borrow and coin money, declare war, and maintain military. Since the states are given residuary powers their exclusive powers are few: conduct elections, establish local governments, regulate intrastate commerce, protect public health, safety and morals.

Granting states autonomy worries Indians, especially with respect to Kashmir, perhaps because they fear it gives impetus to talks of secession. But Article 370 has already given Kashmir control over local affairs. The arrangement didn't work because of other factors: it didn't adhere to principles of national integration and supremacy described above; it wasn't honestly implemented; Kashmir governments were not self-sufficient; central interference remained a problem; and, of course, Pakistan muddied the waters.

The principle of local autonomy also requires that state governments have their own judiciary. This would alleviate one of India's biggest problems with delays and corruption in courts by decentralising them. Similarly, this principle warrants that all elections are held by states themselves. When all representatives—MLAs and MPs—come from constituencies within states, it is distrustful of local people to have them elected via a central body.

Religious equality: Uniform code and separation of religion and state
Lastly, for our "unity in diversity" to sustain, India must establish religious equality. As I have recently written, we desperately need a new definition of secularism, one based on freedom of religion, equality before law, and separation of religion and state.

While freedom of religion is firmly enshrined in our Constitution, having a Uniform Civil Code has remained one of its Directive Principles for 70 years. Now it is essential for our religious amity.

As for separation of religion and state, India should pass a constitutional amendment along the lines of the First Amendment of the US Constitution: that Parliament "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

We all take pride in India's "unity in diversity." It's time to put some effort behind its protection.

Discuss:
- According to the author what major issues threaten India's "unity in diversity?"
- What solutions does the author propose? Do you agree with those solutions? Why or why not?
- Has the US ever dealt with similar problems? If so, what did they do to solve them?