I. Building Inclusivity Through Understanding Diversity Cultures, Traditions, and Beliefs in India

India is extremely diverse in terms of **language, regional differences in cultures and traditions, food, dress, and religious practices**

**Languages – more than 150**

**Diversity of Religious Traditions and Practice – Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism**
Indian Traditions Often BLEND Rituals and Practices, Creating Further Diversity

**Image – Pre-Wedding Manjha Ceremony in Indian Islam.**

**Manjha** = equivalent of the Hindu **Haldi** Tradition – the **painting of turmeric paste** (mixed with rose water) on the **bridge and groom** – purification and protection for health and wellness.

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**II. Diversity within Hinduism – One Supreme Deity, Multiple Manifestations**

**Brahman**

- Ultimate Reality/Supreme Cosmic Spirit
- Divine/God that is **Transcendent** (beyond human experience) and **Immanent** (operating within human experience)
- **Personal and Impersonal**

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<th>Brahman (God) as Energy/Cosmic Spirit – like Solar Energy</th>
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<th>Brahman (God) as Felt/Experienced Manifestation – Personal – like feeling the Sun’s Rays; Seeing the Sun</th>
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- Vishnu (Sustainer) – many avatars like Rama and Krishna (**Bhagavad Gita**)
  - Spring Festival of Holi -- celebrates Krishna

- Lakshmi (Wealth and Prosperity)
  - Associated with Divali – Festival of Lights
Important Spiritual Practice/Ritual

Puja
- Ceremonial worship (daily rites in the home AND elaborate temple rituals)
- Includes making an offering of flowers or fruit to an image of god

Puja – Offering of Flowers and Fruit to an Image of God
III. Yoga – It’s More Than Postures

- **Bhakti Yoga** (Bhakti Marga – the Path of Bhakti)
  - **Yoga** – from Sanskrit “yug” (yoke) = to unite/attach to
  - **Bhakti** = Devotion
    - **Bhakti Yoga (Bhakti Marga) = Spiritual Path to Unite/Attach to the Supremely Real (God)**

IV. Connections Between Health, Wellness, and Spirituality

- Relationship between Puja (offerings to the divine) and Physical and Mental Health
  - **Puja Mantras** – repeated sounds or phrases
  - **Homa** during a Puja – fire ritual

V. Ultimate Goal – Unifying with God and Finding/Unlocking the Divine Within

- **Moksha** = liberation from rebirth
  - Occurs AFTER someone has united with the Supreme Ultimate Reality (God)
    - State of complete bliss, joy, peace

- **Atman** = the divine within – the “spark” of God within the individual

- **Hatha Yoga** = Practice of Physical Yoga Postures
Indian Traditions in SE Nebraska

**Sikhism** – origins, about the community, latest announcements, and events
- Nebraska Sikhs → [https://www.nebraskasikhs.org/sikhism-origins/](https://www.nebraskasikhs.org/sikhism-origins/)
- Mission and Values: [https://www.nebraskasikhs.org/about-us/](https://www.nebraskasikhs.org/about-us/)

**Hinduism** – Nebraska community dates back to the 1970s
- [https://hindutemplenebraska.org/](https://hindutemplenebraska.org/)

**Jainism** – Young Jains of America – Midwest Region: [https://www.yja.org/regions/midwest](https://www.yja.org/regions/midwest)

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**Ayurveda = Science of Life**

- Originated in India more than 5,000 years ago
- Stems from Ancient Vedic Culture
- Holistic Healing System

1) **Understand your particular “constitution”**

Your pattern of energy is shaped by external and internal factors (physical, mental, emotional characteristics PLUS diet, seasons, relationships).

2) **Alter your lifestyle to bring your pattern of energy into balance.**

Balance is the natural order of things; imbalance is disorder; Health is order, disease is disorder.

Everyone has three types of energy (called doshas), and these are Vata, Pitta, and Kapha.

3) **When one of the doshas is elevated, or when one is weak, imbalance occurs, plus emotional and mental distress and/or physical disease.**

Health and Wellness (physical, emotional, and mental) is a RESULT of MAINTAINING balance.

By identifying the dosha that is elevated or the dosha that is weak, you can alter your lifestyle to either pacify the elevated dosha or strengthen the weak one.

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**Call to Action – COVID-19 Health Crisis in India** (For those wanting to donate)

**Care India** – supplying PPE to frontline workers:
[https://www.careindia.org/covid-19/](https://www.careindia.org/covid-19/)

**UNICEF** – supplying oxygen concentrators:

**Americares** – supplying ventilators, masks, sanitizers:

**Indian Red Cross** – running blood drives and delivering equipment: [https://indianredcross.org/ircs/COVID-19](https://indianredcross.org/ircs/COVID-19)