

WORLD CULTURAL REVIEW

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ABOUT US

World Culture Forum is an International organization who initiates peace-building and engages in extensive research on contemporary cultural trends across the globe. We firmly believe that peace can be attained through dialogue, discussion and even just listening. In this spirit, we honor the individuals and groups who are engaged in building peace. Striving to establish a boundless global filmmaking network, we invite everyone to learn about and appreciate authentic local cultures and the value of cultural diversity in film. Keeping in line with our Mission, we create festivals and conferences along with extensively researched papers to cheer creative thought and innovation in the field of culture as our belief lies in the idea – "Culture bounds Humanity" and any step towards it is a step towards a secure future.



VISION

We envisage the creation of a world which rests on the fundamentals of connected and harmonious co-existence which create a platform for connecting culture and perseverance to build solidarity by inter-cultural interactions.



MISSION

We are committed to providing a free, fair and equal platform to all cultures so as to build a relationship of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation which can achieve harmony and understand different cultures by inter-culture interactions and effective communication.

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In recent times we have seen the crisis looming over humanity because of narrow interests, but we believe in the immense power of culture in binding people together and for that acceptance and knowledge of cultures are mandatory.

Dear Readers,

This issue was created as an outlet to speak of the ever-changing nature of culture and humanity which is a part of every society. With this edition, we the "World Culture Forum" are presenting the first edition of our bi-annual magazine "World Culture Review". We are making an effort to align the magazine with the vision and mission of the "World Culture Forum" so that it can work as a strong force to establish the message via the wings of Research, the Fellowship programme, World literature festival, Film festivals, Conference dialogues and Awards. We immensely believe that we humans are an interesting species whose history is defined by desire in gaining and keeping control over resources and sustaining power. Cultural identity has been a central tool which is a phenomenon among several other things, comprised of choices by individuals and communities that define several aspects like religion, ethnicity and personal habits. The itineraries of this issue are hand-picked and crafted in a manner so as to give the readers an offbeat experience of the various cultures containing hidden gems and charming thoughts which may not have been known earlier. As a reflection of our commitment to promote various cultures and arts, we have composed different cultural practices like carnivals, festivals, lifestyles and several other things highlighted in the issue. We started off with "Culture and Humanity" as the initial article because we believe in the close connection between culture and humanity which poses the communication skills and

distinguishes human beings from other animals allowing the survival of human beings on Earth, despite the fact that human beings are not the most powerful animals to have emerged on the planet. In recent times we have seen the crisis looming over humanity because of narrow interests, but we believe in the immense power of culture in binding people together and for that acceptance and knowledge of cultures are mandatory. Accordingly throughout this edition, readers will meet in line with our mission to seek harmony among the various cultures and to understand one another. It discusses the loss of cultural diversity as it is important to unveil the homogenisation driven by narrow understanding, followed by the article on "World political cultures" and "Bharuch" an ancient city of Gujarat which was recently identified in the news as the second oldest city of India with continuous inhabitants after Varanasi, a fact probably known by very few people. We have also tried to incorporate a glimpse of the "Rio Carnival" which is the most important festival in Brazil, a festival of celebration before a period of abstinence. This magazine also further highlights that cultural tourism needs to paid more attention to as travellers come in contact with the region's cultural lifestyle via museums, theatres, food and other tangible cultural resources. The role of culture in bringing peace is a subject one has to stress upon. We brought some festivals into the light to create awareness to the fact that culture indeed plays a role in harmony and peace among people, like the- "Seollal" (Korean New Year)and "Korean peace

dance". We also tried to bring light on Africa and Europe by presenting some aspects of their cultural practices and history in our magazine. And finally, we have given a glimpse of Indian culture to emphasize the richness and diversity of it. "World Culture Forum" as an organization nurtures the idea of a socially engaged and culturally rooted platform across the world. In this issue we aim to push the boundaries of our thinking and tell stories that needed to be heard in ways we had not imagined before, basically understanding the importance of Culture for peace reconciliation to build cooperation, increase social acceptance and resolve culture-related issues, as the term 'Peace' holds larger connotation than just the absence of war. This issue thinks that such cultural experiences sensitize us to build relationships that exceed borders, race, religion, and colour by allowing us to understand more about other cultures creating mutual respect. Such inter-cultural interactions not only introduce interest for other cultures but are also are small steps towards building a peaceful coexistence and invites you to take a peek at your present, to celebrate it and to keep marching forward inspiring assimilation of our various lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Prahlad Narayan Singh".

Prahlad Narayan Singh
Editor

SERVING CULTURE AND HUMANITY



Aristotle has said that, “human beings are social animals.” Is this why we function as societies for survival? If so, what distinguishes us from the animal kingdom? In “Sapiens: A brief history of humankind” author Yuval Noah Harari has interpreted how human beings evolved and survived on Earth. The author has credited the social skills of human beings allowing them to connect with one another giving birth to humanity, furthermore, the cognitive skills of the sapiens led to the creation of languages. With the passing of time, evolution and the advent of globalization efforts have been made to homogenize culture, a meeting point for people to think similarly. But assimilation entails not just good but bad consequences often emerging as cultural conflicts all over the world. As culture signifies identity, insecurity of one’s identity leads

to disastrous consequences like genocides. Seen from a psychological viewpoint, terrorism arises from the fear that one’s culture would become extinct. Throughout the world, there is a cultural crisis due to the threat from the homogenization of ideas and globalization which to a certain extent promotes homogenization is viewed negatively.

Colonization was rooted in the superiority of Western culture with the colonized people’s cultures being viewed as derogatory and them being considered as ignorant. Post-colonization, protests were voiced from all over Africa and Asia and by minorities all over the world seeking to dismantle that viewpoint by “writing back to the empire.” (Bill Ashcroft) Standing by their ethnicities they wished to be identified culturally and recognized. This is why we wish to emphasize the importance of culture and diversity as it would bring balance and much-



Medical Mission (savinghumanityblogspot.com)

200 members.” (National Geographic) Currently, there are over 7000 languages in the world, if we continue this way more languages and cultures will disappear from the face of the Earth. Harmony between different cultures is a necessity which can be facilitated by understanding as culture is necessary for humanity, its contribution is immense. Thus, empathy is required in order to rekindle life when culture and civilization are dying.

When asked, why should one be worried about the loss of cultural diversity? There are innumerable reasons as different cultures have contributed to humanity in various ways. Quinine which is a malaria prevention drug comes from ancient Chinese medicine, while the prevention of the plague was found in Peru. Cultures have contributed not just in medicine but for the betterment of entire communities. These instances prove the point that only Westernization or Western liberalism cannot alone save the world or humanity. Globalization has connected people but mostly on the basis of capitalism leaving several gaps in the bridge to understanding. It has also led to hegemony, such that often small cultural groups or minorities disappear being assimilated into the

needed peace in this world. The news often speaks of a language or culture dying with a person who is the last representative “like Marie Wilcox who is the last fluent speaker of the Wukchumni language spoken by a Native American tribe with less than



(www.uwgbcommons.org)

mainstream. This is something that has to end. To bring out the best in humanity, multiple ways of thinking should be embraced. India which is a country of diversity faces many such challenges, but we should come together as a nation advocating empathy. A recent example is that of the opposed “citizenship amendment bill 2016” proposed in the Indian Parliament which sought to grant citizenship to Hindu refugees from neighboring countries. There was huge opposition from the North-East of India which is comprised of minorities as the demography would be affected and this would lead to a crisis of identity. Protests arose from Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh- where there has been a continuous problem of illegal migration with the migrants posing as a threat to the minorities of the above states. This is why recognition and understanding of cultures are essential as it allows people of diverse traditions, cultures, and languages to develop together holistically.

NOW, THE FOREMOST QUESTION IS WHY CULTURE IS SO IMPORTANT?

Culture and cultural diversity matter because it shapes an individual’s behavior, their thought processes and outlook on life-giving one a sense of identity. One of the problems of globalization is hegemony, which fails to shine light upon the various cultures of the world. It fails to include minute necessary details which are a problem as details embody beauty. In connecting the world via culture, one needs to keep in mind the details associated with various cultures around the world. We have to be aware that, not recognizing the specific attributes of specific regions, there rises insecurity as well as ignorance.

Our opinion as to why tribal people are averse to mainstreaming is because they fear that in merging with the mainstream their culture would suffer the loss of its details. They believe that they need to change their way of life in order to modernize which would threaten their identity. Tribal cultures are very enriching so instead of elimination, we should opt for assimilation of their culture. Many aspects which the modern world is unable to achieve are innate in tribal societies like the question of ‘women equality’, we should imbibe their mindset which sees men and women



Importance of Culture (wordpress.joseyphina.com)

as equals regardless of gender or sex. Another perspective is the respect they uphold for the environment leading their lives in tune with nature recognizing nature as the provider, unlike modern societies which fail to recognize the importance of nature leading to environmental degradation. Colonization brought about the crisis of culture, as the West sought to wipe out any culture that threatened them. This changed the world’s opinion in regards to homogenization, teaching us that every ethnic group’s identity should be taken into consideration. For assimilation, not homogenization is needed since whenever there is an identity crisis, ideology falls apart too. Recently 21st February has been named ‘World mother tongue day’ in order to celebrate the innumerable languages of our planet. We should celebrate diversity rather than trying to wipe out differences also this will bring about greater understanding of one another, leading to compromise and acceptance and in doing so, we will make way for a better world. **Team, World Culture Forum**

CHANGING THE NOTION OF WORLD POLITICAL CULTURE



Chinese demonstrators (www.npr.com)

The contemporary society is identified by extensive cultural contacts that intensify connections but also pose new difficulties in acting responsibly and sensitively to the unfamiliar. Cultural proficiency and diplomacy are primary to the peaceful functioning of a global system recognized by deep historically grown disparities. People's Republic of China's growth is unprecedented and showing an alternative world which is totally different from the political cultures of advanced European and North American countries. An important fact is that China is not a democratic country; China defines itself as a socialist state. For

almost a century now, democracy is regarded as the only way to flourish and achieve full potential for a country. China's tale tells a whole different story of political culture and what an ideal political culture should be like questioning democracy as a prerequisite to development. But one should keep in mind even China's political culture has its setbacks, as Mao's "Cultural Revolution" as sources states sought to "wipe out not just the capitalist tendencies but also the traditional elements of Chinese society". Furthermore, the continuous attacks on the citizens of China practicing the "Falun Gong" tradition as religious or spiritual practices are forbidden, the



incarceration of the Noble Prize recipient Liu Xiaobo and the colonization of Tibet, these are a few examples of a government which gradually turns authoritarian. This makes us aware of the importance of an ideal political culture.

“Political culture” is defined by the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, as the “set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system”. It encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. It is the product of both the history of a political system and the histories of the members. Thus, it is rooted equally in public events and private experiences. In 1963, two Americans Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verbal outlined three types of a political culture that can be combined to create a civic culture. These three key features were composed to establish a link between the public and

the government. The first feature is “Deference” which considers the concepts of respect, the acknowledgment of inferiority or superiority and authority in society. The second key feature is “Consensus” which represents the key link between government, public agreement, and appeasement. Support for appeasement may not always be shared by the whole nation but as a whole, people agree to sustain it and making it a common agreement. There are various examples of “Consensus” in British political culture like how people are governed as a whole, consensus regarding the welfare state, agreement as to who acts as head of state and with what powers. The third feature of British political culture is “Homogeneity”. Currently, the Church of England doesn’t hold much power and sections of the Scottish and Welsh populations have called for independence.

