



THE QUEEN'S
COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2019

GOLD AWARD



2019

This is to certify that the Royal Commonwealth Society, on
recommendation of the judges, has awarded this certificate to:

Aarya Patil



Dr Linda Yueh
Chair

Dr Diana Owen OBE
Chair of Junior Judging Panel

Vicki Wienand
Chair of Senior Judging Panel



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

MY CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Culture is a set of traditions, rituals, values and practices which have been followed through the generations in a particular community. Culture defines the identity of a person. Being an Indian I have been extremely lucky to have a chance to experience this rich and varied heritage. Indian culture is ancient and extremely diverse. Over several generations the culture has been influenced by place, region and neighboring countries, further enhancing its diversity.

I have always stayed away from my country since my childhood yet, I have experienced a close relation to my culture through simple practices in my day to day life. For instance; we have a prayer room consisting to distinct deities with each one having significant importance. We would get up early in the morning, give them a bath and adorn them with rich embroidered attires. We would also offer them offerings like sweet delights or fruits. Later on as a whole family we would show our devotion in the form of Aarti (devotional song).

Coming to the meals of the day. We have a separate way to show respect for food. We all would take some drops of water in our palm and sprinkle it around the plate of food, reciting a thank you message to God for giving us food to eat. It's a promise to finish whatever has been served in the dish and to waste no food.

One integral part of my culture is Saree. It's a whole 6 to 9 yards of intricately designed fabric draped by women in India. It is usually made of cotton or silk. My relation with saree started when my aunt offered me to try on one of hers for a family function. I was amazed by rich fabric and the expertise needed in draping it. When I learnt little more about sarees I came to know that they are a heritage in itself. Generations of weavers have dedicated their lives in creating intricate geometric and floral patterns of weaves that cannot be recreated by machines. Every state in India has its own weaving style and draping style which defines the cultural beliefs and practices of that particular place. I feel like saree unifies whole lots of diverse cultures in India.

During my summer vacations, I visited my dad's native place Nandurbar, it is a small town in India where my grandparents live. I learned that the women of the house draw Rangoli. In the front yard a small area is swept and sprinkled with water then that area is nicely smeared with cow dung. It creates a uniform board to create the pattern of rangoli. After it is dried, using fine white marble powder various designs are drawn. The designs of rangoli are usually flowered, petals, religious emblems or geometric patterns. The purpose of rangoli is to welcome good luck and visitors and at the same time to ward of the evil.

In one way or other the culture binds us together making us a one big happy family. The members of family usually come together to celebrate the festivals. Raksha bandhan is one such example where a sister prays for her brother's long life and the brother promises her that he will always protect her. In such traditions it is a must for the brother and sister to visit each other in spite of different schedules. It is because of such traditional practices that the whole family comes together in spite of being in different cities and countries.

I am really proud to an Indian and to follow its culture. I hope to carry it forward so that the generation ahead can have glimpse of this rich tradition and heritage. Indian culture has put a great effect on my life. I keeps me happy and peaceful. It gives me solace and inner strength that sees me through my ups and downs :)