

## TRADITIONAL PRACTICES, TECHNIQUES AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN INDIA

---

Dr. Kavita Jain\*

### ABSTRACT

*The word tradition finds its origin from the Latin word transdere and the French word tradicjon that means, to deliver across. Tradition refers to a belief or long-established custom that passes from one generation to another. The way in which people belonging to a particular group or community act, behave or conduct their activities over a long period become a tradition for them. Traditional practices refer to the set of information, practices and experiences that are transmitted over generations. Practices that are continued from our forefathers to the present generations, become traditions of a particular society and become a mark of tradition or culture. Many traditional practices are quite prevalent in India and serve as key of belonging.*

**Keywords:** Tradition, Practices, Indians, Economic Sectors, Economic Disparities.

### Introduction

Traditional practice refers to the total sum of the etiquettes, activities, art and actions practiced by local communities over many generations through which the habits and autochthonous (of an inhabitant of a place) environment can be better understood. These practices are most importantly the activities that are aboriginal or native to various teachings, cultures, beliefs and traditions. India is a country of diversified social heritage. People living in different regions speak different languages, eat different food, speak different languages and celebrate festivals in different ways but they all live in harmony in spite of their diverse culture. Indian culture has been influenced by a history which is several millennia old, beginning with the early Indus valley civilization to the recent. The Indian culture and traditional practices over different regions of India are something which are now recognized and respected all across the world. We all refer to customs and traditions of India as something very diverse and unique. But seldom do we give a thought to why things are done in certain specific manner. Indian culture is full of a variety of unique customs and traditions, which might be very fascinating for non-Indians. Most of them find their origin from the ancient Indian testaments and texts, which have paved the way of life of the Indians for thousands of years.

Here are a few fascinating Indian cultural traditions and customs:

- Greetings
- Religious Customs
- Symbols
- Architecture
- Religious Symbols
- Guest Worship - Atithi Devo Bhavah
- Martial Arts
- Eating with Hands

### Greeting - Namaskar

The Namaskar is one of the most popular Indian customs and is no more limited to the Indian territory anymore. Namaskar is the most common mode of showing respect to one another specially to elders in the Indian families. The word Namaskar or *namaste*, means "I bow to you" and is *Namaskar* is *not only* one of the five forms of traditional greetings mentioned in the ancient Hindu testaments, the 'Vedas'. The action of joining both hands together in front of your chest or face and bowing your head for

---

\* Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics, B.B.D. Government College Chimanpura, Shahpura, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

greeting one another with it is a way of saying 'May our minds meet'. The word Namaha can also be translated as 'na ma' (not mine), to signify the reductions of one's ego in the presence of the other. In ancient Indian culture, this practice of bending one's head with folded palms was of great significance and was observed as a basic step of one's spiritual growth. Namaskar is the most popular action used as a mark of respect not only in India but also in most South-Asian countries like Nepal, Bangladesh etc. In the recent years the popularity of this Indian tradition has spread in the western countries also which can be confirmed as the entire world has seen Barack Obama, doing it on various occasions. Moreover the world has observed Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary-General, greeting everyone with a namaste at the Times Square in New York on the first international yoga day.

### **Festivals & Religion - Always a Festive Season**

Festival is a day or a period of celebration typically with religious beliefs. India is a land of festivals. A large number of festivals are celebrated in India mainly because of the prevalence of diverse religions and culture. The Muslims celebrate Eid, the Christians celebrate Christmas and good Friday and Easter, the Sikhs have Baisakhi (harvesting of crop), and Guru Parva, the birthdays of their Gurus and the Hindus have Diwali, Holi, Raksha-bandhan, Makar Sakranti, etc. the Jains celebrate Mahavir Jayanti, Moksha Kalyanak, the Buddhists celebrate the Buddha's birthday on Buddha Poonima, and this number is endless. These festivals are an expressive way to celebrate the glorious cultural heritage of our country. These festivals not only bring joy to an individual but also provide some special emotions and memories in our lives. Celebration of various festivals inculcates unity in diversity in the common masses.

### **Symbols - Fasting**

Fasting is an integral part of the Indian culture. Fasting is the willful sacrifice of partial or total food by an individual generally for religious reasons. In fact, Fasts or Vrats or Upvas are a way to represent one's sincerity and resolve, or express one's gratitude to their Gods and Goddesses. In India many people observe fasts during various religious occasions. Some people also observe fast on different days of a week in order to please a particular God or Goddess associated with that specific day, with the belief that by doing so, a person can punish oneself to clean off the sins that one has committed until the day of fast. Some people keep fasts on particular day as they believe that this is the best way they can please their deity. The origin of fast probably comes from the Vedic ritual of kindling the sacrificial fire for sacrifice purposes. Since the word 'upvas' has been used to signify both fasts and kindling sacrificial fire, it can be thought that people observed fasts when they had to kindle or rekindle the domestic fires kept in their homes to perform daily sacrifices. People believe that they can restore or strengthen their faith in God or Allah by keeping fasts on some particular days, for eg. Hindus observe fasts on Ekadashi and Purnima, Jains fast on Ashtmi or Chaudas, Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan or Ramazan etc.

