

# An Overview of *Indian Culture*

Course BJMC 109  
Lecture-3

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# Personal symbols

Expressed in daily life such as-

- ◆ **Food**
- ◆ **Eating habits**
- ◆ **Dressing habits**
- ◆ **Language**
- ◆ **Rituals**
- ◆ **Festivities**
- ◆ **Mourning**

# Food & eating habits

**Indian food characterized by-**

- ◆ **Extensive use of spices, herbs**
- ◆ **Vegetarianism**
- ◆ **Ancient tradition of cooking**
- ◆ **Inter-cultural flavour**

# Indian food

**Ancient tradition – Spicy – Flavoured**



# Timelines in Indian cooking

- ◆ **Ancient times – The Ayurvedic way**
- ◆ **In later centuries, use of spices, non-vegetarian food, milk products**
- ◆ **With Muslim invasion, cooking habits changed**
- ◆ **Travelers' record refer to great Indian spices and flavors**

# Staple food

Staple food includes-

- ◆ **Atta**  
**(whole-wheat flour)**
- ◆ **Pulses**
- ◆ **Rice**
- ◆ **Vegetables**
- ◆ **Pickles**
- ◆ **Salad**



# Cooking medium

- ◆ **Medium oil**
- ◆ **Peanut oil**
- ◆ **Coconut oil**
- ◆ **Now use of sunflower/soybean oil**



# A spicy treat...

## Most frequently used spices-

- ◆ **Chilli pepper**
- ◆ **Black mustard seed**
- ◆ **Cumin seed**
- ◆ **Turmeric**
- ◆ **Fenugreek**
- ◆ **Asafoetida**



# The spicy story

- ◆ Earlier, almost all spices were prepared at home, now packaged spices are also used



# ... With garam masala

- ◆ **Ginger**
- ◆ **Coriander**
- ◆ **Garlic**

A popular spice mix is, **Garam masala** - typically includes five or more dried spices, especially cardamom, cinnamon and clove



# The main courses

- ◆ **A healthy breakfast is common**
- ◆ **In north India**
  - ◆ **Lunch has rice, dal and rotis,  
Two or three vegetables**
- ◆ **In south India-**
  - ◆ **Rice, sambhar, idli, dosa, Curd,  
chutney**

# Etiquette

- ◆ **Traditionally meals are eaten while seated**
- ◆ **Generally eaten with fingers of right hand, and with one hand only**
- ◆ **Most often no cutlery is used, except a spoon**
- ◆ **Served on a thali or a banana leaf**

# Eating, the traditional way

- ◆ Served in a thali or banana leaves



- ◆ Eaten while seated, fingers of right hand used in eating



# A family affair

- ◆ **Efforts still made by elders that at least all available members of the family collect on the dinner table at least once a day**
- ◆ **Eating together is supposed to create bonding and nurture a feeling of togetherness**

# Dressing habits

- ◆ **Dressing habits are a reflection of one's culture, beliefs, values, attitudes and lifestyle**
- ◆ **The attire of people keeps changing with the evolution of tastes, ones needs, and comforts as well**

