

Cultural Stereotype Attributed to Regions in India

Pramod Thapliyal,

Asst. Professor, Department of Humanities, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun
Uttarakhand India

Abstract

Almost every facet of Indian culture is rich with variation. Besides the obvious gender and urban/rural divides, Indian society is also fragmented along linguistic, economic, religious, caste, and regional lines. Marriage and familial practises are two areas where North and South India diverge significantly. Indian culture is incredibly complex, possibly more so than in any other major civilisation; it resembles a region as diverse as Europe rather than a single country. Rapidly occurring changes impacting different geographies and socioeconomic classes in India provide even more nuanced variation to modern Indian culture. Despite the many moving parts of Indian society, there are underlying cultural elements that serve to maintain peace and order.

Keywords: Diversities of ethnic, linguistic, regional, economic, religious, class, and caste groups crosscut Indian society, great civilizations, socioeconomic group.

Introduction

India is a diverse and fascinating nation, but it also suffers from a number of negative perceptions. Although some of these generalisations may have an element of truth, this is usually not the case. The individuals who hold stereotypical views often reveal something about themselves. Understanding and combating the negative perceptions that some people hold about Indians is essential. The complexity of India's culture and civilization may be better understood after these myths and distortions are dispelled.

Stereotype-1 :

The average Indian speaker of English is terrible.

The truth is that most Indians have excellent English language skills. Why? Since English is widely spoken and is recognised as India's second official language.

Almost all Indian schools start teaching English to young children, making it feasible to go throughout the nation without learning any local tongues if you just speak English.

But it must be said that India has a relatively low literacy rate, therefore better levels of English proficiency are more likely to be found among the educated and the working professionals. At the same time, as Western influences flood the Indian subcontinent, especially via the media, English terms are becoming more commonplace across all social strata.

Stereotype-2 :

“Thank you kindly, please come again!”

The truth is that Indians are very courteous, sometimes to the point of begging.

The problem with the Indian accent follows naturally from the preceding argument; it has been particularised, stereotypically, and amplified by comedians and the media.

Even though visitors to India often see what they call "Indian activity," not every Indian speaks English as a first language and there is no standard Indian accent.

Stereotype -3

Indians are uneducated

Truth: they may not be able to read or write, but they certainly aren't ignorant. These cultural practises are instructive in and of themselves.

Although the literacy rate in India, and more so among women, is low, it is misleading to generalise about the whole country because of the sheer size of India's population. The stereotype of Indians as being ignorant is far from true; on the contrary, education is highly valued. Hundreds of thousands of schools may be found across the nation, and the formal education systems that are recognised by the federal government differ from one area to the next. Professionals with advanced degrees like MDs, PhDs, and MBAs are in high demand in India. Universities in India are very selective, with minimum admittance requirements of 100 percent.

Different parts of India have their own unique dialects and speech patterns. Many Indians, especially those who are actively working to better their language, take offence at the stereotypes perpetuated about the Indian accent. You may be guaranteed that no one in India will ever appreciate you trying to sound like Apu from *The Simpsons*.

Stereotype-4.

Indians are poor

In reality, they're never without enough money to provide full hospitality and assistance to anybody in need.

Media depictions of India, such as in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, contribute to the widespread belief that all Indians live in abject poverty.

There are numerous slums and shantytowns in India, and a large part of the population lives below the poverty line. However, this is not true of the whole country.

India is home to a sizeable proportion of the world's wealthiest individuals, and many Indian citizens are also multibillionaires, both at home and abroad.

Stereotype -5

The 'real India' is dirty and chaotic

Actuality : For many tourists, visiting India is all about having the "genuine Indian experience." For many Westerners, though, Indian culture is synonymous with squalor, anarchy, and unpredictability. They dress like traditional Indians, eat inexpensive cuisine, stay at budget hostels and use the bus or tube in an effort to save money and seem more authentic.

Stereotype -6.

Indians only eat curry and that to 'hot' spicy curry.

Actuality : Curry has come to represent all Indian cuisine outside of India, yet this is a gross simplification, since there is much more to Indian cuisine than just curry.

