Indian culture can be classified into many varied form which are existent in their totality throughout India. The culture of India has been influenced by various religions and customs of the world, which has resulted in the mingling of religious values, folk idioms, and art forms. While the religious influence is quite evident in the "classical" Indian culture mostly found in smaller towns and villages, the urban India is now widely influenced by globalization.

[edit] Language

Main article: Languages of India

As well as regional diversity, languages have created diverse traditions of culture in India. There are a large number of languages in India, 216 of each of which are spoken by a group of 10,000 people or more, although there are others that are spoken in India by fewer than 10,000 people. If these languages are included, there are 415 living languages in India.[1] The two major families of languages are those of the Indo-Aryan languages and those of the Dravidian languages, the former being largely confined to North India and the latter to South India. The Constitution of India has stipulated the usage of Hindi and English to be the two official languages of communication for union government. There is another language family in India which is spoken by about 3% of the people. These languages falls in the language family of Tibeto-Burman languages, which is a subgroup of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Besides this, many other languages in India can be divided into 10 other families of languages.

A further twenty-two languages are scheduled for official use, mainly by state governments.

[edit] Cultural Policy

The cultural policy of the Government of India has three major objectives. One is to preserve the cultural heritage of India; two to inculcate Indian art consciousness amongst countrymen; and three to promote high standards in creative and performing arts fields. [*citation needed*]

[edit] Literature

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Please improve the article by adding references. See the talk page for details. *(September 2007)*

Rabindranath Tagore became Asia's first Nobel laureate when he won the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature

[edit] History

Main article: Indian literature

The earliest literary traditions were mostly oral and passed down through descendants by citizens. Later, though, they were transcribed. Most of these spring from Hindu tradition and are represented by sacred works such as the Vedas, the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Tamil Sangam literature represents some of India's oldest secular traditions.[citation needed] Many Buddhist and Jain works are in Prakrit languages like Pali. The classical works of playwright Kalidasa even today exert an important influence on Indian litterateurs. The Tamil Ramayana (translated from the original Valmiki Ramayana) by Kamban is considered to be a classical masterpiece.[citation needed] Kamban[citation needed] and Kalidasa have been rightly given the title of "Kavi Chakravarthi" (King among Poets).

Upon the arrival of Mughal dynasty, Islamic culture also influenced the medieval Indian literature. This was due to the spreading influence of Persian and the rise of famous poets such as Amir Khusro. Colonial rule prepared the stage for modern literature exemplified by the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Subhramanya Bharati,Kuvempu, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Munshi Premchand, Devaki Nandan Khatri, among many others. Indian writers in modern times, like R. K. Narayan, Poornachandra Tejaswi, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer,Mahasweta Devi, Amrita Pritam, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie, and Moncy Pothen, have been the cynosures of wide acclaim, both in Indian languages and English .

[edit] Poetry

Main article: Indian poetry

India has strong traditions of poetry, as well as prose writing. This is often closely related to musical traditions, and most poetry can be attributed to religious movements. Writers and philosophers were often also skilled poets. In modern times, poetry has served as an important non-violent tool of nationalism during the Indian freedom movement. A famous modern example of this tradition can be found in such figures as Rabindranath Tagore in modern times and poets such as Kabir in medieval times, as well as the epics of ancient times. Two examples of poetry from Tagore's Gitanjali serve as the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh.

[edit] Epics

Main article: Indian epic poetry

The Ramayana and Mahabharata are not only considered epics of India and Hinduism, but serve as the folk epics of other Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. In this respect, they are considered by many to be the 'eastern' equivalents of the classical epics of Europe, namely Iliad and Odissi. Similarly there are five epics in the classical Tamil language -they being Silappadhikaram, Manimegalai, Jeevaga-chintamani, Valayaapathi, Kundalakesi.[citation needed] Other regional variations of these stories, and unrelated epics include such as the Tamil Kamba Ramayanam, Kannada Pampa Bharata, Karnata Bharata KathaManjari by Kumaravyasa, Hindi Ramacharitamanasa,Malayalam Adhyathmaramayanam. The vedas are also a major collection of writing for Hindus.

