

KNOW YOUR COUNTRY

India – a nation so vast, it is termed “The sub-continent”. It is the world’s largest peninsula; Nature’s wonderland – bestowed with diverse features that have never been witnessed in any other parts of the globe. India was referred by the ancient geographers as “chatuh samasthana samsthitam” (four fold confirmation) encircled by the Great Ocean on its east, south and west, whereas the northern side is bounded by the vast mountain ranges of the Himalayas and its offshoots the Lushai, Garo, Jayantia and Chittangong hills in the East and the Kirthar and Sulaiman ranges in the West. Interspersed between these, lie the salty marshes and deserts in the west, the cold desert in the north west, the lesser Himalayas and the vast plains, great rivers, virgin forests, caves, the central plateau, the tropical forests and the mangroves and the largest delta in the world.

The Indian history traces back its origin to the Indus Valley Civilization which is amongst the world's oldest, richest and most diverse cultures. India's unique ethos is rooted in its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. The abundance of natural resources and the benign climate invited invasions from the Aryans followed by the Persians, Greeks, Moghuls, Chinese nomads, Arabs, Portuguese, British and many others, yet none could crush the indomitable soul of ‘Bharatvarsha’ but rather assimilated in its soul leading to *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* i.e respect for all belief systems. Festivals like Holi, Diwali, Nanak Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Eid , Christmas, Navroz and numerous tribal festivals are celebrated, transcending religious barriers.

Not only by its natural and rich religious diversity, India and its world-wide diaspora has also enriched the world intellectually and culturally. Scientists like C V Raman, Hargobind Khurana, Subrahmaniyam Chandrasekhar are the noble laureates - with prodigies like J C Bose, Vikram Sarabhai, Meghnad Saha, Homi Bhaba being among the very best.

Mathematicians like Aryabhatta and Ramanujan have stunned the world. Spiritual leaders and reformers like Swami Vivekananda, Shankaracharya, Swami Dayanand Sarawati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rishi Aurobindo, Baba Amte, Acharya Vinobha Bhave have transformed the life of millions by their revolutionary ideas. India has given the world Yoga as propounded in its ancient literatures. Kalidasa, Munshi Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Bhisham Shahni, Khuswant Singh, R K Narayan, Salman Rushdie have mesmerised all by their literary grandeurs. The legacy of rich repertoire in music of Mia Tansen is carried out by the legendary Amir Khusrau, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Lata Mangeshkar, A R Rehman, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Zakir Hussain, Zubin Mehta and the art world is resplendent by the works of Jamini Roy, M F Hussain, Satyajit Ray, Satish Gujral.

India is also making a strong march in the area of sports and games being the world leaders in cricket, hockey, badminton, wrestling, shooting and weight lifting. The Silicon Valley is enriched by the contributions of Sabir Bhatia, Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella. In each and every sphere India is leaving an indelible mark of its rich cultural, intellectual, spiritual heritage. The functioning of the democratic system in the political process evokes awe to the entire world.

India is not confined to the towns and metros with glittering shopping malls and towering sky scrapers, but one needs to discover and explore beyond; its soul in its villages, mountains, rivers, valleys, jungles which reverberate the clarion call “We Indian, One India.”

Lopamudra Ganguly

