

Urban Lifestyle – A Catalyst in Revival of Social & Cultural Traditions of Rural India

Ar. Vidya Singh*

Abstract

Urbanization post -Independence saw rapid fall in ethics and values affecting traditions and customs followed by communities in India as a part of their culture. This impact of ignorance towards culture has influenced rural people and they are drifting away from their simple firmly rooted life style as well. Social & cultural traditions have been a catalyst in keeping alive 8000 years old civilization in India. This paper is an attempt to revisit the treasure of culture we have and how current life style has fragmented the fundamentals of this great civilization. Music, food, language, clothing, architecture and many other aspects of culture can be reinvented and adapted with today's context. Researcher believes that a small change in life style & thought process of urban people can become a catalyst in revival of social & cultural traditions of rural part of India. Challenges of Global warming and over use of resources can be tackled by promoting sustainable living. Respect for nature and integration of traditions & customs with contemporary living may act as a catalyst for revival, suggests the writer.

Key Words :- Social, Culture, Revival, Urban, Rural and Life-style

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I. Introduction

India, the land, having 8000 years old culture is a mystic land for some and land of Vedic mantra for some. On the other hand, India is a country that gave “ zero” to the world and a country that set a record of launching 110 space shuttles in a day. A land that has shown the world how the Mars mission can be successful on the lowest budget and how various sects and religions can cohabit peacefully for centuries. Even after facing many invasions and being ruled by Britishers, India still stands high and has proved its mantle to the world. Even in the Covid-19 pandemic every citizen was fed and looked after well. The people of India always has stood united and that's the strength of this great country.

Despite second highest populated country and numerous problems and issues, why is it so that the entire world looks towards India? Why India is so important to the world? Is it only because it's a lucrative merchandise market? Why do people wish to explore India? Why do people come and learn Sanskrit and try to understand rituals that are followed here for ages? Is it the treasure that is hidden in Sanskrit verses? Or is it the gold mine in commerce? There was a time when the world used to speak about snake charmers of India. But the scene has changed slowly & steadily and today, India is the leader in Artificial Intelligence & computer technology services.

Industrial revolution happened post -independence in India and a mixed economy was adopted. This lead to massive urbanization. New technology influenced businesses and standard of living . The growth of public sector resulted in the development of infrastructure like roads, water supply ,electricity etc. This had some adverse effects too. The last few decades saw not only rapid Urbanization but its impact is seen on the culture and traditions of this great old country. As the economy changed, the lifestyle also changed. Western influence is seen not only on work culture but also on clothes and food. As we slowly started following the western lifestyle, we did not realize when did the joint families reduced to nuclear families and when festival celebrations became an opportunity to flaunt wealth and power and when the essence of culture got lost. The bonding between family members loosened as food is ordered and shopping happens online. We did not realize that the festive shopping which used to be a family event got reduced to an online shopping program and gave rise to individualism. Convent schooling not only gave rise to education for a job but also influenced the lifestyle of many generations.

Urban lifestyle thus gave rise to an altogether different social life which includes kitty parties, clubbing, pubs, fine dining, parties, etc. All these activities are perceived as an opportunity to flaunt money and a platform to

**Practicing Architect with 32 years of experience out of which 10 years of academic experience.*

establish networking for business or work. Sadly, all traditions and rituals have been reduced down to formality and cultural events are either for upmarket people (who consider it a status symbol to be a part of these events) or for few middle class and rural people.

II. The Culture

The culture in the Indian context is a complex word. It includes language, religions, food, art forms, architecture, music, custom, celebrations, etc. The social traditions are inclusive of culture and social norms. The vastness of culture can be realized only when we read or understand every part of the culture.

2.1 Language

The Constitution of India officially recognizes 23 languages but there is no official language in India. It is a misconception that the majority of people in India speak Hindi. 59% of citizens speak other than Hindi, though many people speak Hindi in India according to The Times of India. Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, and Urdu are some other languages spoken in the country. Sanskrit is the oldest and is said to be the mother of all languages. *

2.2 Religion

India is identified as the birthplace of Hinduism and Buddhism, the third and fourth-largest religions. According to the "Handbook of Research on Development and Religion," edited by Matthew Clarke (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013) about 84% of the population identifies as Hindu. Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakteya, and Smarta are the main predominant sects along with many divergent sects of Hinduism in India. According to 2011 census 79.8 percent is the population is Hindu, 14.2 percent is Muslim, 2.3 adhered to Christianity, 1.7 percent adheres Sikhism . 0.7% adheres to Buddhism and 0.4% adheres to Jainism.