The term “Political Culture” was brought into Political Science to promote the American political system. This concept was applied by Gabriel Almond in the late fifties and is outlined in “The Civic

Culture” (1963, Almond & Verba), but soon faced opposition from two European political scientists Gerhard Lehmbruch and Arend Lijphart. Lehmbruch analyzed politics in Switzerland and Austria while Lijphart analyzed politics in the Netherlands. Both argued that there are political systems that are more stable than the one in the USA. Different typologies of political culture have been proposed. According to political scientist William S. Stewart, all political behavior can be explained as participating in one or more of eight political cultures: Anarchism, Oligarchy, Tory corporatism, Fascism, Classical liberalism, Radical liberalism, Democratic socialism, and Leninist socialism. Societies that exemplify each of these cultures have existed historically.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in “The Civic Culture” outlined three pure types of a political culture based on level and type of political participation and the nature of people’s attitudes toward politics. They are “Parochial” – Where citizens are only remotely aware of the presence of central government and live their lives regardless of the decisions taken by the state, distant and unaware of political phenomena. They have neither knowledge nor interest in politics. This type of political culture is in general congruent with a traditional political structure. “Subject” – Citizens are aware of the central government and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent. The individual is aware of politics, its actors

and institutions. It is effectively oriented towards politics, yet it is on the “downward flow” side of the politics. In general, this type of political culture is congruent with a centralized authoritarian structure. “Participant” – Citizens are able to influence the government in various ways and they are affected by it. The individual is oriented toward the system as a whole to both the political and administrative structures and processes (to both the input and output aspects). In general, this type of political culture is congruent with a democratic political structure. Almond and Verba wrote that these types of political culture can combine to create the “civic culture”, which assimilates the best elements of each.

However, the ardent critique of world political culture has come long before the present day. Many critiques dismiss the concept of “civic culture” of world political culture as something which doesn’t fit for the so-called third world countries working only for the developed West. This is proof for the political masses of most third world countries that their culture doesn’t go hand in hand with the democratic norms. Probably a different system would be more helpful for them. Presently, the USA and the UK are becoming suspicious of the political culture that exists in their countries. Maybe it is ‘time’ which will define another political culture altogether, a political culture much more accommodative and less judgmental. [Team, World Culture Forum](#)

POLITICAL CHANGE DEFINED



(study.com)

THE SECOND OLDEST CITY OF INDIA



Samdi Vihar Jain Temple (www.guidetogo.in)

Culture pertains to the patterns of perception and the behavior of the people. It involves values, beliefs, rules, and patterns of social, political and economic institutions. They are passed down from the past to the present through formal and informal processes. Cultural expansion is a historical process. Our ancestors mastered several things from their predecessors, adding to their own practices and discarding what wasn't needed. The culture we inherit from our ancestor's form our cultural heritage, this inheritance exists in various levels. We shall cite a few examples in order to clarify the concept of heritage. The Taj Mahal in Agra, the Jain caves at Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Bhubaneswar, the Sun temple at Konark, the Jagannath temple in Puri, the India Gate, Red Fort and Nizamuddin Aulia's Dargah at Delhi, Tipu Sultan's palace in Bangalore, Nahargarh Fort in Jaipur, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, the Sanchi Peace Stupa, the Bom Jesus Basilica in Goa, the

Pemayangste Monastery in Sikkim etc. All the above places are well-known representatives of our culture and are to be protected and preserved.

Following the line of our concern, we would like to speak of "Bharuch" the oldest city in Gujarat also the second oldest city of India having been habituated continuously after Varanasi. The city of Bharuch lies at the mouth of River Narmada in Gujarat in Western India. The land is blessed with rich black soil which is suitable for growing cotton and a variety of different crops. In ancient times, the city was a major hub of cotton and grain trading. Owing to its proximity to European civilizations the city was developed as a port known as Barugaza in the 3rd century CE. The city's trading history goes all the way from the 3rd century CE to 17th century CE with the Greek, Roman and Persians and other centers of Western civilization. The city's history spans across 8000 years. The city reflects cultural diversity and is an important region for various religions owing to the variety of rulers

making it an important center for Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists.

By the 6th century BC, the city was known widely owing to its accessible land and sea routes reaching the Levant to the Arab and Ethiopian traders feeding goods westwards to the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Western Romans, Carthaginians, and eventually, the Eastern Roman Empires, and the Republic of Venice. It is likely even the Phoenicians knew of it and thus, it has acted since antiquity as a link port to the luxury goods trade from the Far East and the interior of the Indian sub-continent to the civilizations of South-west Asia, the Middle-East, the Mediterranean basin including Northern Africa and Europe. During the “Prarga-Maurya” period in Gujarat, King Pradyot Mahaveer of the Pradyota dynasty, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha of Ujjain ruled over Bhragukutchh in 550 BC. The “Theragatha” part of the Pali Canon written down in Sri Lanka in the 1st century BC mentions Vaddha Thera and Malitavamba Thera of Bharukaccha as contemporaries of the Buddha, while the “Therigatha” of the same canon mentions Vaddhamta Theri of Bharukaccha. Excavations near the banks of the river Narmada in Bharuch have revealed many archaeological and architectural wonders, mostly temples. Later Bharuch was part of the Mauryan Empire (322–185 BC), the Western Satraps, the Guptas and the Gurjara-Pratihars. The Mauryan period was between 322 and 185 BC. The post-Mauryan period is mentioned between 185 BC and 23 AD. Princess of Sinhala, Sudarshana had built the Shakunika Vihara in the Bhragukutchh during the rule of Sampati (229–220 BC), and a Bharuch trader became responsible for the memories of the princess. This depicts trade relations between Laot and Ceylon.

It was known to the Greeks and Romans as Barygaza and probably had a settlement of Greek traders. As one southern terminus of the “Kamboja-Dvaravati Route”, it is mentioned extensively as a major trading partner of the Roman world in the 1st-century “Periplus of the Erythraean Sea”. One of the “Periplus” describes numerous Greek buildings and fortifications in the area, although mistakenly attributing them to Alexander the Great who never reached this far south, as well as the circulation of Indo-Greek coinage in the region in “Periplus ch.41”. “The metropolis of this country is Minnagara, from which much cotton cloth is brought down to Barygaza. In these places, there remain even to the present time



Swaminarayan Temple, Bharuch (theindia.co.in)

signs of the expedition of Alexander, such as ancient shrines, walls of forts and great wells.”

The location of Bharuch offered two advantages: firstly, the harbor was accessible to medium-sized vessels because the river Narmada was wide having good depth. The ships could anchor safely on a calm river bank far from the turbulent tides and undercurrents of the gulf. Thus, the port was linked with the Indian Ocean and the global maritime network while the city was protected by a hazardous gulf which only sailors could navigate. The walled city stretches 1400m along the right bank of Narmada on an elevated terrain overlooking the river, the anchoring area and the suburbs, the south-western parts sit on the highest hill, while other parts lie in lower undulating terrain. Fortification surrounds the hill at its base so that the wall is accessible from the river and low lying area. The buildings on the hill are separated from that the wall by a steep slope on almost all sides. These topographical and architectural characteristics offer a grand view of the city, which impressed the travelers approaching Bharuch by sea. Sage Bhrigu’s ashram is located on the Narmada banks and, according to the “Skanda Purana” legend says that before Bhrigu Rishi came here Bharuch was the residence of the Goddess Lakshmi.

“Bharuch” was formerly known as Broach or Bhrigukachchha. “Bharuch” derives its name from the great saint Bhrigu Rishi. Legend states that he was one of the ten sons of Lord Brahma. There is also a story which indicates that Bhrigu along with his kin asked for temporary access to Bharuch which then belonged to Goddess Lakshmi since Bharuch is located on the banks of river Narmada. It is said that Brighu never left the place and the Ashram of Brighu Rishi is located on the banks of Narmada. Bharuch was considered

to be sacred among sages and they would come to Bharuch to pray. The priests of Bharuch were famous for their learning in the other regions too. According to mythological stories Agnihotri and Samvedi – the learned priests of Bharuch were famous up to the Kashi in northern India. Sages like Shukra, Chyavana, Markendeya, and Jamadagni were said to be of the lineage of Bhrigu Rishi, Parshurama (sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu) was born in the seventh generation of Bhrigu. According to the “Skanda Purana” there are 55 tirthas (pilgrimage) located in Bharuch. Many great sages such as Kashyapa, Kapila, Mandavya, Adi Sankaracharya are also said to have performed penances in Bharuch. Bharuch finds its mention in major Hindu scriptures such as “Bhagavata Purana”, “Shiva Purana”, “Skanda Purana”, “Kurma Purana”, “Matsya Purana”, “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata”. The Narmada is one of the “Seven Holy Rivers of India”; the other six being the Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sindhu, Godavari, and Kaveri, it is believed that a dip



(gujratirecipes.com)

in any of these seven rivers washes away one's sins. According to legend, the river Ganges is polluted by millions of people bathing in it in order to cleanse herself acquires the form of a black cow and comes to the Narmada to bath in its holy waters. Legends also mention that the Narmada River is older than the river Ganga.

The people in this city follow various religions; usually, there is a sense of compatibility and co-existence without incidents. However, there have been incidents in the past in which this delicate social fabric has broken down. Today the city is supposed to be a great example of communal harmony. Bharuch is an important religious center for Hinduism being a renowned tirtha also known as the “Bhrigu Tirtha”, it also has a huge number of temples along the riverside. Bharuch is also

a sacred tirtha for Jains and in the sacred history of the Jainas, the city is important from many points of view. It is also an important center for Buddhism being mentioned in various Jatakas and in the 7th century was an important center for the sages. Bharuch is also the birthplace of Sarvadnya Shri Chakradhar Swami who established the “Mahanubhava Panth” (Jai Shri Krishna Panth) in Maharashtra in 1267. He propagated a religious as well as social movement in which members were accepted irrespective of caste.

Bharuch is renowned globally in the field of music due to the famous Pt. Omkarnath. Writers such as like Dr. Kanaiyalal Munshi, Balwantray Thakore and Sundaram have added to Bharuch's pride. “Raichand Deepchand Library” was established in 1858 and is one of the oldest libraries in Western India; it has a collection of about 200,000 books including some precious manuscripts. Ganpatram Desai of the Bhargav Brahmin caste of Bharuch wrote the famous book “Bharuch Shaher No Itihaas” in 1900, this outstanding piece of history is an excellent source even today. He wrote another historical novel called “Alexander Na Samay Nu Hind” or India at the Time of Alexander.

Bharuch cuisine is similar to that of Surti cuisine. The most popular form of the meal — a typical Gujarati thali consisting of roti, dal, rice and shaak (cooked vegetables, sometimes with curry) accompanied by pickles or roasted papads. Bharuch cuisine also includes perennial favorites such as “ghari” (a type of sweet), “malai ghari” (a unique sweet of Bharuch), khichu, undhiyu, khaman, nylon khaman, phaphada, and jalebi. Unlike cuisines in other parts of Gujarat, Bharuch cuisine is pretty spicy. In the cooler winter months, people eat “Ponk” a roasted cereal. The roasted salty peanuts of Bharuch are popular worldwide. Most of the food outlets serve only vegetarian food, as a strong custom of vegetarianism is maintained by the city's Jain and Hindu communities. Roadside kiosks called “laaris” or “rekdis” are quite popular. Non-vegetarian food is also available in some Muslim-dominated areas.

Novel dishes made from eggs (ghotala, kheema, half fry) are specialties, apart from this the traditional mutton preparation of tapela, fish (patramacchi), and lemon chicken can also be relished. Thus, Bharuch the second oldest city in India is a cultural as well as a religious center with a wide variety of cuisines. It represents the diversity of cultures which formulates our country India. **Team, World Culture Forum**

ACROSS RIO CARNIVAL



(c2rio.travel.com)

The “Culture for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition” defines culture as shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group. Culture emerges from the understanding of social, cultural, and natural patterns; likewise, a nation’s political culture is brought forth by individual analyses of the concentration of power in society. Culture is versatile being open to individual interpretations. This view of the extensibility of culture in general and political culture contributes to a richer understanding of the totality of political systems in developing nations. Carnival is examined as a celebration encompassing both political and

folk dimensions. From the alluring beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema to the Rio Carnival and the steamy Rio de Janeiro nightlife, the energy emanated by the marvelous city of Rio de Janeiro is nothing short of electrifying. Equally exhilarating are the bronzed and toned samba dancers, the pulsating samba music, the frantic applause of the spectators and partying at Rio Carnival. Rio Carnival is held every year in the week leading up to Lent and attracts visitors from all across the globe looking to join in the celebration and explore the Carioca Carnival culture. It is inconceivable to think of Rio de Janeiro without thinking of the Carnival which is the favorite holiday celebration in Rio. Anticipation and excitement build as the Carnival draws closer and the city radiates with the smiles and energy of the ‘Cariocas’. Samba music can be heard coming



(mustseeplaces.eu.com)

from neighborhoods and 'favelas' all throughout the city and crowds gather to dance and make merry all day and night. It is the inherent spirit of the 'Cariocas' and their true 'joie de vivre' that makes Rio Carnival such a glorious success year after year.