Indeed, many people in the nation enjoy curry, yet this statement is very imprecise and inaccurate since there are so many different kinds of curries.

It may be difficult to find 'foreign' cuisines like Chinese, Thai, Mexican, French, and American outside of India's major cities. McDonald's, KFC, Subway, coffee chain Costa

Coffee, with Starbucks are just some of the worldwide companies that have set up shop in India, and many more are sure to follow in the coming years. They ignore the fact that the 'new' Indian society is becoming linked with things like high-end hotels, shopping centres stocked with designer goods, and restaurants serving foreign cuisine. This thought follows from the one before it.

We must learn to understand and respect the many contrasting aspects of Indian culture, including the wide gap between India's affluent and poor, the East and West, and the contemporary and ancient.

Stereotype -7

Indians all speak Hindu

Actuality Both the religion and the language are Hindu and Hindi. Most Indians speak English, therefore you can forget about a "Hindu" tongue.

The Indian Union is home to a wide variety of languages and cultures as a result of India's vastness and diversity. In many Indian schools, particularly those in the South and East, the local languages take priority over Hindi. The purest form of Hindi is spoken mostly in North India, but in other parts of the country, individuals are more likely to learn it as a second or even third language.

Stereotype 8

Indian women are subordinate to men

Actuality : There is some truth to this generalisation. There is a strict gender hierarchy in Indian culture that puts males at the top and women at the bottom. There are few notable outliers in India's otherwise mostly patriarchal culture.

This should be seen in the light of the fact that it is typical for a developing nation. Patriarchy is deeply ingrained in Indian culture, and women are often seen as second class citizens. The gender gap is evident in the country's low female literacy rate and gender gap in the labour force.

Women have historically been restricted to the roles of caretaker, mother, and wife. However, this belief is steadily crumbling in recent years, especially among the upper and middle classes. There has been an increase in the number of women enrolling in college and working in professional fields. More and more women are holding positions of power in businesses and other commercial settings.

Therefore, many modern women aim for professional success before getting married and starting a family. India is notable for having a female president, a fact that cannot be stated of many Western nations.

Stereotype -9

Cows roam the streets of India

Actuality : There's no denying the cultural significance of the cow in India. They only go off the rails in a few isolated communities.

There are many cows in India, and you will see them all over the place, from farms and fields to roadways and even beaches. They sometimes become separated from their herds while their owners are relocating them from one location to another, which is why you see so many stray cows wandering the streets.

Even though these cows spend their days surrounded by people and human activities, you shouldn't go up to them or touch them since they might potentially attack you or spread illness.

Stereotype -10.

Indians worship millions of Gods

Actualty: Given that India is home to a wide variety of religions, this estimate is likely low. However, ancient Hindu texts have revealed that the religion incorporates the worship of over 330 million Gods and goddesses.

While this is true, it must be borne in mind that Hinduism is not a polytheistic religion, but rather a monotheistic one. Hindus believe that each of the many deities they worship serves as an incarnation for Brahman, the religion's greatest deity. Therefore, the exact number of Hindu deities varies depending on who is being asked the question. The core beliefs and practises of Hinduism, including Hindu "fundamentalism," date back millennia.

Most modern historians agree with the argument that the interaction between the official British polity and the reaction of the Indian English-educated elite resulted in the widespread adoption of a single religious entity called Hinduism. Hinduism seems to be an invention of the colonial age with no linguistic precedent in local traditions. The name Hindu has a convoluted origin; the Persians used the Indo-Aryan word "sindhu" (sea) to refer to the Indus River, and later the word was altered to Hind. It was the Greeks and the Latins who took the Persians' name for the region beyond the Indus and transformed it into the modern word India. The Muslim conquerors of India labelled the local population as Hindus.

Since at least 3500 B.C.E., Hindu religious expression has been developing into a rich and nuanced system comprising numerous subsystems rather than a core set of universally imposed beliefs and practises. Sacred the Vedic oral customs (sruti, Revelation) include sacrificial customs and songs that developed over time within complicated cosmological buildings, engendering strong metaphysical dialogue and monotheistic mixes as professionals of yoga "internalised" via meditation are largely responsible for the diversity of iconographic as well as ritual forms as well as the complexity of Hinduism's systems of thought.