[edit] Performing arts

[edit] Music

> *Main article: Indian music*

The music of India includes multiples varieties of folk, popular, pop, and classical music. India's classical music tradition that originates, has a basis from and is heavily influenced by Hindu texts. It includes Carnatic and Hindustani music, and is noted for the use of several Raga, has a history spanning millennia and, developed over several eras, remains instrumental to the religious inspiration, cultural expression and pure entertainment. Alongside distinctly subcontinental forms there are major similarities with other types of oriental music . Indian genres/fusions like filmi and bhangra have become popular throughout the United Kingdom, South and East Asia, and around the world.[citation needed]

[edit] Dance

> *Main article: Indian dance*

India offers a number of Classical Indian dance forms, each of which can be traced to different parts of the country. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people. The nine main styles are Garba, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Yakshagana, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Bhangra, Manipuri and Kathakali.[citation needed] Besides, there are several forms of Indian folk dances, and special dances observed in regional festivals.

[edit] Drama and theatre

> *Main article: Theatre in India*

Indian drama and theatre is perhaps as old as its music and dance. Kalidas' plays like Shakuntala and Meghadoot are some of the oldest plays from literary traditions. The tradition of folk theatre is alive in nearly all the linguistic regions of the country. [citation needed] In addition, there is a rich tradition of puppet theatre in rural India. Group Theatre is also thriving in the cities, initiated by the likes of Utpal Dutt, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and still maintained by groups like Nandikar and Prithvi Theatre.

[edit] Visual arts

> *Main article: Indian art*

[edit] Painting

> *Main article: Indian painting*

an 18th century Rajput painting.

The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of pre-historic times, the petroglyphs as found in places like Bhimbetka, and some of them are older than 550 BC. Ancient texts outline theories of darragh and anecdotal accounts suggesting that it was common for households to paint their doorways or indoor rooms where guests resided.

Cave paintings from Ajanta, Bagh, Ellora and Sittanavasal and temple paintings testify to a love of naturalism and God. Most rock art in India is Hindu or Buddhist. A freshly made coloured flour design (Rangoli) is still a common sight outside the doorstep of many (mostly South Indian) Indian homes.

Madhubani painting, Rajput painting, Tanjore painting, Mughal painting are some notable Genres of Indian Art; while Raja Ravi Varma, Nandalal Bose, Geeta Vadhera,Jamini Roy are some modern painters. Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, has on display several good Indian paintings.

This short section requires expansion.

[edit] Sculpture

This article needs additional citations for verification.
Please help improve this article by adding reliable references. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *(February 2007)*

Main article: Sculpture in India

Sculpture in Khajuraho

The first sculptures in India date back to the Indus Valley civilization, where stone and bronze carvings have been discovered. This is one of the earliest instances of sculpture in the world. Later, as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism developed further, India produced some of the most intricate bronzes in the world, as well as unrivalled temple carvings. Some huge shrines, such as the one at Ellora were not actually constructed using blocks, but instead carved out of solid rock, making them perhaps the largest and most intricate sculptures in the world.

The pink [sandstone](#) sculptures of [Mathura](#) evolved during the [Gupta period](#) (4th to 6th century) to reach a very high fineness of execution and delicaracy in the modeling. Newer sculptures in northwest, in [stucco](#), [schist](#), or [clay](#), display very strong blending of Indian post-Gupta mannerism and Classical influence, [Hellenistic](#) or possibly even [Greco-Roman](#). Meanwhile, elsewhere in India, less anatomically accurate styles of human representation evolved leading to the classical art that the world is now familiar with and contributing to Buddhist and Hindu sculpture throughout Asia.

This short section requires [expansion](#).