2.3 Food

Indian food is influenced by the people who conquered and ruled and also by small colonies established by people of foreign land who came for business. India is known for its large assortment of dishes and liberal use of herbs and spices. Indian cuisines has local flavour as it uses mostly locally grown ingredients. Indian food is oriented scientifically and is quite seasonal. The culture , which again is influenced by nature, plays an important part in deciding what to eat as per the season (through religious bindings). Rice and pulses are important staples in Indian diet. The food is rich in curries and uses ginger , coriander, cardamom, turmeric, cinnamon, etc. Chutneys- thick condiments and spreads made from assorted fruits and vegetables such as tamarind, tomatoes, mint, and other herbs are used generously in Indian cooking. Indian people use hands for eating and is beneficial for health. Handling food with fingers releases digestive juices and enzymes . Many Hindus are vegetarian but chicken and meat are most favoured in non-vegetarians. 81% adults in India follow some restrictions on meat in their diet. Only 39% on Indian adults are vegetarian.**

2.4 Architecture and art

Society is known by the Architecture it creates and India is no exception. Influence of culture and religion is distinctively seen on the Architectural styles that developed in India. Prominent among all are Hindu temple Architecture, Indo-Islamic Architecture and Colonial Architecture. Temple Architecture, further, has various regional styles within them. Indus Valley Civilization is an excellent example of own planning . The baked brick houses, streets in a grid layout, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, citadels, granaries and some non-residential buildings established the fact of advancement in science and technology in that era. Mughals

*Source - <https://www.livescience.com/28634-indian-culture.html>

** Source – www.spoonuniversity.com

adopted local styles in their constructions and have created beautiful structures and gave a new dimension to Architectural style. Britishers on the other constructed huge structures to show their dominance.

2.5 Music

Owing to India's vastness and diversity, Indian music encompasses numerous genres in multiple varieties and forms which include classical music, folk (Bollywood), rock, and pop. It has a history spanning several millennia and developed over several geo-locations spanning the sub-continent. Music in India began as an integral part of socio-religious life. Classical , folk and film music can be termed as broad classification of music in India. Lot of western music influence is also seen . Fusion music is very popular among young Indians.

India is well known for its film industry, which is often referred to as Bollywood and the beautiful music & songs is appreciated all over. Dadasaheb Phalke was the pioneer in the indigenous cinema In India. Today, the films are known for their elaborate singing and dancing. India is one of the world's leading film entertainment markets, with the overall revenue raised by the Indian film industry exceeding **90 billion Indian rupees** in 2021

2.6 Clothing

Clothing in India is dependent upon the different ethnicity, geography, climate, and cultural traditions of the people of each region of India. Historically, male and female clothing has evolved from simple garments like kaupina, langota, achkan, lungi, sari, gamcha, and loincloths to cover the body into elaborate costumes not only used in daily wear, but also on festive occasions, as well as rituals and dance performances. In urban areas, western clothing is common and uniformly worn by people of all social levels. India also has a great diversity in terms of weaves, fibres, colours, and material of clothing. Sometimes, color codes are followed in clothing based on the religion and ritual concerned. The clothing in India also encompasses the wide variety of Indian embroidery, prints, handwork, embellishment, styles of wearing clothes. A wide mix of Indian traditional clothing and western styles can be seen in India

2.7 Customs and celebrations

India is a land cohabiting various sects and weaves the thread of different cultures with much ease and fervour. Greeting with folded hand is the most common custom in India so as washing foot after coming home (which is believed to shed away the negativity along with dirt & dust that comes in. This used to be outdoor in olden times but in contemporary context, no space is left in modern design for this important custom) Hindus celebrate Diwali, Holi and Makar Sankranti, Muslims observe Eid, Baisakhi (crop harvesting) is a Sikh festival, Jains commemorate Mahavir Jayanti and Buddhists mark Buddha's birthday. Christmas and Good Friday are celebrated by Christians too. Then there are festivals to honour saints, public figures and gurus.

Diwali is the largest and most important holiday in India. It is a five-day festival known as the festival of lights because the lights lit during the celebration symbolize the inner light that protects them from spiritual darkness. Holi, the festival of colors, also called the festival of love, is popular in the spring. The country also celebrates Dashetra – dedicated to Goddess Durga with the most fervor. Eid, Christmas and many other festivals are also celebrated with equal respect. Most of the Indian festivals are associated with regional flavor and are in synch with nature.

