

A Universal Destination

Published by the Embassy of India in Beirut and Agenda Culturel July 2016



FOREWORD

This book is a collaborative effort aimed at highlighting the diversity of India and illustrating why we think of it as "A Universal Destination". India is a universe in itself where you will find whatever you are looking for, whether it is nature in all its manifestations or the unique and creative expressions of the human spirit.

Here in India, you will find the past coexisting with the present while manifesting an awareness of the future, the spiritual coexisting with the material, the tribal and primitive coexisting with the sophisticated and futuristic, and many other dualities and contradictions, making it virtually impossible to define India. India will leave you with an experience that is yours and yours alone, which can never be fully shared by anyone else.

At the same time, India's diversity is informed by a universal ethos which manifests itself in a vibrancy of colour and spirit that can verge on the chaotic but can never be routine or mundane. We have tried to convey this ethos through images rather than words, using the latter largely to provide context.

On behalf of the Embassy of India in Beirut, I thank all our contributors and partners who have given their time and effort to making this volume possible without any thought of remuneration or reward; we are sincerely and eternally grateful. I hope all our readers will enjoy these glimpses into the Indian cosmos and will be inspired to try the Indian experience for themselves.

ANITA NAYAR Ambassador of India to Lebanon





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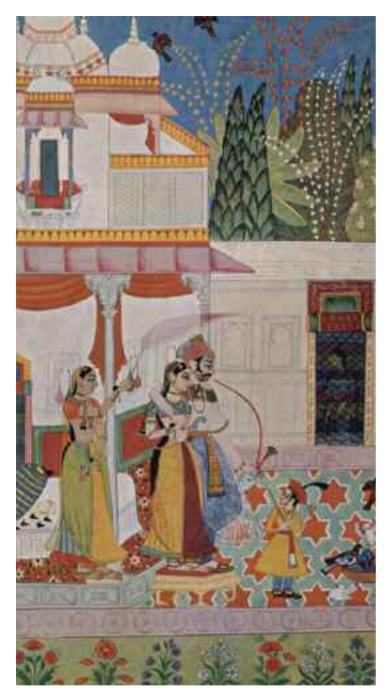


India has a rich heritage of architecture, sculpture, painting, carvings and handicrafts, which dates back to the dawn of human civilisation. The Indus Valley Civilisation, which reached its peak around 3000 BC,

has left behind few examples of its artistic tradition but the sculpture of the Dancing Girl of Mohenjodaro alone is enough to show that it was a stylised and sophisticated tradition. Because most of the materials used in early architecture and painting were perishable, most of the art that has survived is in the form of bronze and stone sculptures and carvings. The carved lions of Ashoka's pillars, the cast metal bronzes of the Pallavas and the Cholas, the amazing temples and palaces carved out of mountains and rock in Mahabalipuram, in Konark, in Khajuraho in the cave dwellings of Ajanta and Ellora and in the great stone fortresses of Rajasthan, Mandu and Hampi are some examples. Architecture (the use of space), sculpture (form) and painting (colour) often intermingled and drew on each other to create holistic works that shaped the environment.







Historically, Indian art was deeply influenced by the three great religions of ancient India – Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It was also influenced by external inputs from Greece (especially when Alexander reached the Indus on his quest for world domination), Central Asia, Persia and Turkey. Traditionally, the artist remained anonymous as an individual, the focus being on the spirit and essence of the artist's creation, on idealism rather than realism. In the process, Indian artists revealed a mastery of space, form and colour that has been retained over the centuries and still illuminates the work being done by modern-day artists.

Examples of the works of the painters of ancient India can be seen in the wall frescoes and mosaics that have survived the ravages of time. Some ancient illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts have also survived. But it is from the 11th and 12th centuries onwards that we begin to see a plethora of evidence of the skills of Indian painters, mainly through the illustrated manuscripts produced by the various schools of miniature paintings that developed from then on - the Mughal school, the Rajput school, the Pahari schools such as Kangra and Guler. These schools represented a fusion of Islamic and Hindu influences. Also around this time developed an art form unique to India - the Raga Mala paintings, which used form, design and colour to depict the spiritual essence or unique rasa of the various ragas or classical music compositions, each of which was composed to represent specific times, seasons and emotions.

The richness of the Indian artistic heritage was not restricted to the palaces of the nobility but flourished in the handicraft and folk art traditions which are still vibrant and alive in India today. Some examples are the painting traditions represented by Madhubani, Kalamkari and Phad; the bidri work of Hyderabad; the inlay work using precious and semi-precious stones that is represented so superbly in the Taj Mahal; the colourful Jaipur pottery; the complex designs and motifs in Indian textiles and many other objects of daily use from furniture to toys.

Contemporary or modern Indian art had its origins in the coming of Europeans to India the British, the French and the Portuguese. Portraiture and all the visual arts in general became more realistic, with Raja Ravi Varma's paintings of Rubenesque yet clearly Indian women symbolising the influence of naturalism and of the Renaissance painters of Europe. The Bengal School of painting fathered by Abanindranath Tagore tried to revive the historical traditions of Indian art. Immediately after India gained independence, the 1950s saw the Bombay Progressives like M.F. Hussain and Francis Newton Souza introduce idioms which focused on representing the characteristics and essence of India, a spirit which still informs the works of Indian artists, whether it be paintings, sculptures, installations, or graphic design.















India is home to more than 500 different forms of handicrafts, whose products range from basic utility items to the most intricate works of art. These handicrafts can be classified on a regional basis into six broad categories – West, North, East, North East, Central and South India. The major craft products of each region have been shaped by context - the landscape, the availability of raw material, the social fabric consisting of the mix of religions and cultures and the general level of educational and technological advancement of the region.

The crafts of West India consist of jewellery making, Ajrakh painting, embroidery, leather footwear, terra cotta pottery, clay relief work, bamboo craft, woodcarving, stonework, gem work, stringed jewellery and wrought iron crafts.

The crafts of North India consist mainly of knotted carpets, Phulkari and Bagh embroidery, rugs, wood work, baskets, copperware, paintings, woollen textiles, doll making, leather footwear, terra cotta pottery, tie-resist dyeing, block printing and stone work.

East India specialises in Madhubani paintings, sikki carpets, applique work, paintings, making of musical instruments, stone work, wood carving, metal castings, tribal jewellery, bell metal ware, straw and jute work.

The North East Indian crafts include bamboo furniture, reed mats, bamboo containers, cane bridges, wooden toys, gourd craft, pressed clay work, bamboo rain shields, eri silk spinning, loin loom weaving and bamboo carrying baskets.



