

Culture plays an important role in the development of any nation. It represents a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices. Culture and creativity manifest themselves in almost all economic, social and other activities.

A country as diverse as India is symbolized by the **plurality of its culture**. India has one of the world's largest collections of songs, music, dance, theatre, folk traditions, performing arts, rites and rituals, paintings and writings that are known, as the '**Intangible Cultural Heritage**' (ICH) of humanity.

Many elements of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian religions, philosophy, cuisine, languages, martial arts, dance, music and movies have a profound impact across the Indosphere, **Greater India** and world.

Greater India

Greater India encompasses the historical and geographic extent of all political entities of the Indian subcontinent and the regions which are culturally linked to India or received significant Indian cultural influence. To a varying degree these countries have been transformed by the acceptance and induction of cultural and institutional elements of India.

Since around 500 BCE, Asia's expanding land and maritime trade had resulted in prolonged socio-economic and cultural stimulation and diffusion of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, in particular in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. By the early centuries of the Common Era, most of the principalities of Southeast Asia had effectively absorbed defining aspects of Hindu culture, religion and administration.

In Central Asia, the transmission of ideas was predominantly of a religious nature. To the north, Indian religious ideas were accepted into the cosmology of Himalayan peoples, most profoundly in Tibet and Bhutan. Buddhist monasticism extended into Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia, and Buddhist texts and ideas were readily accepted in China and Japan in the east. To the west, Indian culture converged with Greater Persia via the Hindukush and the Pamir Mountains.

The use of Greater India to refer to an Indian cultural sphere was popularised by a network of Bengali scholars in the 1920s who were all members of the Calcutta-based Greater India Society. The movement's early leaders included the great historian R. C. Majumdar (1888–1980). The term Greater India and the notion of an explicit Hindu expansion of ancient Southeast Asia have been linked to both Indian nationalism. However, many Indian nationalists, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore, although receptive to an idealisation of India as a benign and uncoercive world civiliser and font of global enlightenment, stayed away from explicit "Greater India" formulations. In the field of art history, the term survived due to the influence of art theorist Ananda Coomaraswamy.

CULTURAL ZONES OF INDIA

There are seven overlapping zones defined by the Ministry of Culture. Each of these zones has been provided with a zonal centre. Several states have membership in multiple zones, but no state subdivisions are utilized in the zonal divisions.

Cultural Zone	Zonal Centre
South	Thanjavur
South Central	Nagpur
North	Patiala
North Central	Allahabad
East	Kolkata