This annual Brazilian style celebration continues until 'Ash Wednesday' which also marks the beginning of the 'Lent period' characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures and fasting for Christians around the globe. The Rio carnival attracts approximately a million people from different parts of the world. The word 'Carnival' originates from the Portuguese 'Carne-Vale' interpreted as 'farewell to meat'. Thus, the Carnival is a celebration before a period of abstinence from alcohol, meat, and pleasure. This period lasts up to the Easter the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection, Lent is normally observed for forty days. The Rio celebration begins just a week before Ash Wednesday and the parties start in December.

The first Carnival was organized during the 1640s. During that time, elaborate feasts were organized

to give honor to the gods of wine and pleasure. Drinking sprees were common and the soldiers exchanged their outfits with the others to indulge in nocturnal festivities of wildness and revelry. The celebration had much in common with that of the Greek and Romans whose god of wine and pleasure is Dionysus or Bacchus. The Roman Catholic Church put in place the traditions of the current Carnival celebration that leads to Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lent period in the Christian calendar. The present format of the celebration was introduced by the Portuguese as 'Entrudo' giving birth to the Rio Carnival. In 1840, the very first Rio masquerade took place with polka and waltz taking the center stage. The Africans have subsequently influenced the Carnival with the introduction of samba music in 1917, samba is now considered as traditional Brazilian music.

The Roman Catholic Church put in place the traditions of the current Carnival celebration that leads to Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lent period in the Christian calendar. The present format



A Carnival Float in Rio (capitalfm.co.ke)

of the celebration was introduced by the Portuguese as 'Entrudo' giving birth to the Rio Carnival. In 1840, the very first Rio masquerade took place with polka and waltz taking the center stage. The Africans have subsequently influenced the Carnival with the introduction of samba music in 1917, samba is now considered as traditional Brazilian music.

THE HEART OF THE FESTIVAL

Ancient Carnival traditions in Italy consisted of masquerade balls with revelers dressed up in costumes, but Brazilian traditions were influenced by the Portuguese and African presence in South America. The Rio Carnival has a unique style, which is mainly attributed to the influence of African immigrant slaves famous for their spectacular musical abilities. African slaves brought to Brazil by the Portuguese, gave life to the first samba rhythms. Carnival costumes were made of various elements such as feathers, grass, and bones. The Rio Carnival of 2019 gave us a glimpse of the past as well as the future.

Sometime during the 19th century, Rio's neighborhoods began to take part in the carnival parades with groups of people performing the samba accompanied by percussionists, drummers, and other musicians. Dancing, singing, excitement and party spirit- you could find all of this and more on the streets of Rio when the Carnival turns into a competitive arena for various blocks or street parades. Participants are seen extravagantly dressed in their bright costumes as they strive to become the champions of the carnival.

Samba music at street parades influenced the

emergence of samba schools in Rio. Today, these schools are positioned at the very heart of the carnival celebrations. As the competition among the street bands increased, samba schools created a specific identity so they could stand out from the crowd. The name of the oldest and most famous samba school is 'Mangueira', which dates back to 1928. This school without fail presents a fascinating show at the Rio Carnival annually at one of the many stunning Carnival Balls hosted at the Scala night club. The best samba schools like 'Salgueiro', 'Mocidade', 'Grande Rio' and 'Beija Flor' usually follow the example of 'Mangueira'. People can sit back and enjoy their performances at the Sambadrome, a stadium constructed in 1984 which will host numerous spectators at the Rio Carnival.

The Carnival became a competing arena for Samba Schools in the mid-1900s when their increase in popularity. Street parades grew bigger and more dynamic with the appearance of samba schools, which subsequently led to the need to build a stadium. The spirit of competition required a powerful arena for presentation and soon the Sambadrome was constructed in 1984, a product of the design work of the prominent architect Oscar Niemeyer. Since then, the stadium has been modified with ideas from numerous immigrants who have contributed to its unique architecture in their own way. The goal of the samba parade is to give samba schools the chance to demonstrate their talents. They need to select a Carnival theme and compose a song, which will reflect its meaning beautifully. The theme is mainly expressed through dance and music. For the Rio Carnival, samba school members accompanied by passionate samba dancers in their fantastic and often provocative costumes allure everyone into joining the feasts. They are joined by a number of choreographers and designers who have invested tremendous efforts in preparing the costumes and floats.

Every school has eighty minutes to demonstrate their skills and convince the judges of their talent. Brazilian celebrities attend to support their favorite samba schools, while the locals and tourists come to witness this unique and spectacular event also defined as 'the biggest party on the planet.' All the Samba Schools compete for the elusive Championship title and their fate lies in the hands of the forty judges who grant points based on elements such



Samba Musicians

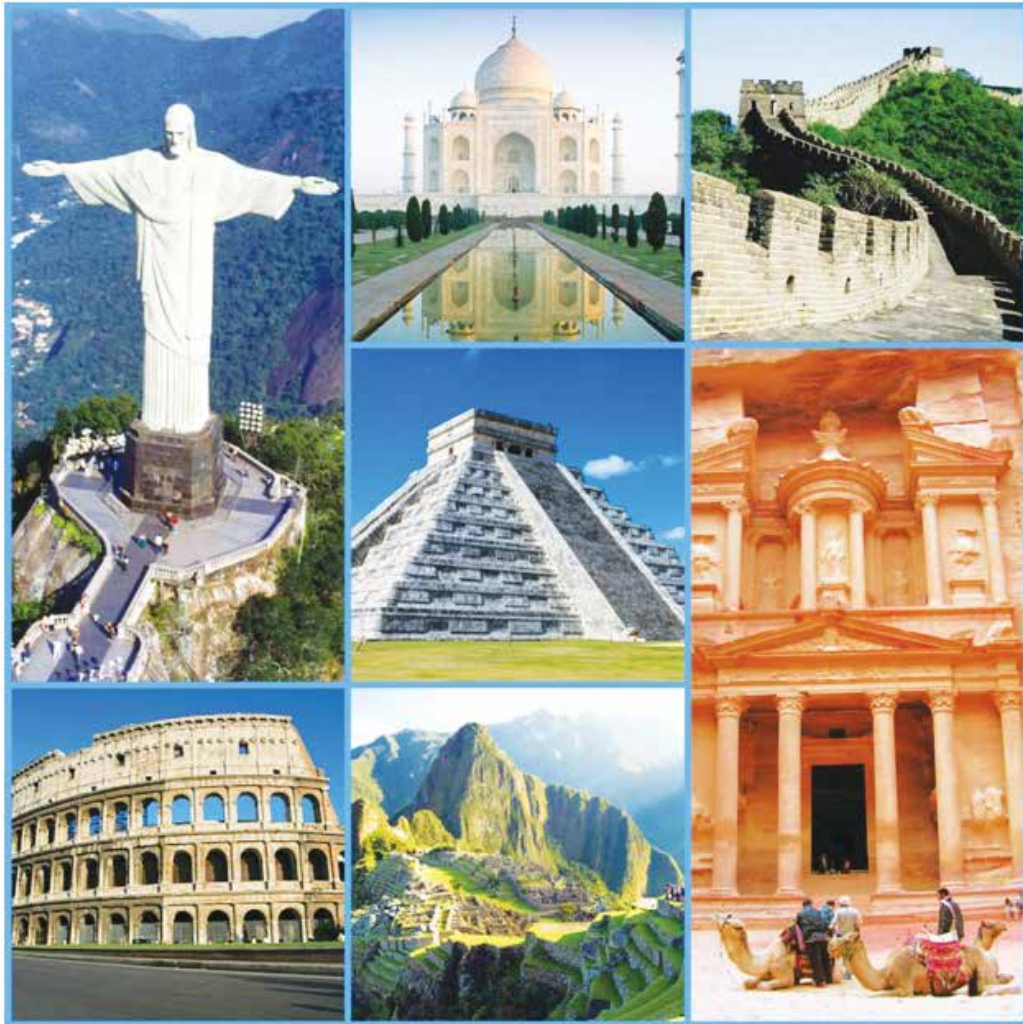
as costumes, the samba song, and the theme. The crowning of 'King Momo' by the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro will launch the Rio Carnival. The event opens the door to numerous celebrations such as carnival balls and street parades in Rio, where people can partake in the spirit of the Carnival. Almost every city corner is predominated by the spirit of celebration. The street parades are free with locals happy to welcome tourists to take part in the celebrations. Events like the 'Magic Ball at the Copa' and 'Scala Rio Balls' are attended by the rich and the famous from all around the world. The Rio Carnival 2019 is a celebration with no limits, no taboos or social boundaries. The 'Sambadrome' located at Marquês de Sapucaí Avenue is the focus of attention during the Rio Carnival.

The sophisticated 'Samba Parade' is the focal point of all competing samba schools trying to win the coveted championship title. Schools present spectacular shows on a daily basis and '2019 Rio Carnival' promises to be even more exciting than before. The Access or Gold Group samba schools compete to win a spot among the next year's best 12 schools. The schools present stunning shows as each of them tries to conquer the heart of the judges. The peak of the events culminates on Carnival Sunday or Monday when the top 12 samba schools

compete while maintaining a mood of camaraderie. Six schools who present a spectacular show grabbing the attention of the judges are selected.

Ash Wednesday is the day when results are announced and the best six schools make their ultimate performance on the next Saturday. The party is never ending with many balls transmitted on television nationwide. The upscale crowds usually head out to the Magic Ball at the Copacabana Palace Hotel. Ball tickets are a hot item as they offer a rare form of refined entertainment. The Rio Scala Nightclub is home to many Carnival balls such as the Scala Gay Ball, one of the most spectacular events of the Carnival providing the opportunity to see drag queens from around the world, in their most fabulous outfits. Street parties in Rio start weeks before the Carnival and are characterized by loud dance music. Every night gives life to more than 300 different parties attracting Cariocas and tourists alike. The Rio Carnival is a celebration unlike any other, providing people with the incredible chance to observe the most sophisticated samba groups with their spectacular floats and a number of revelers in their outrageous outfits. The Carnival which is a stupendous celebration of the diversity of culture, music, cuisine, and costumes is a chance of a lifetime. [Team, World Culture Forum](http://www.worldcultureforum.org.in)

PASSAGE THROUGH CULTURE



tracuadegupe

Tourism has an indispensable role in the evolution of different destinations all around the world. Subsequently, culture is regarded as one of the primary beneficiaries and is observed as a key asset in tourism growth by

promoting both tangible and intangible elements. However, the difference between known definitions and a complex correlation between culture and tourism underlines the problem of defining cultural tourism. For example, if one considers culture as a component in every particular aspect of human



life, it is probable to assume that everything is cultural therefore all tourism is somehow cultural tourism. However, this comprehensive and holistic approach is not particularly useful in identifying those cultural values important in the tourism and vice-versa. Travelling has given humanity extensive power to control events, which were never actualized before. Although very controversial, Columbus's discovery of America paved the way for the creation of the new world society we are living in. It is also evident that through travel, the British were able to forge a union in the world bringing forth the age of colonialism. Colonialism was a terrible enterprise but nonetheless helped the British to promote their language and culture throughout the world while gaining financially and expanding their empire. In today's world, tourism is something that is supported by the host country due to its advantages mainly owing to the commercialization of tourism. 'Cultural tourism' is a subset of tourism involving a traveler's engagement with a country or region's culture, especially the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas like their history, art, architecture, religions and other elements that helped develop their way of life.

'Cultural tourism' also covers tourism in urban areas, particularly historical or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. This form of tourism is becoming generally more popular throughout the world, and a recent OECD report has highlighted the position that cultural tourism can play in regional development in different world regions. Cultural tourism has been described as 'the movement of people to cultural attractions away from their normal place of a habitation with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural necessities.' These cultural needs can include the solidification of one's own cultural identity and to become aware of other cultural identities.