The crafts of Central India consist of woodcarving, marble stonework, metal inlay in wood, brass work, pottery, gold embroidery, black pottery, dhurries, enamel work, nettle fibre craft and lantana furniture.

In the South, the following crafts are in vogue – Bidri work, wooden toys, tie-resist dyeing, stone carving, mat weaving, stucco work, bronze metal casting, silk textiles, coconut shell products, stone and metal sculpture, palm leaf products, Tanjore paintings, rosewood and sandalwood carving.

In recent years, industrialisation and urbanisation have lured people away from the handicrafts sector,

with the result that many crafts have been lost and many others are facing extinction. However, the Government and the craft NGOs (such as the Crafts Council of India, which is a member of the World Crafts Council) have stepped in to reverse this trend, devising ways of getting people back into practicing their traditional crafts and also to find a market for their products, without which the handicrafts sector cannot be sustained.

Adapted from the article written by USHA KRISHNA















"Satya sat at the big wooden loom, throwing the shuttle through the shining silk threads stretched on its frame. As he wove the warp and weft together, the fabric that unfolded was a Kanjeevaram silk saree, purple and red, with gold tigers, elephants and peacocks dancing together on its

resplendent surface. The thak-thak sound of the shuttle as it thudded to and fro had always been part of his life. His father, and his father's father, and his father's father, and his father's father's father, had all woven sarees on the same family loom - as had their forefathers as long as memory could stretch."

Textiles are a part of India's history. Weavers were among the richest communities, and their surnames denoted their trade. As the 17th century French traveler, François Pyrard de Laval, said: "Everyone from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and woman, is clothed from head to foot in the product of Indian Looms". Indian textiles were found in the tombs of the Egyptian Pharaohs, they were a sought-after export to ancient Greeks and Romans; they became part of the fashionable attire of both European and Mughal courts. Indian handcrafted textiles are still unique today, for the hundreds of different techniques, designs and motifs that are living traditions going back thousands of years and still part of the mainstream economy. India is the only source of the lovely golden tussar, muga and eri silk, spun from worms that feed on Ashoka, oak, and castor leaves rather than mulberry. The celebrated Kashmiri 'ring shawl' is made from the fleece the wild Himalayan ibex casts off on rocks and bushes and is so fine, a metre passes through a man's signet ring, with as many as 50 colours used in one shawl. Running the whole gamut from simple to splendid, a few rupees to a fortune, there is something for every season and ceremony – symbolic or merely spectacular- Indian

silks and brocades, block-printed cottons and Saurastrian mirrorwork are all familiar sights, along with carpets, floor coverings, stoles and shawls of every variety. There is something to suit every pocket, something for every season and ceremony.

Weaves A tanchoi brocade from Banaras will play on the contrast of one delicately differing shade against another in shadow and sun, while a South Indian temple sari might have a body of shocking Indian pink and a border of parrot green with a whole stylised garden of flora and fauna running riot in gold on its trailing edges. Fascinating lesser-known techniques are the tie and dye bandini sarees and scarves of Rajasthan and Gujarat in which fine cotton or silk is knotted into minute patterns with waxed string and dyed in successive deepening shades of different colours; the knots untied later to produce delicate spotted allover designs. Allied to the bandini tie and dye technique is ikat - the patola, pochampalli, telia rumal and mashru weaves of Gujarat, Andhra and Orissa, in which the warp and weft threads are separately tiedyed before being woven into intricate, stylised designs of flowering shrubs, birds, elephants and fish set in geometric squares and stripes.





Embroideries The explorer, Marco Polo who visited India in the 13th century said that "embroidery is here produced with more delicacy than anywhere in the world". There are myriad techniques, each reflecting the environment of their creation. The phulkari (flower-craft) of Punjab with its bold surface satin stitch geometrics in vivid satin floss of oranges, pinks and flame, reflects the vigor and vibrant energy of the Punjabi peasant. The chikankari (chikan work) of Uttar Pradesh is a delicate white-on-white chiaroscuro of relief and shadow-work, using over 22 different stitches, reflecting the subtlety and refinement of the Mughal court. The legend is that it was first devised by Noor Jehan, wife of the Emperor Jehangir. The kantha of West Bengal features naif folk motifs of animals, humans, trees, flowers and leaves, forming an intricate tapestry. The crewel, sozni and kashida of Kashmir have intricate detailing of flora and fauna deriving inspiration from the verdant, flowering beauty of the Kashmir valley. The Kutchi embroideries with their exuberant colours and designs of flowers, peacocks, elephants and parrots contrast with the arid desert environment. Each village and community in Kutch has its own distinctive set of stitches and motifs: cross-stitch, satin and herringbone stitch, and a very fine chain stitch done with a hook. Shiny mirrors are stitched onto the fabric to avert the evil eye, which is captured by its own image reflected in the mirror. The Lambani, Lambada and

Banjara gypsy tribes from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in South India also create spectacular embroidery, featuring geometric designs, using mirrors, silver or metal coins, and ornaments at the edges.

Patchwork Yet another textile skill practiced by women all over India, it involves the cutting and stitching together small pieces of cloth, or as in appliqué, cutting the cloth into patterns and stitching it onto the surface of a contrasting fabric. Patchwork styles range from the tiny geometric patchwork *gotapathi* made in Rampur and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, to the bold, vividly patterned pictorial quilts of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Block printing Block printing is practiced all over Western and Central India. Each design is printed with different intricately cut wooden blocks. One block for the outline, one for the background, and one block for each of the other colours. Some designs need as many as 6-8 different blocks. Carving the blocks is itself an art. Like weaves and embroideries, block print designs and colours have the special stamp of the places from where they originate. Those from Sanganer in Rajasthan have designs that include delicate floral butis in pastel colours, Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh has allover paisley motifs. Bagh prints from Madhya Pradesh are in dramatic red and black. Kutch is famous for its double-sided airak interlocked

Zardozi embroidery

Zardozi embroidery (also known as zari work) in-

clothes to wall hangings, purses and bags, scabbards,

volves making elaborate designs using gold and silver threads, studded pearls and precious stones. Zardozi embroidery has been in existence in India from the time of the Rig Veda. There are numerous instances mentioning the use of Zardozi embroidery as ornamentation on the attire of gods as well as for the backdrop hung behind the deity. Zardozi embroidery was regularly used to embellish just about everything from

the paraphernalia for regal elephants & horses etc. lni-

tially, the embroidery was done with pure silver wires and real gold leaves. Due to rising costs, zardozi craftsmen today make use of a combination of copper wire, with a golden or silver polish, and silk thread. The main centres for Zardozi embroidery are Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Delhi, Agra, Kashmir, Mumbai, Ajmer and Chennai.