# Traditional dressing

- ◆ A reflection of culture and beliefs



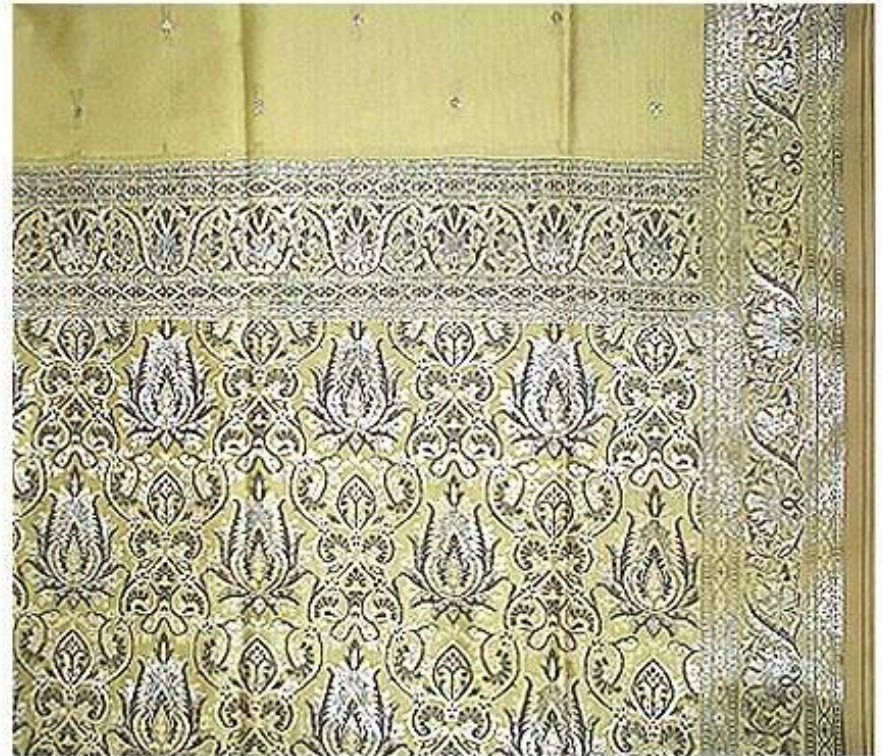


# Traditional designs

- ◆ **India known for hand-woven textiles, richly embroidered fabrics and authentic drapes**
- ◆ **Indian men and women love to dress up in traditional costumes, attires and accessories during festivals and other occasions**