One of the aspects of cultural tourism is living in cultural areas, visiting any cultures other than one's own by as traveling within or outside one's country. Other destinations include historical sites, modern urban districts, and 'ethnic pockets' in towns, fairs/festivals, theme parks, and natural ecosystems. It has been shown that cultural attractions and events are strong magnets for tourism. In order to understand properly the concept of cultural tourism, it is necessary to



Sustainable Tourism in the North-East (thegreenerpastures.com)

know the definitions of a number of terms such as- culture, tourism, cultural economy, cultural and tourism potentials, etc.

It is important that the destination planner takes into account the diverse definitions of culture as the term is subjective. Satisfying tourist's interests through landscapes, seascapes, art, nature, traditions, ways of life and other products associated to them, these all may be categorized under 'culture' and marks the initial phase of the development of a cultural destination. The quality of the service and destination does not solely depend on the cultural heritage but more importantly on the cultural environment, which can be further developed by setting controls and policies which shall govern the community and its stakeholders. It is, therefore, necessary that the planner should be aware of the varying meaning of culture, as this fuels the formulation of development policies that shall entail efficient planning and monitor growth.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, THE DESTINATION AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

While satisfying tourist's interests and demands

may be a top priority, it is also imperative to ruminate on the subsystems of the destination. Development pressures should be anticipated and begin at a minimum level in order to conserve the area's resources so as to not abuse the environment and the residents accordingly. The plan should incorporate the locals by training and employing them, and in the process encourage them to participate in the travel business. Travelers should not only be aware of the destination but also concerned with how to help it sustain its character, while broadening their traveling experiences.

It may appear relatively easy to distinguish the variation between the concepts of culture and tourism as their limits clearly distribute their meanings, the same goes for the concept of cultural tourism. For instance, it is commonly agreed that visiting a cultural center in a country famous for its cultural exhibitions is regarded as cultural tourism whereas a visit to a beach is not. However, in recent years, the two concepts of tourism and culture and the meanings attached to them have undergone significant change. Some scholars believe that cultural tourism is something new or it is postmodern in appearance. However, by examining the definition of cultural tourism, it becomes clear



Diversity of Culture in India (pinterest.com)

that “what has changed is the extent of cultural tourism consumption, and the forms of culture being consumed by cultural tourists.” Cultural tourism is necessary for various reasons- it has a positive economic and social impact, reinforces individuality, it helps build an image and protects the cultural and traditional heritage. Culture as an apparatus facilitates harmony among people and it continues the traditions and helps renew tourism. The economic and social impact is caused by the incomes generated by the cultural tourism business, establishing jobs.

There is also an increase in a local production since cultural tourism is connected with other branches of the economy. As cultural tourism demands employment there is an increase in jobs, this helps in keeping the local people in the region which is a positive catalyst for regional development. Thus, it improves the demographic status in regional areas by giving new perspectives to the youth. Cultural tourism is a key instrument in regional development strategies in EU countries; it leads to an overall better infrastructure and living environment not only for tourists but also for the host community. As cultural tourism gives the destination an identity it gets well known and attracts people, which help to market the local production and is a positive force for economic and social development. Cultural tourism helps to establish and reinforce identity; this is a crucial element in preserving and enhancing the national and local spirit and traditions. Culture and heritage are essential features in building a country's

image, thus cultural tourism can be one of the key instruments in developing an image of a country internationally. It helps to preserve the cultural and historical heritage by keeping the traditions alive and finances the protection of heritage sites while generating awareness. Consequently, well managed cultural tourism can encourage the restoration of traditions and the rehabilitation of sites and monuments. Cultural tourism makes it possible to find a balance between protection and awareness of heritage. Without constant restoration and management, a heritage site gets ruined canceling future income. This is why there is a natural need for sustainable thinking in a world that is disturbed by conflicts, environmental degradation, and xenophobia often based on misunderstandings. Cultural tourism helps facilitate cultural harmony and understanding among people, more in-depth knowledge of other people's culture will stimulate understanding and a wish to cooperate. It promotes communication and integration and brings extra income and development while supporting culture. Cultural tourism is more in line with modern trends making it likely to see a further increase within the tourism sector. It is in line with the demand created by the rising education levels, the growing population, the increasing economic role of women and the increase in travel. In this world, where the pace of life is constantly moving the need for relaxation and preservation of the past and culture is rather important turning cultural tourism into a big business.

Team, World Culture Forum

ROLE OF CULTURE IN PEACE RECONCILIATION



Realizing the Culture of Peace (newstoryhub.com)

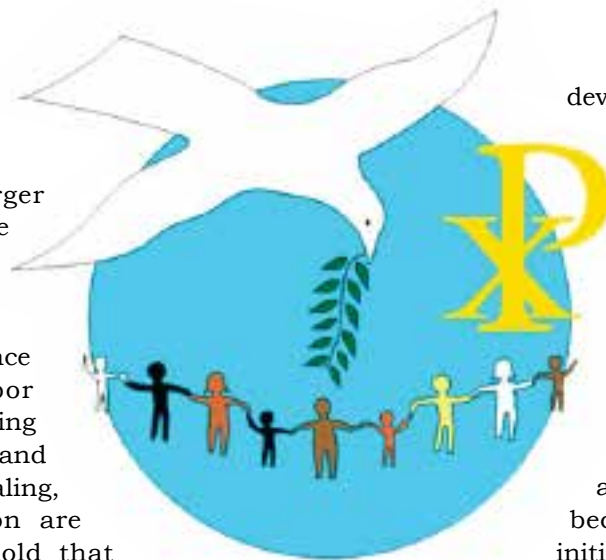
One of the most significant difficulties faced by the international community is the peaceful resolution of numerous harsh and violent conflicts. The challenge exists on two levels. The first includes the temporary administration of the conflict which usually involves negotiation and arbitration resting on the rulers and elites, although it still requires assistance from the general community. The second deeper level involves reconciliation. This requires a change in the societal repertoire accorded by the society members. The repertoire that serves the conflict must evolve into a new repertoire that can serve as a basis for a culture of peace. This latter level is challenging because it both lays the ground

for successful conflict resolution and at the same time prepares the society members to live in lasting peace. Culture is known as the basis for conflicts as well as the basis of reconciliation. People are shaped by culture, which deliberates their views and perspectives and in return describes the way they generally respond to difficult situations and determines their ways of interacting with others. Moreover, ideas of identity and belonging are deeply rooted in culture and breaching the boundaries of the above can be perceived as a threat. Disrespect, rejection or ignorance of other cultures is usually at the helm of reasons for many conflicts. Hence, awareness and understanding of other cultures should be promoted to build cooperation, increase

social acceptance and resolve culture-related issues.

The term peace has larger connotations than “just the absence of war.” Peace upholds the dignity and freedom of every individual to express them freely. Violence and conflict often harbor resentment and hurt, infringing upon the collective memory and shared identity for which healing, forgiveness, and restoration are required. Some scholars hold that one of the important steps towards the resolution of the conflict based on culture is the acknowledgment of grievances, victimhood, and scars of the rival societies in order to mitigate vengeance. According to Daniel Bar Tal an Israeli academic and author “, reconciliation consists of mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests, goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trusts and positive attitudes. It also represents sensitivity and consideration of other party’s needs and interests.”

In today’s societies, many conflicts are the ethos of political identity and a dabbling of politics which often harm more than solving conflicts. For this reason, cultural diplomacy should be at the forefront of conflict solving and cultural sensitivities should be observed. In the face of such situations, new ways of solving conflicts and the role of culture should be given primacy. Culture directs and influences society playing a crucial role in bringing sustainable



(pngkey.com)

development where it entails that stakeholders needs, aspirations, and demands need to be identified and met. The challenge faced by culture in reconciliation is safety and security issues, especially in conflict zones. The role of cultural activities and visual arts becomes indispensable to initiating peace in promoting understanding and respect

between communities for the uniqueness of the other. Such activities appeal to the emotional and spiritual aspects, which in turn shape the mental and political responses. “Cultural activism” helps counter the fundamentalism and extremism by providing alternative narratives while promoting toleration by generating interest in the other. It seeks to bring forth assimilation not homogeneity by preserving cultural interests and promoting peace and harmony.

Culture penetrates every aspect of life. Moreover, cultures and its spiritual values are legacies of the past which binds people’s shared identity, collective memory, and experiences. Hence, the preservation of cultural heritage is an important part of promoting peace since cultural heritage instills pride and confidence among people sharing the same identity. Cultural sites and artifacts are also a symbol of identity which can form a basis for dialogue and tolerance. It raises awareness and informs people about the history, traditions, and beliefs of others. This, in turn, helps in promoting understanding among people; this enhances cooperation and heightens sensitivity towards other cultures. Understanding different cultures will surely enhance cooperation between different people by making them aware of the other person’s mindset including the background to which they belong, enabling them to navigate through their relationships by echoing respect of the other person’s sensitivities. Thus, cultural awareness becomes paramount in the process of understanding and accepting one another promoting global unity. [Team, World Culture Forum](#)



Reconciliation of Peace and Culture (blog.penpalschool.com)

CELEBRATING KOREA: 'SEOLLAL' & 'TAEPLYEONGMU'



* "SEOLLAL" (Korean Lunar New Year)

(Wikimedia.com)

Seollal" is a Korean Lunar New Year celebration which is one of the most important traditional festivals of South Korea, lasting for a period of three days. Korea is a country rooted in traditional values where customs is rigorously observed and "Seollal" showcases the centrality of family ties, such that every person makes an effort to return to their hometown for the celebration. Families gather together and perform ancestral rites to receive blessings from their ancestors. They wish each

other manifold blessings saying 'Sae bok mani badeusipio' which means 'Happy New Year'.

The exact time of the origin of "Seollal" is uncertain but it is assumed to have been initiated during the era of the "three kingdoms of Korea" under Silla kingdom's twenty-first King Soji around 488 A.D. According to the common belief, people of Silla held memorial services on this special day and renewed their body and minds conducting themselves with absolute discretion. Over the years, Korean Christians have discontinued the practice of



(wordpress.com)



(9to5animations.com)

ancestral rites and have started focusing on enjoying quality time with their families. With the advent of modernization, the pressure on women with regard to food preparation has been allayed as the task is now shared among the family members.

The New Year begins with the ringing of a large bell pavilion called 'Bosingak' in Seoul and gifts are also exchanged on that particular day. They initiate the day wearing new items of clothing known as 'Seolbim'. Once every family gathers its members the ancestral rites called 'Charye' is commenced by bowing to the ancestors with an offering of a table filled with different assortments of food. Then 'Sebae' is performed with all the young members delivering their respects to the elders in the family by bowing before them.

Korean cuisine is unique and encompasses various types of food containing dishes for special occasions.



A family celebrates "Seollal" over a meal of 'tteokguk'/rice cake soup (archive.koreanculture.org)

'Tteokguk' (soup with sliced rice cakes) and 'Jeon' (Korean pancakes) are the special dishes consumed during the New Year. The Korean Lunar calendar has significant usage in their tradition since they have a unique way of calculating a person's age in which a baby will turn one on their birth and every lunar year after a bowl of 'Tteokguk' is eaten they grow a year older. Families also strengthen their bond by engaging in traditional games like 'Yutnori', 'Jagichagi', 'Co-Stop' and 'Yeonnaligi'. "Seollal" is a festival which upholds the family values and unites families across the nation despite life being hectic and highlights the importance of ties of consanguinity. There are some superstitions associated with this event, like the fact that ghosts will steal one's shoes taking away happiness and leaving bad luck. Hence, we see people hiding their shoes at night and also hanging a bamboo strainer on the wall to have good fortune.