[edit] Architecture

Main article: [Indian architecture](#)

The [Ellora](#) temples were not constructed, but in fact carved out of solid rock

Indian architecture is that vast tapestry of production of the Indian Subcontinent that encompasses a multitude of expressions over space and time, transformed by the forces of history considered unique to the sub-continent, sometimes destroying, but most of the time absorbing new ideas. The result is an evolving range of architectural production that nonetheless retains a certain amount of continuity across history. The earliest production in the Indus Valley Civilization was characterised by well planned cities and houses where religion did not seem to play an active role, but which demonstrated world-famous city planning.

During the reign of the [Gupta](#) and [Maurya](#) empires, several Buddhist architectural examples like caves of [Ajanta](#) and [Ellora](#) and the monumental [Sanchi](#) [Stupa](#) were built. South India contains several Hindu temples like [Brihadeeswara Temple](#), [Thanjavur](#), the [Sun Temple](#), [Konark](#), [Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple](#) at [Srirangam](#), and the [Buddha](#) [stupa](#) (Chinna Lanja dibba and Vikramarka kota dibba) at [Bhattiprolu](#). [Angkor Wat](#) and other [Buddhist](#) and [Hindu](#) temples carry the evidence of Indian influence on South East Asian architecture, as they are built in styles almost identical to traditional Indian temple building.

With the advent of Islamic influence from the west, the erstwhile Indian architecture was slightly adapted to allow the traditions of the new religion. [Fatehpur Sikri](#), [Taj Mahal](#), [Gol Gumbaz](#), [Qutub Minar](#), [Red Fort of Delhi](#) are the creations of this era, and are often used as the stereotypical symbols of India, despite the greater antiquity and originality of traditional architecture. The colonial rule of the British Indian Empire saw the development of [Indo-Saracenic](#) style, and mixing of several other styles, such as European gothic. [Victoria Memorial](#), [Victoria Terminus](#) are notable examples. Recent creations such as [Lotus Temple](#), and the various modern urban developments of India, are also notable.

The traditional system of [Vaastu Shastra](#) serves as India's version of [Feng Shui](#), influencing town planning, architecture, and ergonomics. It is unclear which system is older, but they contain many similarities. Although [Feng Shui](#) is more commonly used throughout the world.Though Vastu is conceptually similar to [Feng Shui](#) in that it also tries to harmonize the flow of energy, (also called life-force or [Prana](#) in [Sanskrit](#) and [Chi](#)/[Ki](#) in [Chinese](#)/[Japanese](#)), through the house, it differs in the details, such as the exact directions in which various objects, rooms, materials etc are to be placed.

Indian architecture has influence the world, especially eastern Asia, due to the spread of ideas with Buddhism. A number of Indian architectural features such as the temple mound or [stupa](#), temple spire or [sikhara](#), temple tower or [pagoda](#) and temple gate or [torana](#), have become famous symbols of Asian culture, used extensively in [East Asia](#) and [South East Asia](#). The central spire is also sometimes called a [vimanam](#). The variant southern temple gate, or [gopuram](#) is noted for its intricacy and majesty. The [arch](#), a cornerstone of world architecture, was first developed by the [Indus Valley civilization](#) and would later be a staple of Indian architecture.

[edit] Recreation and sports

> Main article: [Sports in India](#)

In the area of recreation and sports India had evolved a number of games. The modern eastern martial arts originated as ancient games and martial arts in India and it was from here that these games were transmitted to foreign countries, where they were further modernized. Additionally, a few games introduced during the [British Raj](#) have grown quite popular in India, [field hockey](#), [football (soccer)](#) and especially [cricket](#).

Although field hockey is India's official national sport, cricket is by far the most popular sport not only in India, but the entire [subcontinent](#), thriving recreationally and professionally. Cricket has even been used recently as a forum for diplomatic relations between India and long-standing rival, [Pakistan](#). The two nations' cricket teams face off annually and such contests are quite impassioned on both sides. Traditional indigenous sports include [kabaddi](#) and [gilli-danda](#), which are played in most parts of the country. Indoor and outdoor games like [Chess](#), [Snakes and Ladders](#), [Playing cards](#), [Polo](#), [Carrom](#), [Badminton](#) are popular.