MUKTA JAIN

hexagonal motifs in shades of indigo, crimson and black, which required 15 different processes to achieve. Each area uses its own techniques – direct, resist, batik, discharge, or gold and silver stamped *khari chhaap* printing. In some the dye is applied directly to the cloth, in others areas are prevented from getting coloured by the use of wax, mud, or chemicals.

Each Indian textile craft technique has its own look, as distinctive as the alphabets of Indian languages, once you learn to recognize them. And they are as much a part of society and culture as they are of the marketplace. An 80 year-old Manipuri woman wearing a worn handloom wrapping was once asked whether she wasn't cold. Why did she not buy anyone

of the warm synthetic mill woolies available on the market? Her reply reminds us of so many intangible things we disregard – "l've spun this out of my own hands; my mother and sisters have woven it. The warmth of so many fingers has gone into this. How can a machine make anything warmer?" It is these intangible strands woven into our Indian textiles as well as their beauty that make them so special – a part of our present and future as well as our past.

Adapted from the article written by LAILA TYABJI







Indian Saree Weaving Traditions

Rooted in history as the traditional attire of the Indian woman, the saree has maintained continuity as a contemporary garment. It is a living tradition that can be traced back to the Vedic civilization, evolving with cross-cultural influences of trade, demonstrating the confluences of techniques, patterns and innovation in its production processes. As an unstitched garment for women, it has no parallels in terms of versatility, richness of colour, texture, variety of weaving techniques using different kinds of yarn, cotton, silk, gold and silver thread, and diverse motifs largely inspired by both nature (animals, plants, flowers, trees) and by the ornamentation on buildings and temples. Some examples of the many regional variations are the translucent

fabric of the Chanderi weave from Madhya Pradesh; the iconic silk brocades with zari (gold or silver thread) of Banares in Uttar Pradesh; the pure gold thread and silk yarn used to produce the Paithanis of Maharashtra; the Pochampalli sarees of Andhra Pradesh with their traditional geometric patterns created by using individually dyed threads in the lkat style; and the Kanjeevaram sarees of Tamil Nadu, known for the sharp contrasting colours of the body and border of the saree, and the intricate motifs woven with gold thread into the silk.

MUKTA JAIN





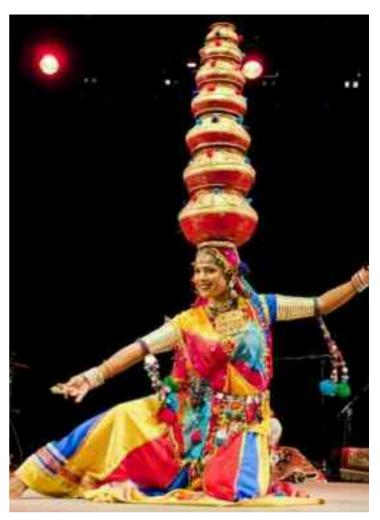


There are two distinct traditions of dance in India – the classical and the folk. The former is based on rigorous principles enshrined in ancient texts; the latter represents the community's response to the rhythms of life and nature, passed down informally from generation to generation.

Lord Shiva as Nataraja, the King of Dance, is the iconic representation of classical Indian dance philosophy. With one leg grounded on the earth, one leg raised in anticipation of movement, his head touching the heavens, Nataraja represents the basic elements of life (fire, earth, water and air), the primordial sound (AUM) which pervades the universe, the cycle of creation and the destruction, and the inter-play of feminine and masculine energy. All the classical traditions of Indian dance attempt to recreate the iconography of the dancing Nataraja, incorporating in the process music, sculpture, painting and all other forms of artistic expression.

The eight accepted classical dance traditions in India are Kathakali and Mohiniattam from Kerala, Bharatnatyam from Tamil Nadu, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Odissi from Orissa, Manipuri from Manipur, Sattriya from Assam and Kathak from Uttar Pradesh. The youngest tradition is that of Kathak which was born in the courts of India's Muslim rulers. As far as folk dances are concerned, every region has its own forms, shaped by local geography, culture and traditions; pictured here are four samples from the west, east, north, and south of India.

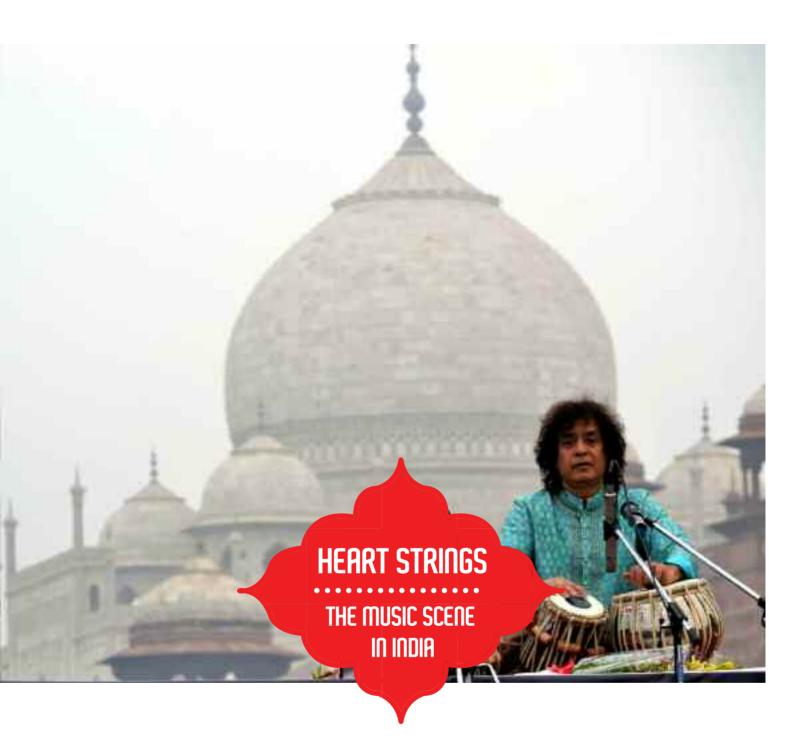












Indian classical music has two main styles, developed over more than a thousand years – the Carnatic tradition of the South and the Hindustani tradition of the North. The concepts of raga (the basis of melody) and tala (the basis of rhythm) are central to both systems. A simplistic definition of the raga would be that it is a collection of musical notes which when correctly sung or played creates a certain atmosphere; a raga has a soul and

personality of its own. The tala, used by the percussionist to keep time, is the Indian equivalent of rhythm. The main instruments range from wind instruments (like the flute and the shehnai), stringed (sitar, veena, sarod, violin), percussion (mridangam, tabla, ghatam, kanjira, maddalam, pakhawaj, chenda) and keyed instruments (santoor, jaltarang, harmonium).