"Seollal" is a festival which is being promoted abroad by the Korean Cultural Centers (KCC) in different countries; there is a Korean Cultural Center in Delhi promoting the culture and customs. "Seollal" celebrations take place in the Korean Cultural Centers all over the world like Egypt and the Philippines. Such cultural experiences sensitize us and help us to build relationships that transcend borders, race, religion, and color by enabling us to understand more about other cultures, this encourages mutual respect. Such inter-cultural interactions and experiences not only instill interest and awareness of other cultures but are also small steps towards establishing a peaceful coexistence. **Team, World Culture Forum**

TAEPLYEONGMU GREAT PEACE DANCE



Dancers performing the Taepyeongmu with a modern twist of ballet (sunburstkorea.blogspot.com)

“TAEPLYEONGMU” is known as the “Great Peace Dance” as its function is to offer a prayer for the peace and prosperity of the country. “Taepyeongmu” has been designated as one of South Korea’s intangible cultural assets in 1988. The dance is said to have been composed mainly after the dance techniques and musical patterns of “Gyeonggi-dodanggut”, a shamanistic ritual that worships the village God in Gyeonggi-do province. Therefore, it can be assumed that it originated from Gyeonggi-do and since then has been performed as a national artistic dance. It is also said to have originated from a court dance of the Joseon dynasty, as the costume is similar to the “gwanbok” formerly worn by the Royal family of Korea. The modernized form of the dance was reorganized Hahn Seongjun, a well-known dancer and drummer in the 20th century whose genius made the modification possible. Its rhythms are unique, not to be found in any other dance and it is

complex making it hard to master in a short time. The basic rhythmic patterns are classified into six types- nakgung (4 beats), teobeolrim (10 beats), olrimchae (3, 12, 24 beats) and dosalpuri (six beats). Its movement techniques are equally complicated including 22 kinds of arm movements, 15 kinds of steps and 5 kinds of body movement, etc and footwork is very important. “Taepyeongmu contains the essence of Korean traditional dance as it delivers the aesthetic principle of inner dynamics of stillness”. (Young-Il- Heo, Professor at the Korean National University of Arts) Famous practitioners like Han Young-suk have popularized this dance form and was designated as a “National living treasure” for her performances. It is generally performed by a group of women or occasionally individuals, who along with the colorful costumes, graceful body movements and the music create a breath-taking spectacle.

Team, World Culture Forum

WOMEN RISING



Empowerment via Education (<https://www.ketto.org/fundraiser/SchoolsInVillage>)

Cultural determinism' the fact that the culture in which we are raised determines who we are at emotional and behavioral levels, is an actuality exhibited by many theories defining the socio-cultural importance on individuals, their attitudes, mentalities, perceptions and their responses. Certainly, the levels of culture vary with different extents of impact. Elements from the general culture have the strongest influence on individuals, but there are identity markers with origin in ethnicity, religion, social class, age, gender, education, etc. We say "in common" of certain elements that occur constantly, this does not mean that they represent the national culture alone in spite of the fact that they belong to a cultural group or community. Another marker of identity is Gender, culture affects gender but the impact varies according to the gender one belongs to.

Differentiation on the basis of sex/gender has led to inequality and stereotypes. In general, gender stereotypes (provided mostly by the representatives of the opposite sex) devalue women, who are regarded as being inferior to men without the capacity to reason, as it appears in the works of major philosophers like Aristotle or Jacques Rousseau. They associate women with passivity, emotion, structural weakness/fragility or lack of virtues, as opposed to masculine traits of strength and dominance which are seen as positive. While man says and does "meaningful things", a woman is considered "fluid, ambiguous and open", in fact being a woman is considered as a state of continuous childhood. Both religious sources and ancient philosophy and the mentality that perceived women as the "weaker sex", were the basis for creating social representations and gender stereotypes. What is interesting, these aspects were internalized by women throughout the ages, as Simone de Beauvoir bought



Indian women in the Defence (www.amarujala.com)

up the differentiation between sex/gender stating that gender is a cultural construct. This was further contested by Judith Butler who brought forward the point that gender in turn influences sex making them co-dependent, such that we should question the differentiation based on sex too. Butler put forward gender as a performance by both men and women, wonderfully portrayed in Virginia Woolf's "Orlando". Thus, men and women internalized the tenets of gender behaving in the manner society wanted them to allowing women to be dominated by men. We need to question and change the ways of thinking and behaving but old mentalities still reverberate in the present. In order to overcome them, an "alive and detached thinking, acquitting, a non-ecologic, nor a possessive one" is needed, basically, awareness is the key.

Human behavior is subject to determinism by biological and cultural elements. This is particularly visible when looking at the comparisons that are made between sex and gender. These differences are communicated and reflected in communication. Cultural dimensions reflect specific aspects of the two genders, we notice the binary divide the thinking which looks at everything two-sided that is men and women despite social evolution, and this gradually leads to the propagation of the unequal relationship between men and women. Culture, through the generated representations

and stereotypes, perpetuates a way of thinking and further incorporates this unbalanced vision of inequality among men and women. Feminism responds to this with solutions demonstrating the need of dialectical thinking. A woman does not need to adhere to the societal conventions in order to be accepted, she should be given the opportunity of freedom to choose for herself and to be accepted. Issues of ethics because of sexual difference can be solved by creating and strengthening an adequate legal framework with the opportunity of a mentality change. Gender inequality is an aspect of the socio-political context in which culture plays a huge role.

THE QUESTION IS, HOW IS GENDER RELATED TO CULTURE?

Expectations about attributes and behaviors appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men, in other words 'Gender' is shaped by culture. Identities and relations based on gender are critical aspects of culture, as they shape daily life for individuals both in the private and public sector. Gender like race or ethnicity functions as an organizing principle of society, because of the cultural meanings it attributes to being male or female. This is evident in the division of labor according to gender as we see in most societies. Women are relegated to the 'private space' or the household while men work outside the home in the 'public space'. The patterns

and explanations for this divide are mostly propagated through the culture like in Hindu households there existed the 'antharpura' or private space for women while it was the 'zenana' in Muslim households. There is also the tradition of the 'veiled women'; in Imtiaz Dharker's works, we see the veil as a physical as well as metaphorical manifestation. While the specific nature of gender relations varies among societies, the general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own personal lives. This pattern of disparity based on sex/gender is both a human rights as well as a development issue. The factors that affect women's participation in leadership roles are different across the world, changing with the dynamic nature of the environments in which they live. Women within a particular society are affected by the environment they are a part of like social and developmental considerations like education, economic factors, and the level of development of a country, technological levels, political rights and civil liberties within a country.

Women in India and all over the world have gradually begun to acknowledge their true potential. She has begun to question the rules laid down for her by society and as a result, she has begun to break barriers and gain a respectable position in the world. Today Indian women have surpassed in each and every field from social professions to sports and even visiting space, there is no platform which persists unconquered by Indian women. Regardless of politics, sports, writing, technology, etc, women all over the world are "shattering the glass ceiling". In the literary world, names like Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shobhaa De, Jhumpa Lahiri, Tasleema Nasreen, Mamang Dai, etc shine equally brightly or even more than male authors. In the field of cinema, women like Rekha, Smita Patil, Shabana Aazmi, Vidya Balan and Konkona Sen, Kalki Kochlin, etc are such names who don't play traditionally female roles and subvert the categories of gender/sex. In the field of politics in India, we see women such as Indira Gandhi, Sheila Dixit, Uma Bharti, Jayalalithaa and Mamata

Banerjee making their presence felt. Undoubtedly there is a long way to go but female literacy levels have advanced considerably in the world. In South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, female enrollment rates in education multiplied in the second half of



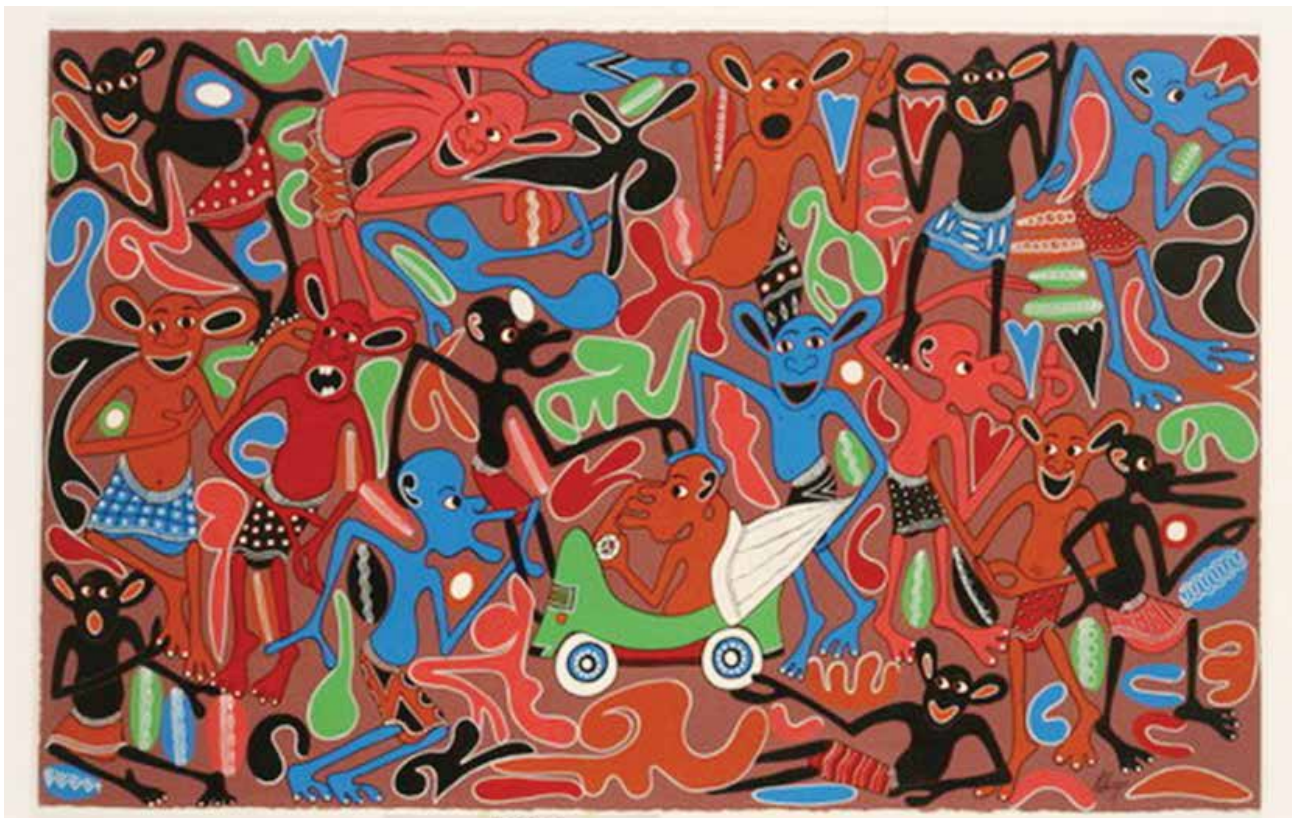
the 20th century growing faster than boys' admission rates and considerably reducing gender gaps in schooling and education. In several regions, primary registration rates have reached high levels like in East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, total enrollment rates for girls have

considerably exceeded. Another area of improvement, we are seeing is women's life expectancy as multiple women died in childbirth. The longevity of life has been ensured for both men and women with better diets, safer water, and control of communicable diseases, since 1970, average life expectancies have increased by fifteen-twenty years in developing countries. There has also been a marked improvement in women's labor positions in the market in many regions and countries. Since the 1970s, women's labor force participation has risen by an average of fifteen percentages in East Asian and Latin American countries, the female share of non-agricultural employment has also increased. According to the UNESCO report, there has been a clear trend towards gender equality in education in the last decades; though the gains have been slow and uneven. Education is doing more than opening new career avenues, it also gives women greater insight into the world at large making them aware of their rights and stealing them with the courage to stand up for themselves. These long overdue forces are slowly giving women near, if not fully equal opportunities. For example, women are landing more jobs than ever in white-collar managerial and technical positions. It is clear that girls and young women today are far more informed and confident than their mothers. Another encouraging factor is that these patterns extend beyond people who live in large cities or were born into affluent families. Increasingly, these changes are becoming prevalent across societies throughout the world. We hope that there shall be a day when true equality shall reign.