Stereotype 11.

The Brahman priests solidified the caste system into its current form during the Vedic period, and it has remained unchanged since then. The concept of caste is fundamental to Indian culture.

Reality: Manu's Dharma Sastra with the Rig Vedic hymn detailing the four sacred social groups (varnas) are used to argue that Brahman clergy historically had a preeminent position within this strict system.

Scholarly debates on "warrior-centered expressions of caste values" and, most importantly, the malleability of intercaste interactions, have been ongoing for well over a decade. In the eighteenth century, thanks to the categorization efforts of British authorities, a Brahman-centered and legally designated caste order emerged.

Here, it is emphasised that for over a decade, academic arguments have provided alternate and contextualised views on "warrior-centered expressions of caste norms" and, most importantly, the malleability of intercaste interactions. It wasn't until the late eighteenth century that a Brahman-centered and properly designated caste system emerged, a development sanctified by the categorization efforts of British administrators. There has not been a strict caste structure as a defining element of Indian civilization "from time immemorial." To the extreme, Ronald Inden argues for the importance of precolonial "subject-citizenries" under the Rashtrakutas' mediaeval realm.

The East India Company's administrative officials' fascination with Brahmans as scribes and interpreters is a new phenomenon. As the British developed revenue collection systems modelled after Mughal administrative practises, promulgated reformist interpersonal regulations, produced massive official ethnographies, and beginning in 1871-2, produced decennial censuses, the interpretive discourse in India under the Raj of Company and (ultimately) Crown grew increasingly complex throughout the nineteenth century. The second notably used "objective" measures that accounted for social, linguistic, or religious distinctions to track the "success" of British administration. While the divisions of caste have always been a part of the Indian mindset, education, urbanisation, and the promise of better economic prospects have all contributed to a softening of those barriers in recent decades.

Stereotype 12.

Despite repeated invasions and continuous interaction with civilizations outside of India's borders, the subcontinent's geographical isolation is seen as a given.

Actuality : Valuable assessments of Asian faiths have depended on the formal language offered in 1829 by Sir Charles Metcalfe, an East Indian company manager working as residing in the neighbourhood of Delhi. "... the village populations are miniature republics, possessing essentially everything one may wish inside them, and almost devoid of any international links," he stated. They are reliable even in conditions when nothing else is. Even when Hindu, Patan, Mogul, and English govern alternately, and upheaval follows revolution, the rural society remains mostly unchanged.

Many British civil servants left for India in the nineteenth century, especially after the Charter Act of 1813, which allowed evangelical and utilitarian influences to permeate official Company polity. They went there hoping to inspire a change in the country's stultifying acceptance of the dictates of Brahman priests, who they believed were supported by antiquated social codes that had kept India in a state of ethical and physical corruption.

Despite several waves of invasion and conquest, Jawaharlal Nehru agreed with Sanskrit scholar Arthur Anthony Macdonell's claim that "no other branch of the Indo-European stock has seen an independent development like this" in his book *The Discovery of India*.⁶ Religions of Asia, now in its third edition, devotes the first few chapters to discussing "India's Isolation and Stability." Aside from the Aryan migration and conquering, no other foreign power "radically altered the age-old Hindu social order," the author tells the reader, arguing that India's geography has shielded it from invasions. Because of their sheer number and isolation, India's agricultural villages—the building

blocks of Hindu civilization—have never been able to be coerced into modernization. While many scholars specialising in South Asia still use the term "subcontinent," this region is not characterised by isolation due to its geography, culture, or psyche.

Rural and later urban communities were profoundly impacted by dynamic cultural exchange across "borders," giving rise to complex patterns of trade and new forms of social, religious, iconographic, and aesthetic expression that varied greatly from region to region as well as locale to locale. India has maintained active and open lines of communication with the rest of the world for a very long time, contrary to the claims of the writers of Religions of Asia.