The major difference between the two styles of Indian classical music is the medium of expression of the raga. Carnatic music uses the "kriti", which is a song generally devotional in nature, with high literary merit as well. After the song is completed, a line or two is taken up by the singer for improvisation, and this is followed by singing the permitted sol-fa syllables of the raga in two speeds, keeping in mind the rhythm. Other forms of musical expression in Carnatic music are the ragam-tanam-pallavi, the varnam, the padam and the tillana.

In Hindustani music, the main vehicle of expression of the raga is the "khayal", which means "thought or imagination". The lyrics are very simple, and mainly describe the change of seasons, the pain of separation, stories of kings and emperors of bygone eras, devotion to God, etc. The khayal is the result of the intermingling of the Hindu and Persian cultures. The khayal starts at a slow pace, called vilambit, and then picks up great speed in the drut (fast) section. The khayal is brought to its completion with a torrent of taans – these are fast paced musical ideas expressed

using the "aa" syllable. Other forms of musical expression are the dhrupad, the tappa, the thumri and the taraana.

Perhaps the most important event in the Carnatic music scene is the Margazhi Isai Vizha aka the December Season in Chennai, a super Woodstock where music and dance lovers from all over the world gather for a month of concerts. The city of Trivandrum in Kerala also has its own Carnatic music festival during the auspicious period of Navaratri (September-October). The festival is held in the royal palace known as the Horse Palace (after the 122 horses carved on wall brackets) where the only illumination is provided by oil lamps, adding to the ethereal atmosphere created by the music.

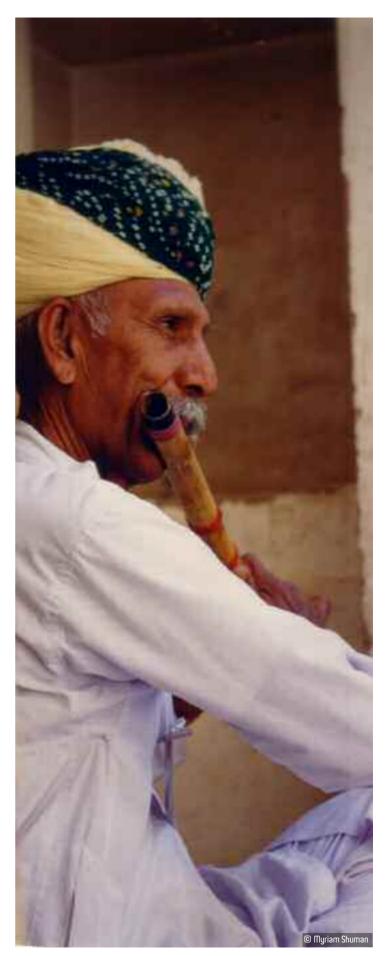
For Hindustani music, there is the Hariballabh Sangeet Sammelan, the oldest classical music conference in India, which has been celebrated in Jalandhar, Punjab in the last week of December every year since 1875. The Dover Lane Music Conference, which is held in the third week of January each year, started

in Calcutta (now Kolkata) way back in 1952. Another important conference is the Tansen Samaroh, first held in 1952, and now held annually in the second week of December in Madhya Pradesh. The venue of the conference is the tomb of the legendary singer Tansen, one of the nine jewels of the Mughal emperor Akbar's court.

Western classical music does have a presence in India especially in Mumbai and Calcutta, and to some extent in Chennai and Bangalore. Western popular music has long had a very strong hold on the educated English speaking classes in India. A little known fact is that one of the biggest names in British rock, Freddie Mercury (of the legendary band Queen), was of Indian descent – he was born Farrokh Balsara in Tanzania, and grew up in Mumbai before migrating to the UK.

The rock and roll scene in India is mainly in Bangalore and Mumbai, but can also be found in Kolkata, New Delhi, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai and Kochi. Genres such as garage band, alternative, Indie folk, djent, heavy metal and grunge-rock are catching on fast, competing with the age old traditions of rock and jazz. The Strawberry Fields Rock Festival, held every year in December in the grounds of NLSIU, Bangalore is the largest congregation of rock musicians, fans and performers in India. The Bangalore Open Air Festival, NH7 Weekender, etc are other such events that promote Indian rock bands.

The advent of free media such as YouTube and SoundCloud, powered by the proliferation of the Internet, has contributed greatly to the intermingling of Western and Indian cultures. This has spawned a new genre – Indian fusion – which incorporates elements of Indian music with that of mainstream rock and pop. Major exponents of this genre include Hindustani classical musician Vishwa Mohan Bhatt who plays the guitar – he calls it the Mohan Veena – and who won a Grammy back in 1993, film music directors like A.R. Rahman, Amit Trivedi, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and Vishal-Sekhar, and bands like Agam and Indian Ocean.



However, it is film music that still holds sway over the masses. Bollywood (Hindi) film songs continue to dominate the film musical discourse in the country, but film songs in regional languages have their own dedicated audiences. You can hear film music everywhere, not just on the silver screen but also on the streets, in restaurants and bars, in auditoriums, and now in all corners of the world.

Indian music is therefore truly eclectic in nature. It has drawn from a wide variety of sources, and has enriched the world stage. Pandit Ravi Shankar was perhaps the first Indian musician to propel Indian music into the international limelight, collaborating with the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin at one end of the spectrum and the Beatles at the other. Zakir Hussain, the jet-setting tabla wizard has managed to give

an entirely new dimension to percussion. M.S. Subbulakshmi was invited by the then UN Secretary General U Thant to sing before the General Assembly in June 1966. A.R. Rahman, known as the Mozart of Madras, won an Oscar for his *Slumdog Millionaire* score. Several Indian bands have successfully broken into the international arena, a few examples being Skrat, Parikrama, Junkyard Groove, Motherjane and Skyharbor.

Adapted from the article written by RAMDAS MENON







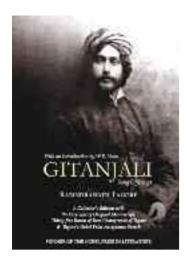


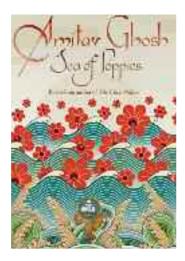
In the past decade, the publishing industry in India has seen many changes, some good, some not so encouraging. Publishers have a larger vision, experimenting with publishing genres which didn't find their way into Indian publishing a few years back. I see crime, thriller, and detective books. I see popular commercial fiction, graphic novels, science and speculative fiction, mythological fiction and non-fiction filling up shelves in book stores. A remarkable increase in the percentage sales of non-fiction books is a very encouraging trend. It speaks of a populace that is conscious, seeking and exploring the socio-cultural and political narrative of contemporary times. Biographies, memoirs, travelogues, self-help, and business books are the top selling genres. Brilliant translations like Baluta by Jerry Pinto and Ghachar Ghochar by Srinath Perur have added to the rich repertoire of translations from regional Indian languages.