Team, World Culture Forum

AFRICA

THE LAND OF HUMAN ORIGIN



A painting from the CAAC displaying art from 15 Sub-Saharan African countries in Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (undo.net)

Africa was once known as the 'Dark Continent' designated so by the Europeans, seen for example in literature of that time like Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" (1899). Africa used to be a mysterious land for them because nothing much was known about Africa to the Europeans. One of the factors responsible for designating Africa as the 'Dark Continent' is Slavery which began with colonialism. However, in today's context, Africa is no more the 'dark continent' but one of the most attractive regions of the world in many aspects like resources and cultural diversity, including the fact that the ancestors of human beings are said to have

originated from Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is a large region, not only in size and population but also because of its cultural heterogeneity. Several distinct native groups live together in harmony and each nation has a different history, beliefs, and traditions to be followed. "Sub-Saharan Africa" is commonly defined as all the countries partially or entirely located south of the Sahara Desert. Therefore, it means 43 countries in mainland Africa and six island nations which are located in this particular vast region. An evident fact is that many countries were colonized by European powers while some are young nations that recently gained independence in the 20th century. Africa is



(stluciasouthafrica.com)

a land rich in diverse cultural heritage.

The term “Sub-Saharan” is considered controversial because it appears from the colonial times and

provokes atrocities committed against the native population. It is preferable to refer to a specific area like Southern Africa or Western Africa. It is believed



(kubuka.org)



Women from the Bantu tribe (www.sutori.com)

that since evolution, mankind originated in Africa and migrated throughout the planet. Moreover, Africa the second largest continent in the world is home to hundreds of tribes and native groups who have adapted to the different landscapes and weather conditions throughout the continent. The 'Bantu' is a major ancient tribe which has originated thousands of years ago and has evolved into over 500 different ethnic groups. Some of them are the- 'Zulu', 'Shona', 'Sukuma', 'Kikuyu', 'Kongo', 'Mongo', 'Luba' and the 'Swahili'. One of the most renowned and prestigious tribes are the 'Amhara': the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and Hausa, a traditionally nomadic tribe that has converted drastically and where extended family culture prevails in most of the areas.

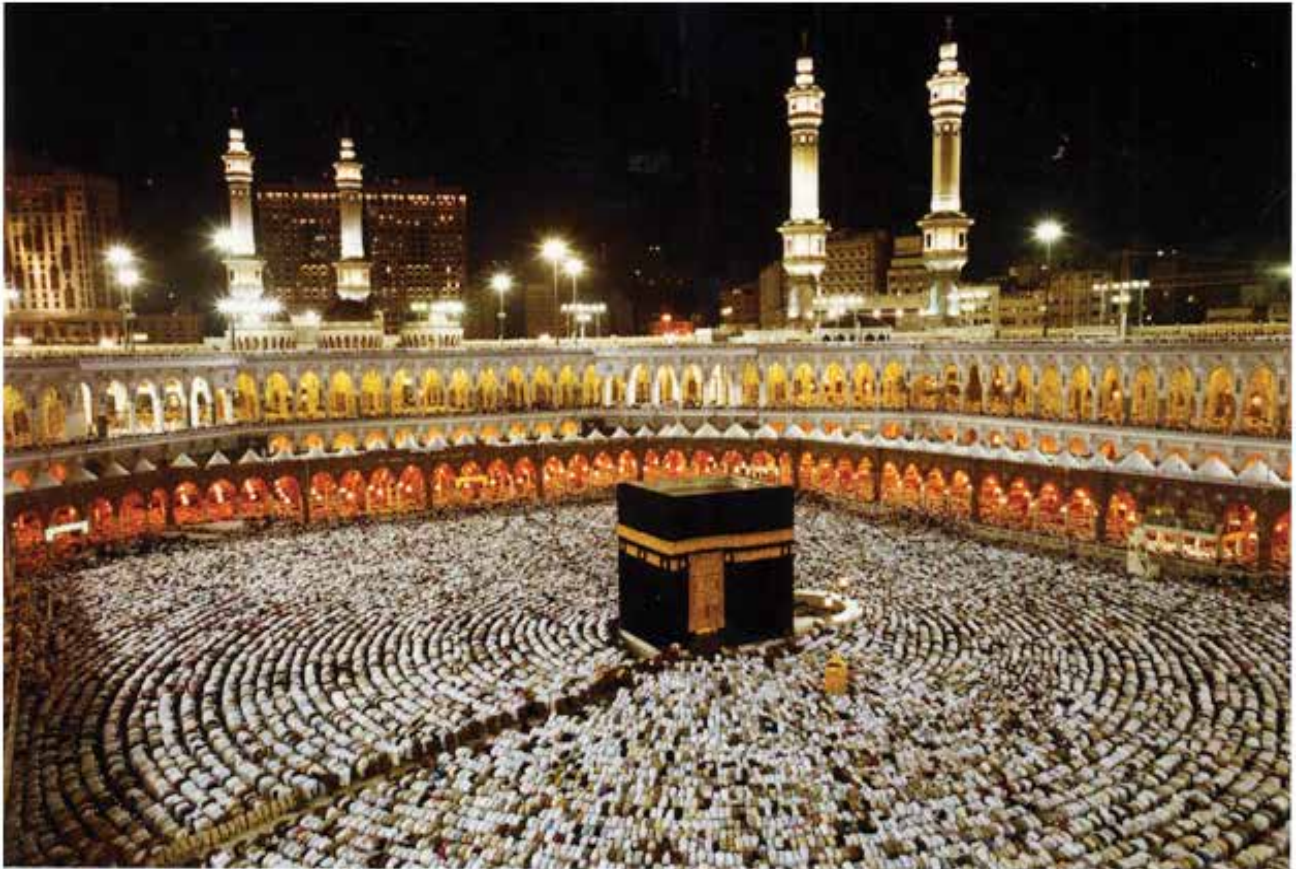
They have various religious beliefs and various theories, like a belief that religion is the soul of a culture. Christianity is commonly seen along the coastlines, where colonial influences were stronger while Islam is common in West Africa because of trade. Traditional native religions are found all over, which are often based on the existence of nature spirits and in honor of their ancestors. European languages such as English and French are widely spoken, however there are over 1,000 local dialects

which are grouped into five major families: the 'Afro-Asiatic dialect' in the Sahara, the 'Horn of Africa' dialect, the 'Niger-Congo' dialect and the 'Khoisan' dialect spoken mostly in Namibia and the 'Indo-European' dialect in South Africa.

Food is an important part of the culture as we grow up consuming the cuisine of our culture. Food remains a part of us throughout our lives, such that many of us connect food from our childhood with tender feelings and good memories and it ties us to our families holding a special and personal value for us. Colonization brought products from Europe and America, such that traditional ingredients combined with new ingredients to create a variety of dishes like stews commonly made of vegetables, meat or both. These cuisines are seasoned with plenty of spices, consisting of grilled meat, fried or boiled plantains, etc. Some popular dishes are the 'Injera' a flatbread eaten with stew, the 'fufu' thick bread made from cassava flour, and the 'jollof rice' cooked with tomatoes, onions, peppers, and spices. Thus, we see Africa as land not only rich in natural resources but also as a center of cultural diversity with the intermixing languages, cuisines, religious beliefs and traditions.

Team, World Culture Forum

THE MIDDLE EAST: CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION



(britishmuseum.org)

Culture has a great impact on individual value frameworks. It is a set of traditional beliefs and purposes that are communicated and shared in a given society. Culture also encloses the entire way of life, thinking patterns, language, and artifacts that are carried from generation to generation. However, this is dependent on people's capacity for learning and conveying knowledge to succeeding generations. In a nutshell, culture is the total sum of customs, rituals, artifacts, beliefs,

and values.

Culture encompasses the sum of ways of living followed by a group of human beings, passed down from one generation to another. Elements of culture are artifacts, music, literature, lifestyle, food, painting and sculpture, theater and film. The "Middle East" refers to the region that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to Afghanistan in the east, which has a total population of around 300 million people and comprises of countries like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon,



The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi (theculturetrip.com)

Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. Moreover, the African countries of Mauritania and Sudan are also considered to be within the “Middle East.”

Currently the term “Middle Eastern” and “Middle East” have been adopted by the people of the entire region to refer to themselves in order to be broadly identified among the highly complex and culturally diversified regions of the world. The “Middle East” as defined above, encompasses four distinct cultural areas: Arab, Turkish, Iranian and the newly evolved Israeli culture. The Arab, Turkish, and Iranian cultures are the heirs of great Islamic empires that had their centers in the region within the global Islamic civilization. From a historical perspective, the “Middle East” was commonly known as the “cradle of civilizations.” It consists of two major river systems namely the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Tigris-Euphrates in Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia) sited as the world’s earliest civilizations (e.g., Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian). This is the core, where urban life and centralization of political organization arose and the birthplace of the world’s three major monotheistic religions- Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam. These three distinct religions were forged in the Middle East, and now it finds expression in and gives meaning to the lives of the people of this remarkable region.

Archaeologists excavating in the “Middle East” have uncovered evidence of prehistoric domestication such as plants, animals, etc and the vestiges of settled life far back from the Neolithic or New Stone Age. From the sites scattered along the hilly flanks of the mountain ranges of Iraq, Iran, and Israel, archaeologists have been reconstructing the Cultural Revolution that transformed humans from nomadic hunters and gatherers into settled villagers who cultivated domesticated varieties of wheat and domesticated sheep and goats. This major milestone in human history has been referred to as the “Agricultural Revolution” in order to underscore its significance in the development of our cultural history.

Culture entails the human thoughts, concepts, and beliefs appearing in social behavior, common characteristics in the society, social activities and the creation in society. Here, the transition of adaptation from hunting and gathering to cultivation was based on food production. Settled community life was



Yemeni women in traditional clothing (www.apogeephoto.com)

desert, nomadic travelers were always welcomed into homes and offered food, water, shelter or provided any help they needed. Tourism in the Middle East has incorporated this long-standing tradition of hospitality into the services and amenities they provide, in order to make the travelers feel welcome.

In the Middle East, you probably won't find pork on restaurant cards, unless you're in a touristy area. Additionally, many restaurants and grocery stores follow the laws of Kashrut for Judaism or Halal for Islam. This means that all meat has to be Kosher or Halal; each is guided by a number of rules. However, Middle Eastern cuisine incorporates some of the world's tastiest dishes for example, in countries like the Mediterranean, you will find hummus, pita, eggs, cheeses, olives, fresh juices, salads, etc and some common street foods which include falafel and shwarma can be found in virtually any Middle Eastern country.

Jewish food and Arab food are slightly different, with some crossovers. Some dishes that you'll be sure to find in Muslim countries include manakeesh, an Arab pizza; grilled halloumi, a snack made from goat and sheep's milk; tabouleh, shish tawook, a skewered chicken dish served with garlic paste; or

kabsa, a rice and meat dish. No matter where you travel, you'll notice that many dishes in the Middle East include the same spices, such as ground sumac, isot, oregano, mint, nigella seeds and spice blends, including za'atar, ras el hanout, and baharat.

It is generally heard and observed that whenever or whosoever is traveling to the Middle East, you should not discuss politics. A lot of tension and disturbances do exist in the region hence, it is quite better not to draw attention to it or ask anyone about their opinions on issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the situation in Syria or the oppression of women.

The biggest issue typically gets into play while traveling from Israel to an Arab country. But now Israel has solved this problem by imprinting a piece of paper instead of in your passport. It is because whenever Israeli stamps get seen by an immigration official or an airline check-in, the employee could prevent you from continuing on to another destination.