III. Urban and Rural India

As can be understood ,though the traditions and rituals are plenty and looks complex but this is the very foundation of a strong social bond. India has been witnessing this bond for ages but urbanization has diluted the spirit of harmony. No one realized that the very behavioral changes and lifestyle changes can impact rural India. It is a very simple phenomenon. Like we, urban people, get influenced by celebrities and film stars ,so do the rural people . They get influenced by what urban people do. And sadly the unhealthy habits catch faster than the good ones. Today, if, we go around rural parts of India we do not see the typical village skyline that we once used to see. The houses in vernacular architectural style, typically with an otta and a common space in between the cluster of houses which served as a multipurpose space for many activities including celebration has lost in the space of time and under the influence of urbanization. With pakka Makan(new RCC houses) the common space is gone and so is the communication with the community. TV also has restricted people glued to their drawing rooms only, resulting in even less communication among the family members. The urban influence is not only seen in houses, clothes, and music but also the use of abusive substances. This is a very dangerous threat and we must pay attention to this issue.

IV. Urban lifestyle – a catalyst of change

It is time to realize and understand that it is only the urban people, who can bring the much-required change in rural India. It is the technology that we develop and adapt, it is the fashion that we adapt or it is the eating habits that we adapt, that casts its impact on rural India. The village people always get influenced and like to copy urban people. May it be looks or food, work or leisure. Rural young people, in general, are drifting away from their roots. In the pursuit of copying, they are forgetting the basic fundamental of Indian culture. India lives in her villages – a famous quote by Mahatma Gandhi speaks in itself as the roots of Indian traditions & culture lie in rural India. Right from the local folk music to cuisine, it is the sustainable way of harmonious living that the centuries have witnessed. But urbanization, like a giant killer, is eating away the roots of our existence. If Urban people wish to enjoy good healthy urban life, then it is required that the villages should be made self-sustainable. And for a healthy co-existence, social and cultural revival has to happen. Urban people can become a catalyst to bring back the rich cultural heritage that once we enjoyed and which has helped us to

survive throughout these 8000 years. A small change in thought process, a little bit of patience and tolerance, and equal participation is what it would take to pass on the strong message to the followers of urban people.

V. Revival of social traditions

The culture in the Indian context is a complex word. It includes language, religions, art forms, architecture, music, etc. India is a hierarchical society. One of the great themes pervading Indian life is social interdependence. People have various obligations—families, clans, subcastes, castes, and religious communities. There is a deep sense of inseparability from these groups. Involvement in each other's family or friend actually never allows anyone feel left alone or separated. Emotional interdependence is observed on social and family front. Economic activities, too, are deeply embedded in a social nexus. Almost every urban citizen has a connection with villages and near-by towns. Though not much but even today there is an exchange of commodities and participation in few customs/rituals for most of the urban people. This has kept alive moral and practical support for the people, both, urban and rural. Rural people look for good advice and help for their children's education and jobs whereas urban people look forward for physical support and feels satisfied to see continuation of family/community customs and traditions.

In every activity, social ties can help a person and the absence of them can bring failure. Seldom do people carry out even the simplest tasks on their own. Right from birth to death, life is dependent on someone. Doctors for delivering a baby and four people to carry coffin. A child is fed by mother with her hand. Parents become teachers in teaching values and ethics of life whereas teachers give formal knowledge. In our day to day life we need assistance. Arranging marriage for own children is a well anticipated activity in India but today with changing life style and work culture children are given freedom to choose their life partner and family accepts it wholeheartedly. Finally, a person facing death expects that relatives will conduct the proper funeral rites ensuring his smooth passage to the next stage of existence and reaffirming social ties among mourners.

This sense of interdependence extends into the theological realm. Indian culture has always believed that one's fate is written by divine forces and that one should maintain his/her faith in the relationship with the deities. In all this, not only the family members but friends and relatives too play an important part and thus social spaces are equally important. The family structure has changed from joint family to nuclear family and now to family with grandparents. Thanks to pandemic as people realize the missing link in their lives. People were alone even living with a family (thanks to social media impact for bringing self-centred living) . Lock down brought a new realization for almost everyone. It was difficult for many families to live 24 x 7 in the same house. They felt their privacy is lost. Their individualism has been attacked. There were quarrels, fights and arguments. But within no time they could come with the terms and slowly realize the joy and happiness of co-sharing of spaces and lives.