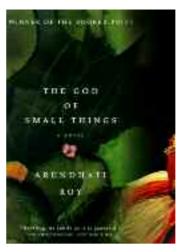
According to the Neilson report, we have recorded a growth rate of 20.4% in 2014-2015. 55% of trade sales are of books in English. Books in Hindi are 35% of Indian language sales but the largest share is taken by 'Others', despite what the report identifies as a "highly disorganised" local publishing sector. Consumer data

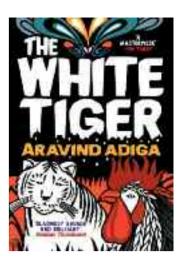
survey shows that, on average, people read books 2.1 times a week, while nearly two-thirds read a book occasionally. Interestingly, 56% of the respondents bought at least one e-book a year and nearly half of these bought at least three or four, indicating a growing demand here. India's e-book sales figures, in spite of having a burgeoning increase in numbers that use smart devices, remain rather low. But bookshops have been affected adversely by people ordering books online due to convenience and good discounts. Another effect of the world going digital is that YouTube films, television and cinema are picking up and adapting books into screenplays and rather successfully so.

What has seen a tremendous burst is the explosion of literary festivals in India. At last count, there were over 75 festivals and still newer ones are cropping up each day. The Jaipur Literature Festival held in Rajasthan in January and February every year has had record breaking audiences and some phenomenal writers speaking, igniting a sound exchange of ideas and firing imaginations. Other festivals like The Hindu Lit for Life, Bangalore Literature Festival, Apeejay Kolkata literary festival, Times Literary Carnival in Bombay, Chandigarh Literature Festival, Bookaroo





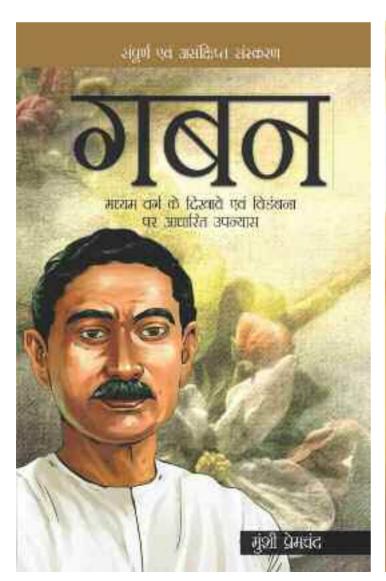


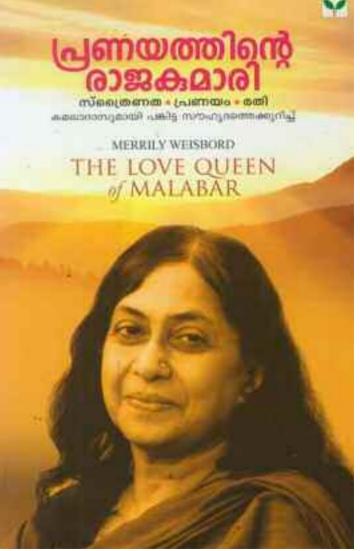


Children's Literature Festival in Delhi are invigorating experiences and are gathering a pulsating momentum of their own. The Crime Writers Festival in New Delhi is a genre festival organised by Siyahi, a literary

agency, which also organises the Mountain Echoes Literary Festival in Bhutan.

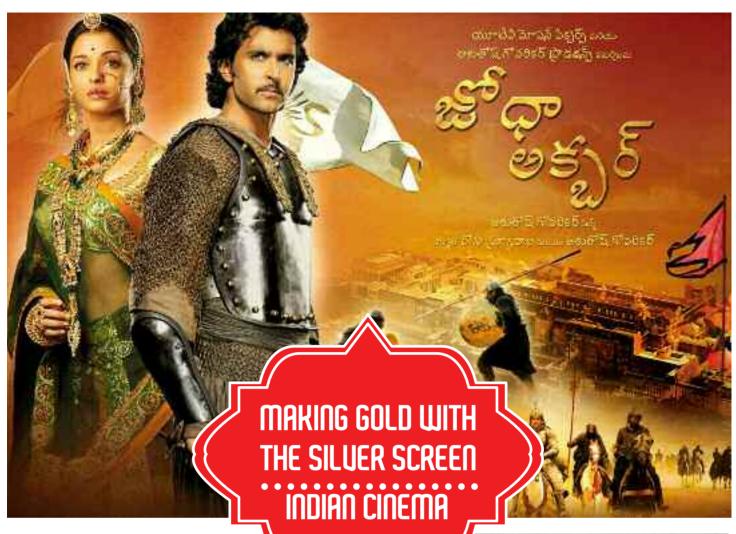
Adapted from the article written by MITA KAPOOR

