

# Perennial Values of Indian Culture

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## Introduction

Culture is the essential and integral cornerstone of a nation. Culture is the base and civilization is the super structure - Culture is like the subconscious and civilization is like the conscious state of mind. Culture is the basic guiding spirit of the civilization. Thus the civilization and culture are the hallmarks of the collective life of man. Culture is the inner stratum and civilization is the outer stratum - civilization embraces the moral and ethical activity of refined human thought and mind, including arts and learning. According to **Sri Aurobindo, The Patriot Prophet of Modern India** "civilization is nothing but the harmony of the fellowship of universal human spirit, Mind and body - the harmony of inner and outer selves". **The Great Historian, Will Durant** defined civilization in his monumental masterpiece, "The Story of Civilization" as social organization, moral order and cultural activism. Four elements constitute civilization - Economic Provisions, Political Organization, Moral Tradition and Pursuit of Knowledge and Arts. In a nutshell we may comprehend civilization of people as the advanced stage of socio-cultural evolution.

On the other hand culture is the discipline by which man's moral and intellectual status get elevated. According to **Sri Aurobindo**, "Culture comprises of various activities of the cultivated aesthetic being." Will Durant defined culture as the sum total of the people's institutions customs and arts. **The Unesco's** definition of culture signifies culture as the total accumulation of the material objects, ideals, ideas, symbols benefits, sentiments values and socio-cultural forms which pass on from one generation to another in any society. To be precise culture signifies refinement of human thoughts and manners as also cultivation and inculcation of the aesthetic faculties in a secular society.

Spirit is the non-material, animating and immortal part of man. According to **Sri Aurobindo** "Spirit is the self-existent being with the infinite power of cosmic consciousness." The individual soul is integrated with the infinite and cosmic soul through the process of integral yoga. **From Manhood**

**there is a Gradual Evolution to Supermanhood, then Avatar Hood and Ultimately to Godhood** is thoroughly a transformational process for gradual evolution to the higher consciousness or Cosmic Consciousness.

## Indian Culture a Conceptual Framework

Indian culture is a remarkably continuing culture - a living factor in the life and thought of the Indian people. There is fundamental unity amidst rich diversity. Thus so many religions, so many beliefs and so many faiths are superbly amalgamated to form the structural edifice of the intricate and blended mosaic of India's culture.

Dating back to over 5000 years old civilization, Indian civilization has been distinguished as the contemporary of the Egyptian, Roman and Mesopotamian civilizations. The survival of Indian civilization is attributed to the moral, ethical and spiritual values deeply rooted in the Indian soil. Here the definition of Tylor (1974), the great sociologist is rightly applicable to the Indian context which implies the wide ranging set of activities, ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge and behaviouristic pattern of a pluralistic society like India. **Unesco's** universal declaration on cultural diversity (adopted on November 2001) culture is envisaged as the set of distinctive spiritual moral intellectual and emotional features of a society or societal group. Encompassing art and literature life style ways of togetherness, value system, traditions and beliefs are also equally applicable to the Indian context.

In sum the Indian culture is the complex amalgamation of the Aryan and Dravidian culture. Comparing the oriental and occidental conceptualization of knowledge, Romain Rolland (1960) defined western knowledge as the "science of facts" and spirituality is the "science of the souls". Spirituality has been valued in the Indian culture from time immemorial and it is no surprise that many innovations in field of spirituality originated in India. Indian civilization is like the ever-growing Banyan tree under which different faiths and ideologies merge together. This is the unique basic distinguishing

