Cultural Paper on India

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

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**Background**

The history of India dates back to thousands of years. The prehistory of the country, however, also dates back to good hundreds of years. Indian culture is quite diverse. It will not be wrong to say that the culture of the country is more like a cocktail. It is a collective mesh of all the cultures that are present and practiced by various communities present in the country. The religion, music, dance, language, food, and architecture varies from place to place in India. The cocktail of cultures making one whole nation has been because of the influence of their ancestors who are several millennia old (Kulke, & Rothermund, 2016). Indian culture is not just restricted to the country alone, the religions, food, philosophy, dance, martial arts, movies, and music have an impact across the globe (Evans, 2016). All in all, the culture is quite vibrant and reflects color, richness, family values, generosity, respect, celebrations, happiness, and collectivism.

When Indian culture is being discussed let us not forget to talk about one of the biggest influences and influencers on the culture. Starting by “Mother Teresa,” she came to India in 1929. She instilled the feature of selflessness and care in the people of India. Her humanitarian work is to this date talked about as one of the noblest. She later even won a Nobel Prize in 1979 for her good deeds. She believed in helping the poor in every way possible (Coffey, Gupta, Hathi, Spears, Srivastav & Vyas, 2015). She taught her students the basic skills of healthcare giving and taught them the joys of giving and selflessness. To this day Indian people try their best to have some reflection of her in them through their generosity and feeding of the poor.

Another factor which has a great impact on Indian Culture are the religions that are followed by the country. The main religions that are being followed by various communities lately are Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism. These religions are based on the concept revolving around Karma and Dharma. Indians are believers of the philosophy of non-violence. They cannot even come in terms of harming a small insect or animal. The main religion that the country follows was based on the teachings of Lord Buddha. When Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment, he set out on a journey to teach everyone around him Nirvana (Kulke, & Rothermund, 2016). This is one of the most significant historical events that have helped shape the culture of India. Further, in light of Hinduism, there are many Gods that are worshipped by the Indians. God's like Brahma, Vishnu, Ganapati, Lakshmi Shiva, Maa Kali, and Saraswati are some of the few Gods and Goddesses that are being worshipped all across the country. These Gods are popular for various reasons, like Ganapati is said to remove obstacles and Saraswati is the Goddess of learning. The pictures and replicas of these Gods are present in both the homes and temples of every Indian.

Talking about the worldview, the Indians believe in spirituality more than physicality. However, there are many factors that have an impact on the Indian Worldview, but the most important thing that should be kept under consideration is that Indians have great respect for their nation (Coffey at al., 2015). This is the reason that the subcultures present in the country thrive and grow. Further, there is a heavy caste system that is present in the culture which was also instigated by religion.

The Family system in India is quite strong. Most of the Indian’s are family oriented and share a great bond with all their family members. It is said that no Indian can escape or pass on the family system. It is essential that every single individual goes through the stage of being a part of the family. It is not necessary that the family will be only consisting of the parents and the children, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles are also included. Hinduism finds that the family as a whole carries more importance than a single individual. Marriage is given great importance and it is actually necessary so that the generation can continue. Another reason why marriage carries great importance is so that the dead family members are also taken care of with the help of Pooja. It is also very common for four generations to live under one roof in India. In the Indian family system, the parents have authority over their children. They decide the career path and marriage of their children. Further, the opinion of the elders is given great importance as well and always at the core of every decision that is made.

**Cultural Values**

The cultural values of Indians are made on the basis of respect. The elders of the family are given great respect as they have lived longer and have the experience that younger individuals do not have. It is not just the elders that are respected, the younger generation is also treated with respect. When the children are younger, the parents take care of them, but as the parents get older, they are taken care of by their children (Longkumer, 2015). While some people do live away from their families but mostly the children live with their parents till they die.

Another aspect that should be kept in mind is that an individual and society are said to be complementary, the two are incomplete without one another. Indian society is old so it lives by the rule that every individual plays their part. Further, Karma is given great importance. In accordance with Karma, the good and bad deeds of a person decide their fate (Kulke, & Rothermund, 2016). This is where the concept of "Reincarnation" also steps in. in accordance with this term a person who does good deeds will be reborn in a higher caste and will get great respect. While a person who does bad deeds will be reborn in low caste or even an animal (McClelland, 2018).