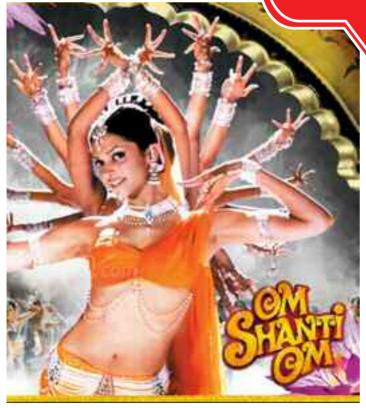


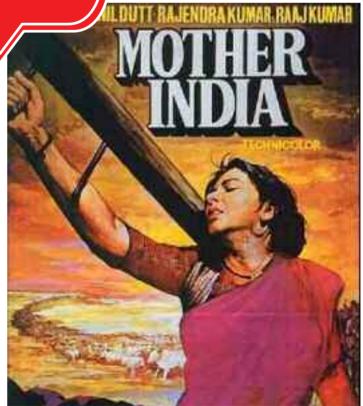












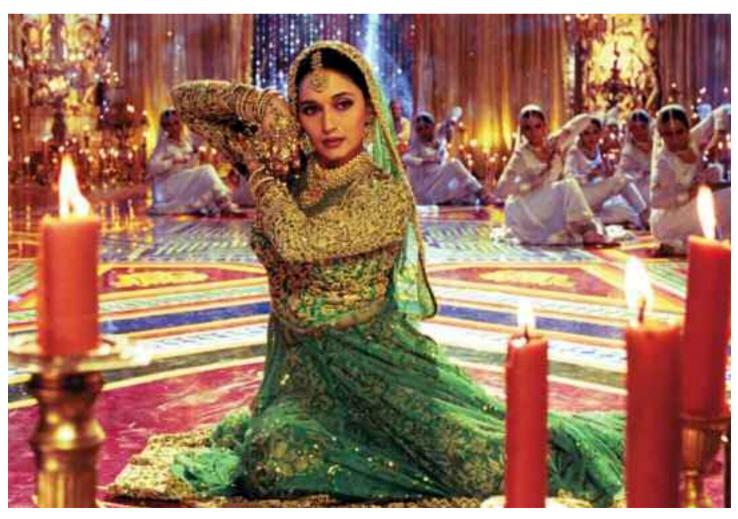
Indian cinema has become synonymous with Bollywood but the reality is that Bollywood specifically refers only to Hindi language films made in Mumbai, amounting to 20% of India's annual film production. The other 80% are films in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Bengal, Bhojpuri, Marathi and Gujarati, with a sprinkling of films made in other Indian languages.

The history of cinema in India parallels the history of India, mirroring the evolution of the Indian national psyche and its economic and technological development. India has always had experimental filmmakers who tried to reflect reality and their own sensibilities in celluloid, and many of them, such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Guru Dutt, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Aparna Sen, Mani Ratnam, Shekhar Kapur, Mira Nair, and Deepa Mehta, have made significant contributions to what is called the parallel cinema, and have won global acclaim. Today, more and more filmmakers are being encouraged by Indian audiences to go beyond the "Formula Movie"

and the line between parallel cinema and commercial cinema is becoming blurred.

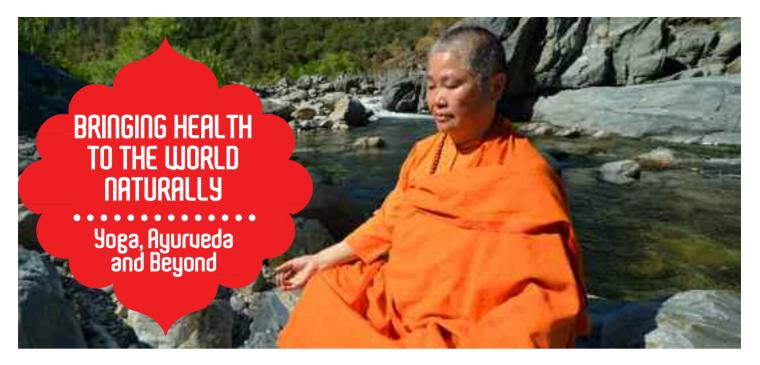
Indian cinema has played a particularly instrumental role in the revival of the musical in the Western world. Baz Luhrmann stated that his successful musical film Moulin Rouge (2001) was directly inspired by Bollywood musicals Danny Boyle's Oscar-winning film Slumdog Millionaire (2008) was also directly inspired by Bollywood and is considered to be a "homage to Hindi commercial cinema". Indian winners of the Academy Awards include Bhanu Athaiya (costume designer), Satyajit Ray (filmmaker), A. R. Rahman (music composer), Resul Pookutty (sound editor) and Gulzar (lyricist).

Today, the industry itself is changing, becoming more professional and organized, and interacting more with the international film industry and the huge indian diaspora than ever before. One could say that Indian cinema is now poised to become truly global.









Traditional Indian medicine systems, traditional Indian medicines derived from roots, leaves and stems, and traditional Indian systems of meditation and exercise are today finding new audiences the world over.

YOGA

This ancient science is one of India's gifts to the world, estimated in 2014 to be a \$27 billion global industry. In recognition of this, the UN General Assembly has declared June 21 as International Yoga Day. The annual Beirut Yoga Festival attracts over a thousand visitors a day, signifying the popularity in Lebanon of this discipline, which combines spiritual, mental and physical practices to transform body and mind in a natural and holistic way.

Yoga is the science of right living and is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yog' which means unity. It establishes integration and harmony between thought, feeling and deed. Over the centuries, many branches of Yoga have developed from the root discipline that developed at the beginning of human civilisation, in pre-Vedic times in India. As Swami Satyanand Saraswati said 'Asana Pranayama' stated: "Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion. It is the most valuable inheritance of the present. It is the essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow."

The original role of the physical poses of Yoga (asanas) was to prepare the body for meditation. The poses enliven the connection between mind and body, consciousness and physiology. Done correctly, Yoga asanas help to dissolve stress and enliven mind-body coordination to support the expansion of consciousness.

An essential component of Yoga is Pranayama, which involves learning proper breathing techniques. 'Prana' refers to the universal life force and 'ayama' means to regulate. Prana flows through thousands of subtle energy channels called 'nadis' and energy centers called 'chakras'. The quantity and quality of prana and the way it flows through the nadis and chakras determines one's state of mind. Regular practice increases and enhances the quantity and quality of prana, clears blocked nadis and chakras, generates energy and positivity, thus harmonising the body, mind and spirit.

AYURVEDA

Another gift from India to the world is Ayurveda, counted among as one of the world's oldest systems of medicine. Ayurvedic philosophy maintains that Prakriti or the basic constitution of the body is comprised of 3 main doshas or elements – Vatta, Pitta and Kapha, which are loosely translated as Air, Fire and Earth, respectively. Each of us has all three

doshas in our constitution, in unique proportions. All the doshas have to be in balance for a person to be healthy. Ayurveda focuses on identifying and correcting imbalances presumed to be the cause of disease. It is a gentle, natural way of addressing the root causes of imbalance caused by stress, improper diet and lifestyle, and environmental influences that push our bodies out of their natural equilibrium.

Ayurveda uses a combination of techniques, including Yoga, Pranayama, meditation, plant-based formulations or Rasayana, massage, and dietary guidelines, to strengthen the body, restore balance and reawaken natural healing mechanisms. The most comprehensive Ayurveda treatment is the Panchakarma, meaning "five therapies", which uses a combination of massage, herbal saunas, special foods and nutritional directives, mild fasting and colon therapies to rid the body of accumulated toxins. Depending on each individual's needs, all or only parts of the five therapies are utilized.

ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES

Beyond Yoga and Ayurveda, which are formalized systems, ancient India had identified the healing properties of different plants to develop herbal remedies that are still in use today. Around 6,000 of the

45,000 known plant species in India are used for making traditional medicines to treat not just minor ailments, but even eye disorders, joint pains, kidney stones and urinary tract infections.