The culture of Europe is rooted in the art, architecture, film, different types of music, literature, and philosophy that originated from the continent of Europe. European culture is largely rooted in what is often referred to as its "common cultural heritage". **Team, World Culture Forum**

EUROPE THE OCCIDENTALISM



(www.venice.com)

The cultural identity of any nation is not a simple concept. It is more like a lived experience that can be known by experiencing the cultural milieu and being acquainted with the nation's cultural products. As an intellectual endeavor, the attempt to understand cultural identity necessarily involves conceptualization. In order to show the difference between cultures, the East is referred to as the 'Orient' while the West is called the 'Occident'. So, Occidental culture means Western culture which is mostly European originated. To begin with, we will go back to the history of Europe which covers the history of the people inhabiting Europe from pre-history to the present. During the Neolithic era and the time of the Indo-European migrations, Europe oversaw the inflow of people from the east and southeast leading to subsequent important cultural and material exchange. The period known as 'Classical Antiquity' began with the emergence of

the city-states of ancient Greece. Later, the Roman Empire came to dominate the entire Mediterranean basin; the fall of the Roman Empire in AD 476 traditionally marks the start of the Middle Ages. The 14th century saw the 'Renaissance' of knowledge challenging traditional doctrines in science and theology, simultaneously the Protestant Reformation set up Protestant churches primarily in Germany, Scandinavia, and England. After 1800, the Industrial Revolution brought prosperity to Britain and Western Europe, the main powers set up colonies in parts of America, Africa, and Asia. In the 20th century, World War I and World War II resulted in massive numbers of deaths and destruction and the Cold War dominated European geopolitics from 1947 to 1989.

The Greeks and the Romans left a legacy in Europe which is evident in European languages, thought, visual arts and law. Ancient Greece was a collection of city-states, out of which the original form of democracy developed, Athens was the most

powerful and developed city and a cradle of learning from the time of Pericles. Citizen forums debated and legislated policies of the state, from these, arose some of the most notable classical philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle who taught Alexander the Great. Through his military campaigns, the king of the kingdom of Macedonia Alexander spread Hellenistic culture and learning to the banks of the River Indus. Meanwhile, the Roman Republic strengthened through victory over Carthage in the Punic Wars and Greek wisdom passed into Roman institutions as Athens itself was absorbed under the banner of the Senate and People of Rome.

The cuisines of Western countries are diverse in themselves, although there are common characteristics that distinguish Western cooking from the cuisine of other countries. European cuisine or alternatively Western cuisine is a generalized term that collectively refers to cuisines of Europe and other Western countries which includes Russia as well as non-indigenous cuisines of America. For example, meat is more prominent and substantial in serving-size; Western cuisines also put substantial emphasis on grape wine and on sauces as condiments, seasonings or accompaniments. Many dairy products are also utilized in the cooking process except in nouvelle cuisine, cheeses are produced in hundreds of different varieties and fermented milk products are also available in a wide selection. Maize is much less common in most European diets than it is in the Americas; however, cornmeal is a major part of the cuisine of Italy and the Balkans. Although flatbreads (especially with toppings such as pizza or tarte flambée) and rice are eaten in Europe, they do not constitute an ever-present staple, salads (cold dishes with uncooked or cooked vegetables with sauce) are an integral part of European cuisine. Formal European dinners are served in distinct courses, European presentation evolved from 'service à la française' or bringing multiple dishes to the table at once into 'service à la russe' where dishes are presented sequentially. Usually cold, hot and savory and sweet dishes are served strictly and separately in this order- as 'hors d'oeuvre' (appetizer) or soup, an 'entrée' or main course and dessert. Dishes that are both sweet and savory were common earlier in ancient Roman cuisine, but are today uncommon with only sweet dishes being served as dessert. A service where the guests are free to take food



The "Colosseum" in Rome (National Geographic Society)

by themselves is termed a 'buffet' and is usually restricted to parties or holidays.

Historically, European cuisine developed in the European royal and noble courts. European nobility usually bore arms and lived in manors in the countryside, the knife was the primary eating implement (cutlery) and eating steaks and other foods that require cutting followed. In contrast in the Sino sphere, the ruling class was the court officials, who had their food cut ready to eat in the kitchen to be eaten with chopsticks. The knife was supplanted by the spoon for soups, while the fork was introduced later in the early modern period ca. 16th century. Today, most dishes are intended to be eaten with cutlery and only a few finger foods can be eaten with the hands in polite company.

European Destinations of Excellence also identified by the acronym EDEN, is an initiative launched by the European Commission supporting sustainable tourism development models across Europe. The scheme is based on national competitions which take place every year since 2006 and results in the selection of a "destination of excellence" for each participating country. The winners are emerging, lesser-known addresses located in the 27 EU Member States, the Candidate Countries, and the EFTA/EEA countries.

Since the 16th century, European dance designed a dichotomy between characters and connecting local and parochial village life and foreign culture. While several nations (England in particular) went through



(www.venice.com)

times where dance kinds of foreign origin, principally France and Italy were lowered upon them, these styles saturated all of Western European enhancing and complementing local English dance traditions and vice-versa. Dance is an evolving art in Europe and its external influences come from even further away, nurturing and sustaining a living tradition. Since the Medieval ages, European dances are refined as they are based on the court dances of aristocrats. In ancient times, European dances were conducted as either sacred dance in religious ceremonies or for popular entertainment. Greek dances included religious worship, education, religious or civil

ceremonies, and festivities; a famous Greek dance is the 'dithyramb' in honor of Dionysus. Originally, Rome had particularly religious dances but as Rome achieved dominance including conquering Greece, more dance traditions were absorbed; the 'Bacchanalia' and 'Lupercalia' festivals highlight the importance of dance in Rome. Under Christianity, dance fell under the control and condemnation of the Church. Records of Medieval dance are fragmented and limited, but a noteworthy dance reference from the medieval period is the allegory of the Dance Macabre, during the Renaissance dance became more diverse. Country dances performed for pleasure were converted from court dances, which had ceremonial and political functions. In Germany, from a modified Ländler, the waltz was introduced in all the European courts. The 16th century Queen of France Catherine de' Medici developed and popularized dance in France, Catherine helped develop the 'ballet de cour'. The production of the 'Ballet Comique de la Reine' in 1581 is regarded by scholars as to the first authentic ballet. In the 17th century the French minuet, characterized by its bows, courtesies and gallant gestures permeated the European cultural landscape.

The politics of Europe is continually evolving, it is a topic rather detailed due to a number of factors including the long history of nation-states in the region as well as the modern-day trend towards increased political unity amongst the European states. The current politics of Europe can be traced back to historical events within the continent; geography, economy, and culture have contributed to the current political make-up of Europe. Modern European politics is dominated by the European Union, since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc of Communist states. After the end of the Cold War, the EU expanded eastward to include the former Communist countries, as of 2017 the EU has 28 member states.

However, there are a number of other international organizations made up predominantly of European nations or explicitly claiming a European origin, including the 47-nation Council of Europe - the first post-war European organization regarded as a forerunner to the European Union, and the 57-nation Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).



A European spread of food (shutterstock.com)

Team, World Culture Forum

CARNEVALE DI VENIZIA

THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

The “Carnival of Venice” is one of the most celebrated festivals of Venice known for its extravagance and grandeur, the Carnival is centuries old and it reached the zenith of its popularity in the 18th century. It is a colorful festival rich in tradition and history, its major attraction is the intricately designed elaborate masks donned by both men and women. The carnival employs the principles of the theater where all are free to engage in role play and the aristocracy and common folk shed their identities, mingling anonymously under the secrecy and cover of a mask. The festivity includes parades, street performances by musicians, jugglers, acrobats, dancers, food and endless merrymaking that culminates in what is known as gloved Grasso/martini Grasso literally “fat Thursday” and “fat Tuesday”, feasting before Lent signaling the commencement of fasts and abstinence from indulgent meals until Easter.



(robertharding.com)

effect on the masses ensured the perpetuation of the system and allowed the people to return their normal lives when the festival was over.

The festival saw the convergence of the lower and higher classes as the social sites were eclipsed by the anonymity accorded by the mask, the attraction of the carnival is the use of the masks and period costumes which erased social barriers and gave the appearance of equality during the festival and allowed the pursuit of unmitigated revelry. However, on the flipside, different kinds of crimes ensued as masked perpetrators got away in the confusion, unrecognized. The carnival is also the background for the narrative of the famous Italian Giacomo Casanova who wrote fervid tales of notorious affairs. Due to the tendency of the carnival to descend into chaos, the Venetian Republic enacted laws to prohibit wearing of masks and costumes into certain places and restricted it to the masquerade balls. With the fall of the Republic and Napoleon’s coming to power, the Venetian Carnival was abolished with the last carnival having been celebrated in 1797.

The masks worn at the Carnival of Venice consists of different types, attached with various significances. ‘Bauta’ a mask originally stark white is now heavily gilded worn along with a black cape called the ‘tabarro’

The first account of the Carnival mentioned as a public celebration is found in a record of 1094, it acquired the official status of a public holiday in 1296 through the declaration made by the Senate. In the succeeding centuries, the celebration is believed to have gone on for about six weeks starting from 26th December to Ash Wednesday. During the heyday of the celebrations, the fanfare could be seen in the city’s main areas like Riva deli Schiavone and St Mark’s square.

There is some uncertainty as to the origins of the carnival; some scholars trace its root to Roman Saturnalia and Greek Dionysian celebrations which were religious festivals where its meaning was manifested through various symbolic representations. The Carnival allowed parades, performances, and other avenues to depict the inversion of ruling authorities and oppressive systems. Some scholars have interpreted that satire and the culture of laughter intrinsic to the festival as a safety valve, which allowed the lower classes to vent their frustration against the prevailing system within the ambit of the festive celebration. The cathartic



Women in masks (blog.friendlyrentals.com)

had become a standardized society mask and disguise regulated by the Venetian government. The 'bauta' was originally worn by men but some paintings of the 18th century depict women wearing it along with a 'tricorn' hat. Meanwhile, the 'Columbina' is a half mask often extravagantly decorated with feathers and gems held up to the face by a baton or tied with a ribbon. The 'Moretta or Servetta Muta' was a small strapless black velvet mask with wide eyeholes and no lips or mouth worn by Patrician women and fell into disuse in 1760. The 'Medico Della Peste' or the plague doctor mask's use in the Carnival is a modern convention; other masks widely seen are the 'Volto' (face)/ 'Larva' (ghost), the 'Pantalone', 'Arlecchino' (Harlequin) and the 'Zanni'. The 'Mascherari' or mask makers were renowned as artisans and even had a statute dated 10th April 1436. The indispensability of

the masks to the Venetian culture of the Carnival is testified by the highly evolved and preserved traditional craftsmanship.

The "Carnival of Venice" was abolished under Napoleon and had a hiatus of around two hundred years. The pomp and glory of the Carnival were reorganized in 1967, but it was not until 1979 when the Italian Government officially reintroduced the "Carnival" as a means of reviving Venice's rich cultural tradition.

Some Scholars see the "Carnival" as a counter-culture where laughter is an integral part of the subversive attack not just on symbols of power and authority is the ruling power or aristocracy, but also on the very concept of folk culture itself. The complete resistance of accepted norms and social conformity and through its mirthful inversion of prevailing institutions, the Carnival is believed to offer an alternative to official culture. Today, the "Venetian Carnival" is a Cultural heritage which brings a million tourists every year to take part in the temporary reprieve that it provides from normal life. The costumes have also taken on various modern twists resembling Hollywood movie characters apart from the traditional eighteenth-century themed Venetian figures. The Carnival allows people of different cultures and backgrounds to come together allowing cultural convergence, where every identity is eclipsed behind the mask and the costume.



(venicecarnival.com)

Team, World Culture Forum

THE MELTING POT OF CULTURE : INDIA



Independence celebrations at India Gate (Askideas.com)

Culture is defined by Wikipedia as the social behavior and norms found in human societies. It is a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena transmitted through social learning in human societies. Individuals may inherit certain characteristics from their parents but social-cultural patterns are not inherited, they are passed down by family members and the society in which they live making it apparent that the culture of human beings is influenced by the physical and social environments which they are a part of. India is referred to as the “Midnight’s Children” bringing to mind Salman Rushdie’s wonderful novel, across the world as India came to freedom in 1947 at the stroke of midnight. What should be kept in mind is that India is not just the nation-state of 1947, but also a cornucopia of the cultures it encompasses. India’s culture goes way back to ancient civilization with various religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Islam thriving as a way of life, which indicates the accommodative nature of the Indian culture which transcends rigidity of religion. India is a land of diversity which requires a broad perspective allowing each and every Indian citizen to be encompassed within it, preventing alienation.