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characteristic features of the Indian culture. The values of spirituality as the complete manifestation of potential divinity inherent in the innermost core of the universal human soul is really the cosmic vision of Indian culture which is based on universal harmony and universal synthesis of **Man, Nature and God** into one complete integral and harmonic whole as defined by the dictum Satyam, Shivam Sundaram. Indian culture has taught the world, in words of Swami Vivekananda, universal tolerance and universal acceptance - this universal tolerance towards all living faiths is the fundamental and integral cornerstone of the Indian society. The Rig-Veda says **Truth** is one but wise men call it by different names - God is one but He manifests through many "Ekam Sad Vipra Bahudha Vadanti". Indian culture has embraced and adapted different customs and religions of different dimensions Shak, Huna, Pathan, Mughal, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist cultures. This inner insight of universal spiritual unity and spiritual emancipation of eternal mankind is the finest fabric of the Indian society. This peaceful coexistence of all living faiths, religions and customs and conventions is the hallmark of the Indian civilization which is manifold in reality and pluralistic in practice. This assimilation and amalgamation of various viewpoints, behaviors, customs and institutions accord rich diversity in the form of fundamental unity. The ethos of Indian culture is based on both unity in diversity as well as diversity in unity. Commenting on Indian civilization the great historian and social scientist Dr. RK Mukherjee succinctly observed India is a museum of different types, communities, customs traditions, religions, beliefs, languages, casts and social system. Even after having so much of wide ranging external diversity, none can deny the internal fundamental unity of Indian culture. According to Pandit Nehru "Those who see India, deeply moved by its unity in diversity. The fundamental unity of India is its great fundamental element." According to Sir Herbert Rizle, "Even after the linguistic, social and geographical diversity, a special uniformity is seen from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas."

### Concluding Observations

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has rightly observed - 'but he could not lose faith in men; that would be a sin. He lived now in the hope that the dawn would come from the East, "where the Sun rises", and that the savior would be born "in our midst", in this poverty-shamed hovel which is India.'

Like Tagore, the most eminent historian of our time, Sir Arnold J Toynbee, who has covered the entire world in his historical studies, also observes thus: 'At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of solution for mankind is an Indian way. The Emperor Asoka's and the Mahatma Gandhi's principle of nonviolence and

Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family - and in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.'

Indian spirituality is deeply rooted in ancient philosophical and religious traditions of the land. Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence. Indian sages called Rishis or 'seers', developed special techniques of transcending the sense and the ordinary mind, collectively called yoga. With the help of these techniques, they delved deep into the depths of consciousness and discovered important truths about the true nature of human being and the universe. The sages found that the true nature of the human being is not the body or the mind, which are ever changing and perishable but the spirit which is unchanging, immortal and pure consciousness. They called it the Atman.

The Atman is the true source of human's knowledge, happiness and power. The rishis further found that all individual selves are parts of infinite consciousness which they called Brahman. Brahman is the ultimate reality, the ultimate cause of the universe. Ignorance of man's true nature is the main cause of human suffering and bondage. By gaining higher knowledge of Atman and Brahman, it is possible to become free from suffering and bondage and attain a state of immortality, everlasting peace and fulfillment known as Moksha. Religion in ancient India meant a way of life which enables man to realize his true nature and attain Moksha that ennoble human life.

Plato had said that all knowledge is but remembrance. Let us get back that knowledge through the remembrance of these flaming words of Swami Vivekananda and let us hope that the gloom which surrounds us today will be dispelled through the grace and blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, which He uttered, as an **Infinitely Growing Self-Fulfilling Banyan Tree, Kalpataru**, to all of us: 'Let all of you have that awareness.' In that awareness or **Supreme Consciousness (Chaitanya)** alone, let my country awake at this turning point of human history.

Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo has conceptualized the three stage evolution of mankind from Manhood to Super manhood and from Super manhood to Avatarhood or Godhood which is possible only through the process of integralist yogic transformation. **From Integral Theism there is a Gradual Evolution to Integral Humanism and from there to Integral Yoga which is the Highest Culmination of Human Evolution.** This kind of conceptualization by RISHI AUROBINDO is a fundamental characteristic feature of our culture. **Which has taught the World that the World is nothing but an Emotionally Integrated Indian Family based on Religio-**

**Socio-Geo-Cultural Bondage (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam).**

Let us delve deeply into the vast ocean of Indian Culture and find the solace, peace, tranquility, harmony and happiness of human mind. Last but not the least the spiritual values of Indian culture aim at the spiritual unity and spiritual emancipation of the universal mankind. Sir Aldous Huxley entitled as philosophy perennis or the perennial philosophy.

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