For example, aloe vera is used to heal burns, condition skin and even treat liver diseases like jaundice. Likewise, the neem tree is known for its antiseptic and anti-viral qualities which are even used in organic farming. Henna and shikakai are used for colouring hair and making it shinier. Amla, a rich source of vitamin C, has found use in hair products for its ability to strengthen hair roots. Similarly, orange and cucumber have long been used to make face packs as they have the natural ability to remove wrinkles. Rose water and rose oil are important ingredients in beauty products due to their anti-inflammatory properties. All this wealth of traditional knowledge has today given rise to a flourishing industry in India. Ancient remedies are being packed into modern delivery systems such as gelatine capsules, tablets, creams and lotions, etc., and are being exported all over the world under brand names such as Himalaya, Dabur, Vedanta and Shanaz Hussain to name but a few.

> With inputs from MUKTA JAIN











Say Indian food and most people think spices, curry and chicken tikka masala. But Indian cuisine is extraordinarily complex and diverse, comprising a marvellous medley of cooking techniques and ingredients. Over the years, the geographical variety of the Indian subcontinent led to the development of regional culinary traditions adapted to the surrounding environment. Indian cuisine is also influenced by the doctrines of Ayurveda, which prescribe in detail the diet most suited to promote both mental and physical wellbeing according to your body type and temperament.

These indigenous traditions were influenced in varying degrees by the Greeks, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Persians, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the British. The Portuguese introduced chillies, potatoes, tomatoes and cashew nuts to India in the sixteenth century. The Arabs and the Persians brought with them the concept of using dried fruits and nuts in dishes, as also the concept of the "biryani". The tandoori oven came to India from Afghanistan. Tea was unknown in India until it was introduced by the British from China. In its turn, Indian cuisine has

THE SCIENCE OF TASTE

According to Ayurveda, the way foods taste determine how and when they should be consumed.

- Sweet-tasting foods, which include rice, ghee and fruits, strengthen the tissues, nourish the body and harmmonise the mind but they are hard to digest.
- Sour tastes stimulate the digestive fires and enzymes, and ae good for the digestion and the heart. Manufactured products like vinegar and citric acid are not recommended.
- Salty foods stimulate digestion, clear obstruction in the channels of the body and cause sweating but an excess of salt is said to deplete reproductive secretions and cause graying and wrinkling.
- Pungent tastes, as in onion, pepper and garlic, help digestion, improve metabolism and dilate channels in the body. Foods with a bitter taste eliminate bacterial elements, purify the blood and are easily digested.

influenced other cuisines across the world, especially in the Carribean and in Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar and Indonesia.

Spices are a hallmark of Indian cuisine, but the kind of spices and the quantities used vary from region to region. One misconception about Indian cuisine is that it uses curry powder. Curry powder was invented by the British; Indian cooks do not use a generic curry powder but grind spices in different combinations for different dishes and to suit individual tastes. Some recipes call for the use of 20 or more spices; in sharp contrast, there are recipes where only salt and pepper are used. The North makes

and cooking over a slow fire for many hours. There are even dishes cooked in a pit dug in the earth covered with hot coals like in the Hawaiian luau.

We can make some broad generalisations about the regional variations in Indian cuisine. For example, the cuisine of Kashmir, situated in the lap of the Himalayas, draws heavily on meat, winter vegetables and saffron. In the West, the deserts of Rajasthan and Gujarat have spawned a number of dishes which use stems, weeds and roots to make up for the scarcity of vegetables. Seafood and fish dishes figure aplenty in the coastal states of South India while in the East you will find many dishes featuring freshwater fish.



lavish use of dairy products such as cream and Indian cheese (paneer) while in the South, curry leaves, coconut and tamarind are commonly used. Different herbs are also used in different regions and for different purposes, depending on the properties of the herb or spice – cooling, heating, digestive, astringent, antiseptic and so on.

Virtually every cooking technique – stir-frying, braising, stewing, roasting, boiling, baking, steaming – can be seen in Indian cuisine. The dumpakht technique anticipated the use of the slow cooker by putting all the ingredients in one pot, sealing the lid with dough

Clarified butter is the preferred medium of cooking in the North, the Maharashtrians use peanut oil, the Bengalis use mustard oil while down south in Kerala, coconut oil is the standard.

Fish and rice are staples in the East, West and South of India, but the North and the North-western regions and much of central India rely on meat and wheat. So we see a range of breads – naan, tandoori roti, chapatis, paranthas, poories, bhaturas – in the North, while the South offers many different kinds of rice preparations, including crepes, pancakes, vermicelli and steamed rice cakes. Different kinds of lentils are



used across India, on their own or in combination, with vegetables and meat. Various grains also figure prominently in regional dishes, from buckwheat to millet to oats to cornmeal and many more.

The diversity of Indian cuisine is as visible in its desserts, sweets and drinks as it is in its savory dishes and breads. Sweets range from puddings to dry preparations such as laddoos and barfis, from the delicate yoghurt-based sandesh to the dripping sweetness of jalebis to the egg-based desserts of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. Drinks are made from yoghurt, buttermilk, lemons, green mangoes, black carrots, tamarind, hibiscus flowers and many other exotic ingredients.

Another extraordinary feature of Indian cuisine is the amazing variety of snacks and street food, which ensures that at no time of the day or night will you go hungry. And to end the meal, every region has its preferred digestive, from paan (a betel leaf wrap with areca nuts and quicklime) to candied fennel. So the next time you visit India, do make it a point to experiment with all the different culinary variations, which will titillate, tantalize and enchant your taste buds.

HEALTH IN A POT Medicinal properties of some simple spices

Cinnamon: Used extensively in Indian cooking, cinnamon is an anti-oxidant and anti-bacterial agent. It aids digestion, reduces cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and helps fight the common flu.

Turmeric: Another anti-oxidant and anti-bacterial agent, turmeric boosts immunity. A glass of milk with a pinch of turmeric and a spoon of honey is a coldand cough remedy passed down generations. Recent research validates its ability to reduce chances of stroke too.