### **Architecture - The Science Behind Temples**

In India most of the temples are located along the magnetic wave lines of the Earth, which helps in maximizing the available positive energy of the area. In most of the Indian temples the copper plate (called Garbhagriha or origin) buried under the main idol absorbs and resonates energy to its surroundings. Most Indians believe that going to the temple often helps in having a positive mindset and garnishes positive energies, which in turn lead to a healthy and peaceful mindset. It is a common practice to take off one's footwear before entering any place of worship because people believe that it is a mark of respect for their God or Goddess. But the science behind it is that footwear would bring in the dirt to an otherwise clean and sanctified environment. The different idols of Gods and Goddesses represent the different yoga mudras and are a source of inspiration. Also, the architecture of most of the temples is so designed that it creates a positive physical environment in which people get peace.

### **Religious Symbols**

The Indian traditions and scriptures contain various signs and symbols which have multiple meanings. For example, in the Hindu religion, the Swastika and Om or Aum and are the most common religious symbol. For example, the usage of the Swastika, in the Indian context is a symbol of auspiciousness and is considered to bring good luck or fortune. In fact, the word Swastika has its origin from the Sanskrit word svastika, which means well-being or good fortune. It is the symbol of Lord Ganesha, also known as Vighnaharta, the power that takes away all the obstacles of one's life. The arms of the Swastika have various meanings. They signify the four Vedas, the four constellations, or the four primary aims of human pursuit. Swastika is also a symbol commonly used by Hindus, Jains and Buddhists. On the other hand, Om is a symbol which refers to soul and the ultimate truth and divine

reality of the universe. Generally, it is uttered at the beginning and at the end of each prayer or during meditation. It is also commonly used by the Hindus, Jains and Buddhists. Similarly, the star and crescent are a holy symbol in Islam and a Christian Cross is a holy symbol of Christianity.

#### **Guest Worship- Atithi Devo Bhavah**

The saying 'Atithi Devo Bhavah' is an integral part of Indian culture.

Literally it means 'the guest is equivalent to God'. It is a Sanskrit verse taken from the Hindu scriptures, which later became a part of the 'Code of conduct for the entire Hindu society. The guest has always been of supreme importance in the Indian culture. Most of the Indian families treat their guests as God. They feel themselves lucky when guests visit their home. The guests are given VIP treatment whatever be the financial status of the family. The Hindus believe that the hospitality shown to a guest is one of their five basic religious duty.

#### **Indian Martial Arts**

Martial arts is a term derived from Latin and means "arts of war", the Roman God of war. Martial arts are a codified system of hostilities practiced by an individual for a variety of reasons, such as physical and mental health, self-defence, entertainment or even for spiritual development. India is a home to quite a few unique styles of martial arts, some of which have their origin in ancient India. While some martial art require some specific tools or weapons but the other's do not require any weapon or instrument. Mainly used for combat, some martial art forms are also used for healing purposes. In recent times, these martial art forms are not only considered important for physical fitness but are also popular as self-defence techniques. Some famous martial arts of India are: Lathi Khela of North India, Gatka of Punjab, Silambam of Tamil Nadu, Mardani Khel of Maharashtra, Kathi Samu of Andhra Pradesh etc.

#### **Eating with Hands**

Eating food with hands used to be a common practice in India in the past but in recent times it may not sound great to many people. However, eating with hands is quite healthy and beneficial in many ways. Our fingers act as heat receptors as they prevent our mouth from burning when the hot food is put inside. Eating with hands help us to check the temperature of the food we intend to eat. Eating with hands proves to be a wonderful exercise for our hands as it increases blood circulation of our finger muscles. Also, when we dine with our hands we ought to eat slower than usual which helps in easy digestion of the food we eat. Although eating with hands is a good tradition but one must thoroughly wash his/her hands with soap and water before eating to avoid any chance of infection due to dirt on hands. This practice makes the eating process very hygienic. Eating with hands is a widespread practice in South and East India, but it's a bit rare in North and West India. Eating food with your hands makes it taste better, enjoyable and more satisfying.

#### **Conclusion**

Traditional practices serve as connectors between generations. These practices provide us with a sense of recognition and belonging. They also foster moral values and teach us to respect and be loyal to others. Traditions create a strong bond between individuals or groups. The above examples are sufficient to prove that the prevailing Indian traditional practices and techniques are quite relevant in the present times also and we need to preserve them for our future generations. They help provide a holistic approach to our health and enhances are socio-economic well-being.

#### **References**

1. Ruchita Tyagi, Vivek Gupta, Rajiv Kumar and G.S. Wander: Traditional Indian practices: Time to revisit and readopt for a healthier lifestyle.
2. Tracie L. Scott. The Importance of 'Traditional' Culture in Modern Governance and Legal Systems. IJSSH. Vol. 3, January 2013.
3. Akancha Tripathi. Unique cultural traditions of India: blog/ Western Union, December 2019.
4. Rose Borunda and Amy Murray. The wisdom of and Science behind Indigenous Cultural Practices. Genealogy (MDPI), January 2019.
5. Stuart Walker, Martyn Evans and Losie Mullagh. Meaningful practices: The contemporary relevance of traditional making for sustainable material futures. Craft Research, Vol. 20no.2, 2019.