# Hand-woven designs

Rich embroidery, authentic drapes

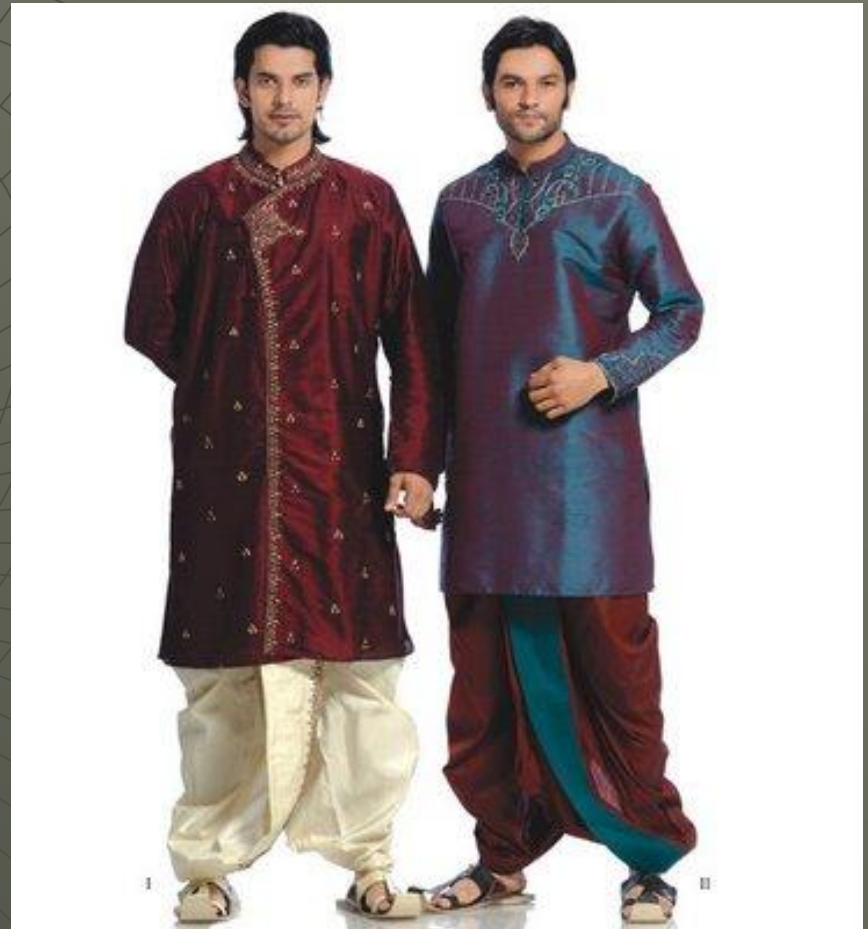


# The elegant saree

- ◆ **Historians believe that the sari itself dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization which flourished in 2800-1800 BC, in the north-western part of India**
- ◆ **Studies also show that men's dhoti is a prototype of the sari and both the sexes wore the former till the 14th century**

# The saree & the dhoti

Saree & dhoti– elegance personified



# External influence

- ◆ **The choli or the woman's blouse is believed to have come into existence with the various European colonial powers**
- ◆ **Achkan, a long-sleeved coat worn mainly by Muslim men even today, originated in Central Asia**

# Simple yet in fashion

Choli



Achkan

# Kinds of saree

- ◆ Bengali
- ◆ Gujarati
- ◆ Maharashtrian



# Kinds of saree

- Banarsi
- Chanderi





# Great variety

## Kanjeevaram



Paithani



Mysore Silk

# Sarees from regions of India

Taant



Tangail



Venkatgiri

# Common attire

- ◆ **Salwar kameez**
  - **Probably borne out of Islamic influence**
- ◆ **Ghaghra or Lehenga-Choli** – **A must-wear by the bride on wedding day**

# Common wear

## Salwar kameez



## Ghaghra-Choli

# Regional costumes

## Mekhla Chadar –

Traditional attire of Assamese women



## Phiran –

Woolen tunic worn by both men & women in Jammu & Kashmir



# Tribal costumes

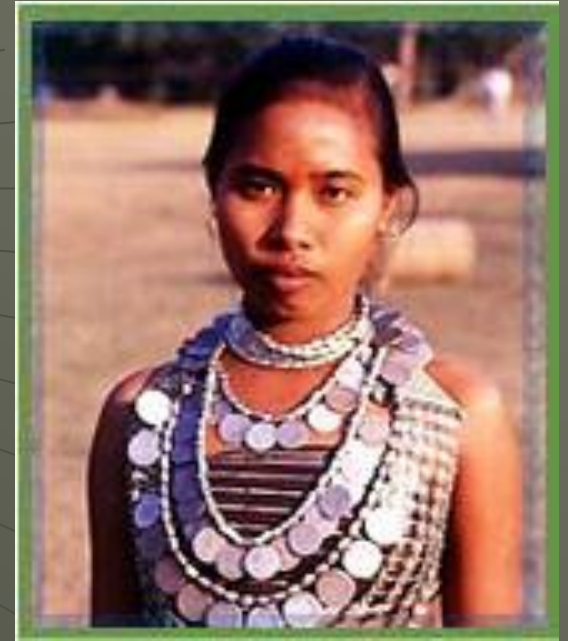
- ◆ Bhils of Rajasthan



- ◆ Todas



- ◆ Santhals of West Bengal



# Men's costumes

- ◆ Restricted to the western–trousers and shirts



- ◆ Lungi common in some states

# Cultural practices

- ◆ **Namaste the most common greeting**
- ◆ **Shaking hands becoming common**
- ◆ **Saying hello with wave of hands**
- ◆ **Mourning in a household often becomes a community phenomenon**
- ◆ **Common saying – stand together in a tragedy, if not in a joy**



# Some common gestures



u28958514 fotosearch.com

# **Distortion of Indian culture**

- ◆ **Composite culture under attack by various influences**
- ◆ **Appeasement and narrow, short-term interests often distort cultural expressions**
- ◆ **Sensitivity to religious identity is crucial to preserve culture**



***Thank you***