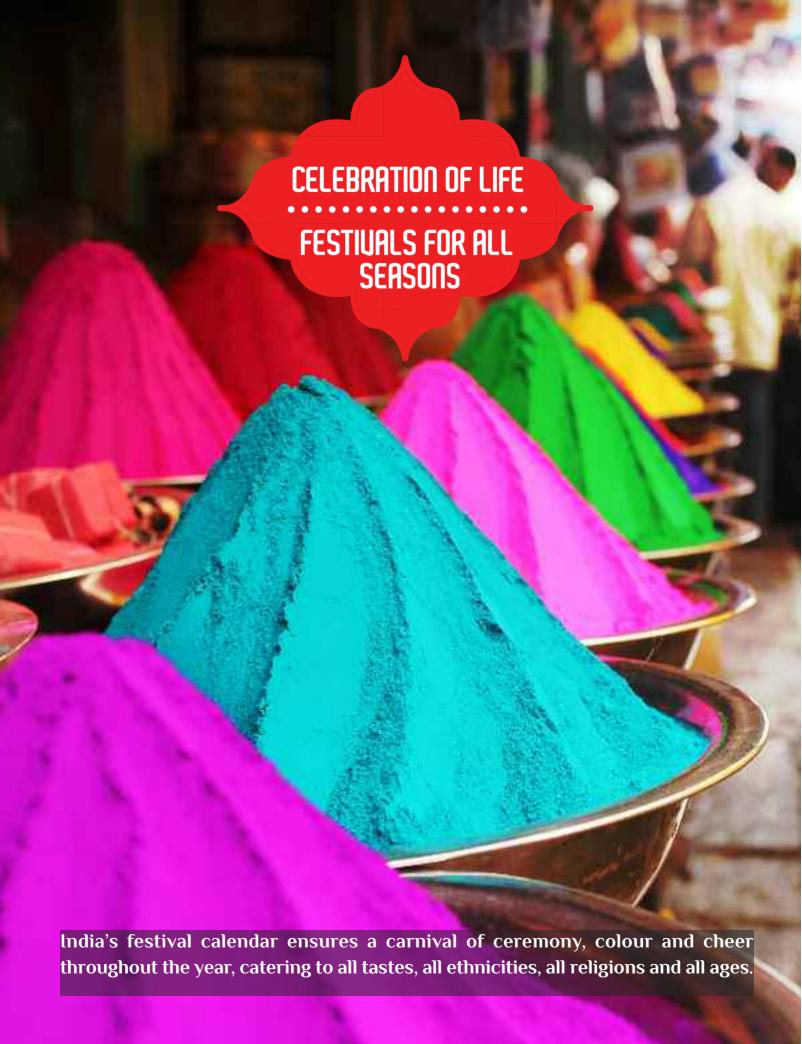
Basil & Ginger: Tea made with tulsi (holy basil) or ginger helps cure the common cold and a sore throat. Ginger also aids digestion, relieves pain and improves circulation. Crushed ginger with honey is also helpful when you have a cold.

Curry leaves: Used in South Indian cuisine, curry leaves help strengthen the liver. They are good for many kinds of intestinal disorders. They are also rich in vitamin A and help strengthen the eyesight if consumed regularly.

Mint: Rich in antioxidants, nutrients and phytonutrients, mint helps build immunity and improves digestion. Just chewing on a few fresh mint leaves can help with oral health, the reason it is often found in oral-care products.









India's festival calendar ensures a carnival of ceremony, colour and cheer throughout the year, catering to all tastes, all ethnicities, all religions and all ages.

The year begins with the many regional festivals heralding spring and celebrating the New Year. The most famous is Holi, the festival of colours, a celebration of life and its renewal, when coloured powders and water fill the air and there is singing and dancing in the streets to the throbbing beat of drums.

The summer months from April to September also have their fair share of festivals from Navroz (Parsi New Year) to RakshaBandhan (the Protection Bond), when all women tie decorative wristbands (Rakhi) on their brothers and close male friends who swear to protect them in return. Another festival, which is celebrated as autumn sets in, is Ganesh Chaturthi, celebrated by the ceremonial immersion of effigies of the Elephant God Ganesha.

After the heat of the summer months comes the series of festivals commemorating the Ramayana, India's oldest epic, which depicts the victory of



Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, over the evil demon king Ravana. The climactic battle is symbolically fought over nine days of fasting (Navratri), when every evening street performers act out various episodes from the Ramayana. This street theatre tradition, called Ram Leela, culminates on the 10th day, known as Dussehra or Vijaya Dashmi, with the death of Ravana symbolised by setting on fire effigies of Ravana especially erected for the purpose. Constructing these effigies is in itself a source of much excitement, with each neighbourhood trying to build the tallest Ravana ever, easily reaching over 80 feet in many cases.

In Bengal, Navratri is celebrated as Durga Puja, with neighbourhoods competing to display the most artistic effigies of the Goddess Durga, which are then ritually immersed in the holy river on Dussehra day.

Twenty days after Dussehra, comes Diwali, the festival of light, when the citizens of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Rama, turned night into day with lamps and fireworks to celebrate the triumphant return of Lord Rama from his victory over Ravana.







Many Indians also celebrate Diwali as the New Year. Lamps are placed in doors and windows to light the way for the entry of Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, and the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. Fireworks light up the night, sweets are distributed to all, houses are spring-cleaned and new clothes and utensils are purchased.

Interspersed throughout the year are all the festivals of the many different religions that co-exist and flourish in secular India, from Islam and Christianity to Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. There are also festivals celebrating events or persons of local significance, from kite festivals to snake festivals to sacred tree festivals.

Each festival in India has a multiplicity of stories linked to it, as also specific songs, dance and worship rituals and dishes. But as they are all inter-active and celebrated as much as by the community as by the individual family unit, they bring Indians together in a celebration of life throughout the year.





CONTRIBUTORS

Usha Krishna is a social worker and promoter of Indian handicrafts. She is a member of the Crafts Council of India and a former President of the World Crafts Council.

Laila Tyabji is a social worker, craft revivalist, art designer and the founder of Dastkar an NGO working for the revival of traditional crafts in India. She has been awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government and is the first Asian to receive the Aid to Artisans' Preservation of Craft award in New York.

Mukta Nandini Jain is currently a senior consultant with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. She is involved in creating and managing the direct online market place, Mahila e Hatt, for women from the rural and semi rural areas of India.

Ramdas Menon writes on science, mathematics, music and current affairs on social and print media. He runs his own Lean Six Sigma and Applied Statistics consulting practice in Chennai

Mita Kapur is the founder and CEO of Siyahi, India's leading literary consultancy, a published writer and free lance journalist. She also creates and produces literary festivals and book reading events.

Photographers

Elias Diab Myriam Shuman Tarek Touma

Partners

Voyages Sana & Myriam
ADLIR - Association for the Development of Lebanese-India Relations

Published by

:. Embassy of India, Beirut and Agenda Culturel

:. Editors : Anita Nayar and Myriam Shuman

:: Graphic designer : Tamara Zeitouni

:. Printed by: 53Dots

:. Bounded by : Fouad Baayno bookbindery

