

## **Q. What makes Indian society unique in sustaining its culture? Discuss.**

*(UPSC Mains GS Paper I – 2020)*

Indian society, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, has displayed remarkable continuity in cultural traditions over thousands of years. Despite repeated foreign invasions, colonial rule, globalization, and internal diversities, the core cultural ethos of India has survived, adapted, and evolved. This resilience makes Indian society unique in sustaining its culture.

### **1. Unity in Diversity:**

India is home to multiple religions (Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc.), 22 official languages, and over 2000 ethnic groups. Yet, a shared cultural framework has emerged through coexistence.

- Example: Celebration of festivals like Diwali, Eid, and Christmas across communities promotes mutual respect and continuity of traditions.

### **2. Spiritual and Philosophical Foundation:**

Indian culture is deeply spiritual, with philosophies rooted in tolerance, acceptance, and non-violence.

- The Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Buddhist teachings emphasize universal values like Dharma, Karma, and Ahimsa.
- *Constitutional Echo*: Indian secularism allows positive accommodation of all faiths, ensuring cultural survival through legal protection.

### **3. Family and Social Institutions:**

The family system, especially joint families, play a vital role in transmitting customs, rituals, languages, and values.

- Example: From food habits to festivals and rituals, children in Indian families are socialised in cultural norms from an early age.

- Caste and community-based practices, though controversial, also contributed to preservation of local art, music, and crafts.

#### 4. Cultural Adaptability and Continuity:

Indian culture adapts to change without losing its essence.

- Example: Modern Bollywood movies often incorporate traditional music, attire, and family values even in contemporary settings.
- Yoga and Ayurveda have been globalized, but continue to be deeply rooted in Indian tradition.

#### 5. Preservation through Art, Literature, and Oral Traditions:

Myths, epics, folk songs, and classical literature help sustain traditions.

- Example: Ramayana and Mahabharata are not just religious texts but living traditions performed as Ramleela or Kathakali across India.
- Oral traditions like Pandavani in Chhattisgarh keep epics alive among tribal populations.

#### 6. Role of Festivals and Rituals:

Regular celebrations reinforce cultural values and identity.

- Example: Harvest festivals like Pongal, Bihu, and Makar Sankranti link communities with nature and ancestral customs.

India's cultural endurance lies in its inclusive ethos, adaptability, and strong institutions of transmission. By integrating the old with the new, Indian society has ensured that its culture remains a living, evolving force rather than a static relic of the past. This dynamic resilience makes it truly unique.