[edit] Clothing

Indian Sarees/Saris are popular in the southern half of India and certain parts of the northern half as well. Alternatively, women can wear salwar kamis or lehngas. For men it consists of the Dhoti or Lungi and currently the kurta top is very popular. Also bhangara is very popular in the Indian culture.

[edit] Cuisine

> Main article: [Cuisine of India](#)

A traditional North Indian thali

The cuisine of Modern India has great variety and each region has its own distinctive flavours. The staple cereals are rice and wheat. North Indian staple meals consist of *chapatis* or *rotis*, wheat based and rice as staples, eaten with a wide variety of side dishes like dals, curries, yogurt, chutney and *achars*. South India staple dishes consist of rice, sambhar, rasam, yoghurt and curries being important side dishes. bob

[edit] Popular media

[edit] Cinema

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Please improve the article by adding references. See the talk page for details. *(September 2007)*
        Main article: Cinema of India

Bollywood is the informal name given to the popular Mumbai-based film industry in India. Bollywood and the other major cinematic hubs (Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu) constitute the broader Indian film industry, whose output is considered to be the largest in the world in terms of number of films produced and number of tickets sold.

Bollywood films are usually musicals, though not in the Western sense of the word. Indian movies have a regular plot, with songs and dances interspersed to add to the entertainment value of the movie. Few movies are made without at least one song-and-dance number. Indian audiences expect full value for their money; they want songs and dances, romance, comedy and dare-devil thrills, all mixed up in a three hour long extravaganza with intermission. Such movies are called *masala* movies, after the Indian spice mixture *masala*. Like *masala*, these movies are a mixture of many things. Plots tend to be melodramatic. They frequently employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers and angry parents, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, conniving villains, courtesans with hearts of gold, long-lost relatives and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reversals of fortune, and convenient coincidences, and even movies with tri polar changes that can turn a movie and its plot upside down.Bollywood is becoming increasingly popular in other countries including several places in Europe and the U.S. Some Bollywood actors have adapted to more Hollywood-type films in movies like Bend It Like Beckham and Bride and Prejudice. Bollywood's fame is increasing internationally as more and more people across the globe are exposed to its style.

Besides the regular *masala* film, India has also produced many critically acclaimed cinema-makers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Girish Kasaravalli, Shekhar Kapoor, Ashutosh Gwarikar Mani Ratnam, G. Aravindan etc. (See Indian film directors). In fact, with the opening up of the economy in the recent years & consequent exposure to world cinema, audience tastes have been changing. Indian commercial movies have also started following

authentic, real world themes with a lower amount of melodrama & some do not even contain songs. In addition, multiplexes have mushroomed in most cities, changing the revenue patterns & allowing film makers greater liberty & scope for executing bold & innovative ideas which would not have been possible even a decade ago.

[edit] Television

Main article: Television in India

Indian television started off in 1959 in New Delhi with tests for educational telecasts.[2] Indian small screen programming started off in the early 1980s. At that time there was only one national channel Doordarshan, which was government owned. The Ramayana and Mahabharat were some among the popular television series produced. By the late 1980s more and more people started to own television sets. Though there was a single channel, television programming had reached saturation. Hence the government opened up another channel which had part national programming and part regional. This channel was known as DD 2 later DD Metro. Both channels were broadcasted terrestrially.

In 1994, the government liberated its markets, opening them up to cable television. Since then, there has been a spurt in the number of channels available. Today, Indian silver screen is a huge industry by itself, and has thousands of programmes in all the states of India. The small screen has produced numerous celebrities of their own kind some even attaining national fame for themselves. TV soaps are extremely popular with housewives as well as working women, and even men of all kinds. Some small time actors have made it big in Bollywood. Indian TV has evolved to be similar to Western TV, including stations such as Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and MTV India.