The “Culture of India” refers collectively to the thousands of distinct and unique cultures of all religions and communities present in India right from the north to the south, the east and the west. Indian languages, cuisine, dance, music, and customs differ from one region to another within the country. Indian culture is often labeled as an amalgamation of several cultures that spans across the Indian subcontinent and has been influenced by a history that is several centuries old.

India being a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society rejoices in holidays and festivals of various religions. The three foremost public holidays in India- the Independence Day, the Republic Day and Gandhi Jayanti are observed with zeal and enthusiasm across India. In addition, many Indian states and localities have regional festivals depending on prevalent religious and linguistic demographics. Popular spiritual festivals include the Hindu festivals of Diwali, Maha Shivratri, Durga Puja, Holi, Ugadi, Onam, and Dussehra, etc along with Eid, Buddha Purnima, Christmas, Lohri and Mahavir Jayanti, etc. Several harvest festivals such as Makar Sankranti, Sohrai, Pusnâ, Hornbill, ChapcharKut, Pongal, etc are also fairly popular Indian festivals. The New Year



Holi, the festival of colours (wikimilli.com)

is celebrated in diverse, unique ways throughout the country like the Ugadi, Bihu, GudhiPadwa, Puthandu, Vaisakhi, PohelaBoishakh, Vishu and Vishuva Sankranti, etc.

Islam in India is the second largest religion with over 172 million Muslims, according to India's 2011 census. The Islamic festivals which are observed and declared as a public holiday in India are- Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha (Bakri Eid), Milad-un-Nabi, Muharram, and Shab-e-Barat. Some of the Indian states have declared regional holidays for the particular regional popular festivals; such as Arba'een, Jumu'ah-tul-Wida, and Shab-e-Qadar. Christianity is India's third greatest religion with over 23 million Christians where 17 million are Roman Catholics. The country celebrates Christmas and Good Friday as public holidays. Regional and community fairs are also common and popular festivals in India like the Pushkar fair of Rajasthan, which is one of the world's largest sales of cattle and livestock.

India is known for its love of food and spices. Cuisine and food are principal to the cultural and religious practices of most communities, due to this it is mandatory to know and acknowledge the food and practices of different cultures to build your own cultural competence. India has an astounding range of wonderful festivals that mark the calendar; these festivals are connected with culinary delicacies and are celebrated with enthusiasm and gusto. No ceremony is considered complete without the table richly decorated with the traditional delicacies of the festival like gujya on Holi, mithai and selroti on Diwali, haleem in Murram, turkey on Christmas day and khapsyo during Buddha Jayanti. India is a home of bewildering diversity, a unique and colorful mosaic of people of

various faiths. These diverse, rich and colorful cultural elements create the harmonious hymn which makes India. Indian food is as diverse as the country; Indian cuisines use numerous ingredients deploying a wide range of food preparation styles, cooking techniques, and culinary presentation. From salads to sauces, vegetarian to non-vegetarian, spices, bread to desserts, etc, Indian cuisine is variably complex. Harold McGee, a darling of many Michelin-starred chefs wrote: ".for sheer inventiveness with the milk itself as the primary ingredient, no country on earth can match India."

Several Indian dishes are historically recorded in books like the 'Mānasollāsa' (The Delight of Mind), written in the 12th century. The book describes the need to change cuisines and foods with seasons including multiple methods of cooking, the excellent blend of flavors, the sensation of various foods and the preparation and style of dining amongst other things. Indian cuisine differs from region to region indicating the local produce, cultural diversity and mixed demographics of the country. Generally, Indian cuisine can be split into five classes – Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and North-Eastern. The diversity of Indian cuisine is marked by the differing use of many spices and herbs, a wide assortment of recipes and cooking techniques. Indian dishes include a wide assortment of vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian dishes including chicken, mutton, beef, buff, pork, fish and other seafood, etc. Fish-based cuisines are prevalent in eastern states of India, particularly West Bengal and the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

There are hundreds of varieties of dessert from different parts of India; these are called 'mithai' or sweets. Sugar and desserts have a long history in India: by about 500 BC people in India had developed the technology to produce sugar crystals. In the local language, these crystals were called 'khanda' which is the source of the word candy. Despite this diversity, many unifying elements do emerge like varied uses of spices are an essential part of certain food arrangements and are used to intensify the flavor of a dish and create unique flavors and aromas. Cuisine across India has also been affected by various cultural groups that entered India, such as the Central Asians, Arabs, Mughals, and European colonists. Sweets are very popular among Indians, particularly in Bengal where both Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims distribute sweets to mark joyous moments.



Religious festivals of India

Indian cuisine is one of the most popular cuisines across the globe. In most Indian eateries outside India the menu does not do justice to the tremendous variety of Indian cuisine accessible, the most common cuisine served on the menu would be Punjabi cuisine ('chicken tikka masala' is a very popular dish in the United Kingdom). Eateries serving cuisines from other regions of India are also found, but they are rare. Historically, Indian spices and herbs were one of the most sought-after trade commodities, the spice trade between India and Europe led to the rise and dominance of Arab traders to such a degree that European explorers such as Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus set out to discover new trade routes with India leading to the Age of Discovery. The popularity of 'curry', which originated in India across Asia, has often led to the dish being labeled as "pan-Asian". Regional Indian cuisine continues to evolve; a fusion of East Asian and Western cooking methods with traditional cuisines, along with regional adaptations of fast food is prominent in major Indian cities.

The music of India is one of the earliest musical traditions in the world; the origins of Indian music go back to the Vedas. Many different legends have surfaced concerning the origins and development of Indian classical music, showcasing the importance music has to Indian culture. Modern historical and cultural research has also provided a good perspective on the field, showing that Indian music has developed within a very complex interaction between different people of different races and cultures. Music is an indispensable part of India's culture, 'Natyashastra' a 2000-year-old Sanskrit text, describes five systems

of taxonomy to classify musical apparatuses. One of these classical Indian systems incorporates musical instruments into four groups according to four primary sources of vibration: strings, membranes, cymbals, and air. According to 'Reis Flora', this is similar to the Western theory of organology.

Archaeologists have also announced the discovery of a 3000-year-old, twenty key carefully shaped polished basalt lithophone in the highlands of Odisha. The oldest preserved examples of Indian music are the hymns of the 'Samaveda' (1000 BC) that are still sung in certain Vedic Śrauta sacrifices; this is the earliest account of Indian musical hymns. It introduced a tonal formation consisting of seven notes, which were listed in descending order as- *Krusht*, *Pratham*, *Dwitiya*, *Tritiya*, *Chaturth*, *Mandra*, and *Atiswār*, these refer to the notes of a flute which was the only fixed frequency instrument then. The 'Samaveda' and other Hindu texts heavily influenced India's classical music tradition, which is known today in two distinct styles: 'Carnatic' and 'Hindustani' music. Both the Carnatic music and Hindustani music arrangements are based on the melodic base (*Rāga*), sung to a rhythmic cycle (*Tāla*); these principles were refined in the 'Nāṭyaśāstra' (200 BC) and the 'Dattilam' (300 AD). The current music of India includes multiple varieties of religious, classical, folk, filmy, rock, pop and dance music. The appeal of traditional classical music and dance is on the rapid decline, especially among the younger generation. Prominent contemporary Indian musical forms included filmy and Indian pop music, filmy refers to the wide range of music written and performed for mainstream Indian cinema primarily Bollywood and accounts for more than seventy percent of all music sales in the country. Indian pop is one of the most popular contemporary styles of Indian music which is a fusion of either Indian folk, classical or Sufi music with Western musical traditions. The logic for the differentiation between North and South Indian music is not clear; the commonly held belief is that North Indian music developed along different lines due to increased exposure to the Islamic world, this appears from nearly 800 years of Islamic rule over northern India. Unfortunately, this answer is considered a gross oversimplification. For instance, the state of Kerala in southern India has an extremely large Muslim population, but virtually no identification with north Indian music and by the same token, the Islamic influence over Orissa (north) was negligible, yet the



Weddings of India (a2zweddingcards.com)

art forms are clearly identifiable as Hindustani.

Drama and dance (Nāṭya) are considered to be the fifth Vedic scripture, as combined with an epic story tending to virtue, wealth, joy and spiritual freedom, it must contain the significance of every scripture and forward every art. The first chapter of 'Nāṭyaśāstra' (200 BC – 200 CE) tells the story of the 'Natyaveda' created by the deity Brahma and taught to a mystic scholar named Bharata. India has had a long romance with the art of dance, the Hindu Sanskrit texts 'Nāṭyaśāstra' (Science of Dance) and 'Abhinaya Darpana' (Mirror of Gestures) are estimated to be from 200 BC to early centuries of the 1st millennium CE. The Indian art of dance as taught in these ancient books, according to Ragini Devi is the expression of inner beauty and the divine in man. It is a deliberate art, nothing is left to chance while each gesture seeks to communicate the ideas, and each facial expression communicates the emotions. Indian dance includes eight classical dance forms, many in narrative forms with mythological elements. The eight classical forms accorded classical dance status by India's National Academy of Music, Dance, and Drama are: 'Bharatanatyam' of the state of Tamil Nadu, 'Kathak' of Uttar Pradesh, 'Kathakali' and 'Mohiniattam' of Kerala, 'Kuchipudi' of Andhra Pradesh, 'Yakshagana' of Karnataka, 'Manipuri' of Manipur, 'Odissi' (Orissi) of the state of Odisha and the 'Sattriya' of Assam. In addition to the formal art of dance, Indian regions have a free form, folksy dance tradition, some of the folk dances include the 'Bhangra' of Punjab; the 'Bihu' of Assam; the 'Zeliang' of Nagaland; the 'Jhumair', 'Domkach', 'Chhau' of Jharkhand; the 'Ghumura' Dance, 'Gotipua', 'Mahari' dance and 'Dalkhai' of Odisha; the 'Qawwalis', 'Birhas' and 'Charkulas' of Uttar Pradesh; the 'Jat-Jatin', 'Natinatin' and "Saturi of Bihar; the 'Ghoomar' of Rajasthan; the 'Dandiya' and 'Garba' of Gujarat; the 'Kolattam'

of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; the 'Lavani' of Maharashtra and the 'Dekhnni' of Goa.

A factor that makes Indian weddings rather interesting is the variety that is observed in the weddings of distinct regions and spirituality throughout the country. It is a true description of the diverse character of the land, as people in different regions honor this auspicious moment according to their own customs and beliefs. In fact, there are so many diverse wedding traditions that it is difficult to classify and categorize them. The Hindu tradition consists of the bride and the groom seated together, receiving instructions from the priest with the sacred square fire container (yajna kund) in front of them. Weddings are festive occasions in India with extensive decorations, color, music, dance, costumes and rituals that depend on the religion and region of the bride and the groom, as well as their preference. The nation celebrates about 10 million weddings per year, of which over eighty percent are Hindu weddings.

While there are many festival related rituals in Hinduism, 'vivaha' (wedding) is the most extensive personal ritual an adult Hindu undertakes in his or her life. Typical Hindu families spend significant effort and financial resources to prepare and celebrate weddings, the rituals and process of a Hindu wedding vary depending on the region of India, local adaptations, resources of the family and preferences of the bride and the groom. Nevertheless, there are a few key rituals common in Hindu weddings – 'Kanyadaan', 'Panigrahana' and 'Saptapadi'; these are respectively the gifting away of a daughter by the father, voluntarily holding hands near the fire to signify impending union and taking seven steps before the fire with each step including a set of mutual vows, after the seventh step and vows of 'Saptapadi' the couple is legally husband and wife. Sikhs get married through a ceremony called 'Anand Karaj', the couple walks around the holy book 'Guru Granth Sahib' four times. Indian Muslims celebrate a traditional Islamic wedding following customs similar to those practiced in the Middle East, the rituals include 'Nikah', payment of financial dower called 'Maher' by the groom to the bride, signing of the marriage contract and a reception. Indian Christian weddings follow customs similar to those practiced in the Christian countries in the West in states like Goa, while there is the incorporation of Indian customs in other states. Thus, we see the diversity of customs, tradition, language, art forms, dress and cuisine throughout parts of India along with the assimilation that formulates India.

Team, World Culture Forum



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