High school and university students alike are still using textbooks that include outdated and inaccurate equations despite the abundance of available information to the contrary. While certain paragraphs have been updated in subsequent versions, some still include ambiguous language that might mislead readers. On the first page of the sixth edition of *A New History of India*, the author informs the reader that Indian culture's lasting traditions have survived "epoch to epoch... surviving basically through change," even as they have soaked up influences from local practises."¹³

Stereotype-12.

Hinduism and Hindu "fundamentalism" are essential forms of belief and practice in existence for millennia.

Actuality : Most modern historians agree with the argument that the interaction between the official British polity and the reaction of the Indian English-educated elite resulted in the widespread adoption of a single religious entity called Hinduism. Hinduism seems to be an invention of the colonial age with no linguistic precedent in local traditions. The name Hindu has a convoluted origin; the Persians used the Indo-Aryan word "sindhu" (sea) to refer to the Indus River, and later the word was altered to Hind. It was the Greeks and the Latins who took the Persians' name for the region beyond the Indus and transformed it into the modern word India. The Muslim conquerors of India labelled the local population as Hindus.

Since at least 3500 B.C.E., Hindu religious expression has been developing into a rich and nuanced system comprising numerous subsystems rather than a core set of universally imposed beliefs and practises. The sacrificial rituals and hymns of the sacred Vedic oral traditions (sruti, Revelation) were elaborated over time within complex cosmological systems, giving rise to intense metaphysical dialogue and monistic formulations among yoga practitioners as they "internalised" the sacrificial function through the "heat" of meditative practises.

This "reorienting" or refining of societal standards and norms was also aided by the establishment of a number of groups for social change by India's elite.

Actuality- 13.

Conflict between Hindus and Muslims is endemic in South Asia.

Actuality : The potential of nuclear war across this border was extremely serious in the 1990s, and the press has made it obvious that the 1947 Partition of India worsened tensions among Hindus, Muslims, & Sikhs, that the state of Kashmir has been a subject of disagreement between both countries for decades. It is less commonly known that 83 of

the more than 600 delegates to the 3rd annual session of the Indian Nationalist Congress in Madras are Muslims and that numerous nationalists "proudly" recognised "the Indo-Islamic heritage as an intrinsic part of the Indian patrimony." As with the prevailing image of an absolute chasm between Muslims and Hindus, the tendency to view action at the village level as solely reactive (the nationalistic elite versus a mob) instead of conscious and contingent, differing by regional traditions and political relations, is a product of a limited field of perception. Given the carnage of Partition, stereotypes about the nationalist movement are understandably common. Tapan Raychaudhuri, arguing against such ideas, pointed out that "unlike Europe," India has never seen civil warfare on the basis of religion. It must be emphasised that unlike what is shown in Richard Attenborough's film "Gandhi" (1982), Muhammad Ali Jinnah did not have sinister music playing every time he entered a room. In fact, a contentious theory proposes that Jinnah actually utilised the prospect of Partition as a negotiating tool in his pursuit of power over what he wanted to be an undivided subcontinent.

Gandhi responded the hurtful effect that British ethnic and religious arrogance had left "in the Hindu psyche" by sporting Indian-made cotton clothing (khadi) and corresponding use of the turning wheel, by supporting the study of Indian languages, as well as embracing religious diversity. Since Gandhi had used Hindu imagery in his call for Ramarajya (reign of God), many Muslims doubted that a secular India would understand his message. Nonetheless, "a lot Muslim friends" in the city turned to them for security as assault escalated in the summer of 1947, and Gandhi asked for, in his religious satisfying at Valmiki Mandir on April 1, 1947, that he have no intention of ever being flung off his feet by any particular religious current, such as the Muslim shahada. In fact, it was not a Muslim who was responsible for Gandhi's assassination, but rather a member of a Hindu extremist group who shouted "Hindustan Hinduka, nah kisika baap ka" (Hindustan belongs to all Hindus, not to anybody else's father).

Conclusion

The "essential factor" for harmonious interactions between different cultures in India's urban population is the existence or lack of "vigorous associational life," which includes things like trade unions, professional organisations, cinema clubs, and political parties.

While other stereotypes may still remain, maybe my interpretation and analysis has dispelled some of the fog.

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