See also: List of Indian television stations

[edit] Radio

Radio broadcasting began in India in 1927, with two privately owned transmitters at Mumbai and Calcutta. These were nationalised in 1930 and operated under the name "Indian Broadcasting Service" until 1936, when it was renamed All India Radio (AIR). Although officially renamed again to *Akashwani* in 1957, it is still popularly known as All India Radio. All India Radio is a division of Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India), an autonomous corporation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. It is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, the national television broadcaster.Indian women are effected by daily serials.Since the turn of the 20th century, radio frequencies in India have been aggressively opened up to broadcasters on the FM and AM bands, although such service has been mostly limited to the metropolitan areas. Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and many others have many private FM channels to broadcast popular Hindi and English music, although they are still not allowed to broadcast news like Akashwani does. Recently World Space launched the country's first satellite radio service.

See also: All India Radio

[edit] Religion and philosophy

[edit] Philosophy

Main article: Indian philosophy

Hindu philosopher Adi Shankara with the Four Disciples

Indian philosophy throughout the ages has had a tremendous impact on world thought, especially in the east. Various theistic schools of philosophy, such as the many schools of Buddhism and Hinduism, have had huge influences, but also, India produced some of the longest and most influential secular traditions of logic, rationalism, science, mathematics, materialism, atheism, agnosticism, etc, which are often overlooked due to popular conception that India is a 'mystical' country.

Many of the complex scientific and mathematical concepts such as the idea of zero, found their way to Europe via Arab intermediaries. The most famous school of Indian atheism, is Carvaka, considered by some to be the oldest materialistic school of thought in the world, composed around the same time as the Hindu Upanishads, as well as the philosophy of Buddhism and Jainism. This period around 600-400 BCE marked a huge leap in both Indian philosophy and world philosophy in general, with contemporary Greek schools emerging simultaneously. Some philosophical concepts from India were introduced to the Greeks, especially during the campaigns of Alexander the Great, and vis a vis, leading some schools of classical Greek philosophy to be almost identical to prior Indian schools.

In addition to the unbroken high emphasis placed on philosophy in India, which has existed since ancient times, modern India has produced some of the world's most influential philosophers of modern times, who have written both in their native languages, and often English. During the British occupation of India, various thinkers, both secular and religious, achieved a new level of recognition across the world as both ancient Indian texts, and the work of contemporary Indian philosophers was translated into English, German and other languages. Swami Vivekananda travelled to America and participated in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, impressing delegates with a groundbreaking speech that for the first time gave access to eastern, Indian, Hindu and dharmic philosophy to western intellectuals.

As well as various religious thinkers Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and other members of the Indian freedom movement, generated political philosophy, and formed the basis of modern Indian democracy, secularism and liberalism. Today, economists such as Amartya Sen, who won Asia's first Nobel Prize in economics, continue to give India a reputation as an important contributor to world thought.

[edit] Religion

Main articles: Religion in India and Indian religions

The Indian religions, one of the two main families of world religion (the other being the Abrahamic), originated in India. They include Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and other

schools of language. Today, Hinduism and Buddhism are the world's third and fourth largest religions respectively, with a collective 1.4 billion followers, despite being free of any evangelistic traditions. Unlike the [sectarianism](#) that has often marked differences among the Abrahamic schools, the philosophical-like treatment of these religions has generally made the idea of rivalry and conversion alien, leading to extremely close relationships between these faiths.

[India](#) is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world, with one of the most deeply religious societies and cultures. Religion plays a central and definitive role in the life of the country and most of its people. The religion of more than 80.4% of the people is [Hinduism](#), considered the world's oldest religious and philosophical system.

[Islam](#) is practiced by around 13.4% of all Indians.[3] [Sikhism](#),[Buddhism](#) and [Jainism](#) are systems that are strong and influential not only in India but across the world. [Christianity](#), [Zoroastrianism](#), [Judaism](#) and the [Bahá'í Faith](#) are also influential but their numbers are smaller. Despite the strong role of religion in Indian life, [atheism](#) and [agnostics](#) are also visible influences.