

## Module 13: "Color and Society"

### Lecture 35: "India- Holi"

The Lecture Contains:

- India
- Northwest American-Indian Culture
- Mesoamerican Civilization
- Incas in Andes

◀ Previous   Next ▶

## Module 13: "Color and Society"

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## India

Like any other traditional cultures India demonstrate large varieties of ceremonial colors. Red and hues of red and yellow are preferred colors in Indian cultural activities. The hues of red and yellow colors generate the warmth and excitement during the festivals (plates 9). India is known as the country of festivals. A country with a wide range of cultural diversities is interwoven in the fabric of traditional Indian culture.



Plates 9 Holi Festival



Basanta Utsav, Santiniketan



The welcoming warmth of the Spring Season is a major festival of India. Warm colors represent the joy, happiness and fulfilment is celebrated in the Northern part of India. The celebration is also associated to Lord Krishna's Rashlila with Radha. It is one of the most exciting festivals that is celebrated with dance and song. Similarly there are numerous regional festivals throughout India. Each festival has its unique characteristics. India being basically agrarian society, festivals related to 'harvest' is celebrated through the country with lot of gaiety that includes special food, beverage and clothing- *Bishakhi* (Punjab), *Onum* (Kerala), *Pongal* (Tamil Naru) , *Nabanya*, *Bihu*, etc. (Plates 10)



Plates10 Onam, Kerala



Boat Race, Onam Festival



Plates 11 Pongal, Tamil Nadu



Pongal

## Module 13: "Color and Society"

## Lecture 35: "India- Holi"

The colorful floral decoration with powdered rice is one of the rituals followed during the Pongal (plates 11). Dominance of red, orange and yellow is typical during the festival.



Plates 12 Bihu Festival, Assam, India



Bihu Tribal Dance

Bihu Festival (plates 12) in Assam (North-east India) is celebrated after the new harvest (rice) with dance and song and prayers. The dominance of red color is significant color.



Plates 13 Bishakhi Festival, Punjab

Bishakhi Festival (plates 13) is celebrated in Punjab after the harvest season. Bright colors are typical attire of the Bishakhi celebration. Men and women celebrate with dance and songs. Harvest is related to prosperity which is celebrated with good food, clothing and prayers.

(Source for plates Indian Festivals Plates 9-13-

: [http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Color+in+Indian+Ceremony&bav=on.2.or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=yAbWTSeKsPyrQeO67j8Dw#um=1&hl=en&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=fwfWT8Htk8TWrQfqk9j8Dw&ved=0CAUQBSgA&q=Color+in+Traditional+Indian+Festivals+holi.+pongal.+baisakhi.+bihu&spell=1&bav=on.2.or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf..cf.osb&fp=cbe1c387f6d26b10&biw=1350&bih=559](http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Color+in+Indian+Ceremony&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=yAbWTSeKsPyrQeO67j8Dw#um=1&hl=en&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=fwfWT8Htk8TWrQfqk9j8Dw&ved=0CAUQBSgA&q=Color+in+Traditional+Indian+Festivals+holi.+pongal.+baisakhi.+bihu&spell=1&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf..cf.osb&fp=cbe1c387f6d26b10&biw=1350&bih=559) ; June 11, 2012)

## Module 13: "Color and Society"

## Lecture 35: "India- Holi"

## Northwest American-Indian Culture

From east to west the importance of color in social activities is strongly visible. In North America the American-Indians have strong history of symbolism and practices based on natural phenomenon and their close relationship with nature.



Plate14 Thunderbird  
North-west, US



Thunderbird Attire



Dancing Ceremony



Thunderbird Totem

(Source: [http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Northwest+American+Indian+colors&bav=on.2.or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=9ArWT4nVDMitrAfAzLX8Dw](http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Northwest+American+Indian+colors&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=9ArWT4nVDMitrAfAzLX8Dw) ; June 11, 2012)

The Thunderbird (plate14) is a legendary creature (Eagle) in certain North American indigenous peoples' history and culture. It is considered a "supernatural" bird of 'power and strength'. It is especially important, and richly depicted, in the art, songs and oral histories of many Pacific Northwest Coast cultures, and is found in various forms among the peoples of the American Southwest and Great Plains. Thunderbirds were major components of the South-eastern Ceremonial Complex of American prehistory. Worshipping natural phenomenon (snake, Thunderbird, Mountain, river, etc.) is common in the American-Indian cultural history. Usages of bright colors are common. Linear quality is strong along with bright color combinations.

◀ Previous    Next ▶



## Module 13: "Color and Society"

## Lecture 35: "India- Holi"

## Mesoamerican Civilization

Aztec is one of the richest civilizations in human history. From the 13th century, the Valley of Mexico was the heart of Aztec civilization: here the capital of the Aztec Triple Alliance, the city of Tenochtitlan, was built upon raised islets in Lake Texcoco.

Aztec culture has strong history of symbolism and characteristics that influenced a large part of Mesoamerica. Pyramid architecture, astronomical visual images, sculptures and paintings (mosaic) are widely used as a strong visual language of communication. The civilization had strong taboo, symbolism, ritualistic artefacts



Plate15 Mesopotamian Art and Symbolism

(Source: [http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Mesopotamian+Civilization&bav=on.2.or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf.cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=gvWT9qSC87nrAeG-dT8Dw](http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Mesopotamian+Civilization&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=gvWT9qSC87nrAeG-dT8Dw) ; June 11, 2012)

The representation of Jaguars in Mesoamerican (plates 15) cultures has a long history. Aztec Cosmology has contributed to the mankind significantly. The naturalistic visual expression of Jaguar is found all around the Mesopotamia. More than the usage of color the linear quality has influenced the visual expression. Commonly the colors are organic or mineral. "The jaguar also is important for shamans who often associate the jaguar as a spirit companion, which will protect the shamans from evil spirits and while they move between the earth and the spirit realm. In order for the shamans to combat whatever evil forces may be threatening, or for those who rely on the shamans for protection, it is necessary for the shamans to transform and cross over to the spirit realm."



## Module 13: "Color and Society"

## Lecture 35: "India- Holi"

## Incas in Andes

Inca Civilization from the early 13th Century AD dominated the Andes range. The Pre-Columbian Inca culture, one of the finest civilizations in human history produced large number of iconic art and craft works. Inca symbols are predominantly created for war, religion (mythology) and astrology. Inca symbols shapes are snakes, condors, corn, cougars, the lightning, the coca plant, the sun and may others. The most complex symbol of Inca tribe is the Chakana symbol which is symbolized the fundamental of universe.



Chakana Symbol



Pre-Columbian Art



Inca Calendar



Mochica-Chimu Culture

Plates 16 Inca Civilization

(Source: [http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Inca+Civilization&bav=on.2.or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=oQzWT\\_bHFcTrQfftqz8Dw](http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=Inca+Civilization&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf..cf.osb&biw=1350&bih=559&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=oQzWT_bHFcTrQfftqz8Dw) ; June 11, 2012)

Inca civilization produced numerous visual examples (plates 16) in the form of sculpture and low-relief sculptures. However, the works remained linear. Like cultures from Far- East and Asia the works did not apply rich color combinations. The symbolisms in their works are extremely strong based on mythology and natural observations. Most of their visual works representing animals Jaguar, Serpent, Sun, Star, etc.)

◀ Previous    Next ▶