**Interaction**

In India the main language through which people interact with one another is Hindi. Other than that, the country is very rich and culture and speak in around eighteen languages inclusive of English as well. However, the main interacting language that is recognized and familiar in all the parts of the country is Hindi. In Indian culture, there are many things that are to be kept in mind when speaking. When referring to an elder an individual should always use the term "Ap,” but when a person is talking to friends and youngsters the term “Tum” can be used.

Additionally, Indians are people pleasers. They will do whatever it takes to keep everyone happy. Proverbs are also a significant part of their culture, they have been passed on from one generation to the other. It is said that a country's proverbs can reflect a lot about people. Proverbs like; "do not delay today's work on tomorrow, and a friend advices in his interests, not yours,” are some of the proverbs that make sense even to this date (Coffey et al., 2015).

In India, the use of nonverbal gestures is quite high. People even meet and greet each other by putting their hands together in front of their chest and taking a slight bow. This gesture is followed by the word Namaste. This gesture and the word means that one is giving a respectful greeting to the person they are meeting. Further, different gestures carry significance in India. People touch their ears when they see something taboo (Longkumer, 2015). They make excessive hand gestures as well when talking to put emphasize in their statement. Other than that, women should never initiate a handshake with a male, rather not get physical whatsoever. However, men can shake hands.

In regards to family and gender roles, men are mostly the breadwinners, while women take care of the household and cook. Due to recent awareness and social change, this framework and thought are changing, now the females earn as well as their male partners.

**Context**

Majority of the businesses in India are family owned, this automatically increases the nepotism rate in the country. Family again is given great importance even in the business sector. Further, the cultural expectations play a great role in structuring the context of companies and leadership in India. People are usually very honest and hardworking in regards to their work. Indian people push limits to achieve their goals (Longkumer, 2015). They are very open to other people’s opinions and believe in enhancing their skills through the process of continues learning. Education is also given great importance and stern on in India. It is seen as a mean to increase the economy and reduce the poverty rate of the country.

Healthcare in India is similar to how it is world-wide. However, there are disparities present in the rural and urban areas. The people in rural areas do not get the same quality of healthcare that the people in urban areas get (Kulke & Rothermund, 2016). The rural areas lack good healthcare givers. Other than that, death also carries great significance in the country. People prefer to die amid family and friends and the funeral ceremony is quite vast where everyone participates, including the children as well. In India, the body of the deceased is placed on wood and is burned to be returned to mother earth, while the family members and friends stand around the fire and pay their respect. The cremated ashes are then spread in Ganga Jal or any river or sea.

**Expression of the Culture**

Wedding in India is quite different. It is a universal fact that weddings are a way to celebrate and appreciate love and commitment. It is the same in India, every single relative gets together in order to celebrate the bond of two people. The wedding ceremony is quite vast and prolongs for a few days. Initially, a date is decided based on the birth dates of the bride and groom. The first ceremony is "Sangeet,” in which the families of the bride and groom get together dance, sing and celebrate (Evans, 2016). Then comes “Mehendi," which is a day before the wedding, in this henna is applied to the bride's hand and the husband's name is written as well. Finally, the marriage itself; the bride and groom sit in front of a fire which is said to be the witness, the ceremony is performed by the Pundit. Then the groom puts a “Mangalsooter" in his bride's neck (A kind of necklace). Then a parent figure ties the clothing of the bride and groom and they both take seven rounds around the fire taking vows and finally the groom puts a red powder in the hair partition of the bride. The brother of the bride gives her rice as a gesture of good omen for her life ahead.

**Improving Intercultural Communication**

There are certain problems that can be faced when communicating in India. The fact that the culture is so rich and there are so many ethnicities amongst one country, there are different beliefs and ways to communicate everywhere (Kulke & Rothermund, 2016). This is why some people face issues when communicating with culture. They think that the beliefs are similar throughout the country, they are wrong. In regards to improving the intercultural communication among the country, awareness should be made at a very young amongst students so they can differentiate different cultures, backgrounds, and castes so they can communicate without offending anyone. Other than that, the people who are not from the country need to educate themselves more and not stereotype the Indian culture.

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