On the other hand families living with parents had a stress free lock down. Its only because they could stick to their roots they could face the challenges with much ease. Same lies true for rural people too. Children who could reach home or people who had migrated to city for work could come back to their villages had a much easy time managing in limited resources than their counterparts who couldn't come back to home town. Lock down came as a boon in disguise. Family rituals and traditions were observed by the members of the family like never before and eventually has influenced family/social structure. This will ensure the return of social traditions with much fervor and joy. Ex. Due to paucity of time and also changed lifestyles people order delicacies for festivals. Lock down brought every member together in making preparation and cuisines at home and enjoyed traditional family flavours. Also, they feel the joy of sharing and caring. enjoy traditional family special tastes. Likewise, people can come together for major festivals. This will ensure continuing family traditions, and bonding would be strengthened and importantly traditions will be passed on to new generations without giving them a moral lecture. *

VI. Revival of cultural traditions

Cultural traditions is always associated with group of people. And it is the continuous practice of customs and rituals given by the culture, the human race has been successful in continuous progression with so much of advancement in development. The term culture itself proclaims the greatness of its existence, so as, the existence of its believers and the followers. Culture irrespective of its geographical location has a common thread. The customs and rituals as practiced, are in synch with nature and factors having direct impact on life. Culture has its beliefs deeply rooted in strong belief system that life is inversely proportionate with nature. Healthy nature ensures healthy life. Respect nature and nature will protect you. Our forefathers had understood that life cannot happen without nature and hence they developed a systematic method of worshipping nature through various customs and believes and made it an indispensable part of our daily life. So, we can very well say that it is this culture which became the fundamental cause of 8000 years of existence for India.

The term *cultural revival* therefore refers to the restoration of aspects of culture lost due to colonization, forced migration or modernization. Culture is a social institution which is fragmented today due to different political ideologies. According to scholars, cultural revival is a tactic pursued—consciously or unconsciously—by minority communities to consolidate political identity and gain recognition through an appeal to foundationalist cultural logic—that is, the belief that "authentic" traditions are unchanging and ancient, unique to and defining of a given community, and properly transmitted only to members of that group through heredity and ancestry.

Adverse impact of globalization and technical advancement is the change in climate and its impact on human life is quite visible. Global warming and subsequent change is seen in temperature rise, floods, draughts and shortage of drinking water has to be treated with utmost priority. The change can happen but for that we are required to change our thought process and life style. Sustainable living should be practiced. Certain habits needs to be corrected . ex. Use of tissue paper, use of plastic and use of power/electricity. Architecture fraternity has a huge responsibility in adapting vernacular designs and blending it with contemporary concepts and technology. Equal is the liability share of the society in accepting these designs and saving the nature and civilization.**

*Source - <https://asiasociety.org/education/indian-society-and-ways-living>

**Source – Cultural Revivals | Encyclopedia.com

<https://www.encyclopedia.com › history › cultural-revivals>

<https://www.authenticindiatours.com › india-travel-blog>

VII. Conclusion

So often intellectuals and scholars speak about morals, ethics and the deteriorating society values and change in social fabric. But it never goes beyond the point of discussions . Today , we all are required to think beyond all these arguments and move beyond cast, creed, religion, gender, and political/social ideology to take on the challenges that the human race is facing. Today pandemic and ongoing Ukrain war and its impact on the world economy has given us a glimpse of what is in store for us in times to come. Global warming, water shortage, electricity shortage and by 2050 food shortage too are the major areas of concern that world today is facing. As parents and an individual we always strive for giving a bright future and secured life to the generations to come. That is what our forefathers thought and gave us . But in today's context are we taking enough care and responsibility to offer the same to our children and their children and generations to come? In spite of ,we, being warned by people with real concern, are we correcting ourselves? Are we even thinking of being disciplined and try to imbibe at least one good habit ?

Our forefathers could do it because they had strong belief system which was based on the strong social and cultural values. They followed all customs and traditions with faith and without any doubt in mind as they believed , that all these rituals have a scientific and logical reasoning, though may not be understood (or known) to a common man but it benefits individual and society at large. But, we, Urban people ignore everything on the pretext of being more literate and technically advanced. Now, is the time for urban people to go back to the roots and try to revive culture and traditions . Every civilization has adapted changes as per the time but continued with the basic fundamentals/practices. Upcoming generations would appreciate this effort of revival of social culture and traditions and would thank us for this timely taken measures to save the culture and for giving them and generations to come, a peaceful life.

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