

# HOLA INDIA! FROM SPAIN!

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Think Spain and reminisce through visuals from the movie 'Zindagi na Milegi Dobaara'. Aptly captured in the movie, images of the exotic Flamenco dance, Spanish guitars, gastronomy and football come to mind. Spain's history is as rich and colourful as its cuisine and lifestyle. Working for the Madrid-headquartered Spanish brand Mahou, I often experience this country's rich culture and the Indian in me never ceases to be surprised by the several similarities with our culture.



It is believed that in the 11th century, a tribe from Rajasthan migrated to Europe, and wandered into Spain. Roma gypsies, or the gypsies of Spain, today celebrate a music and dance that has come to represent them uniquely, but a careful ear and eye will see similarities with the music in India, especially that of the Kalbelia dancers. In fact, these similarities and joint roots are celebrated at the Jodhpur Flamenco and Gypsy Festival held every year. In the Kalbelia dance, many of the movements and gestures describe day-to-day life of the gypsies. A highly impressive movement seen in Flamenco dance is a barrel turn (vuelta caebrada) which draws its lineage from Rajasthani dance.

Everyday similarities also exist in popular culture. We Indians tend to snack a lot, and love street food. From samosas to dhoklas to litti chokha, every State in fact has its own share of simple snacks. So it is with Spain - the concept of 'tapas' which are snacks and finger food that could be anything ranging from cocktail onions to an olive skewered on a long toothpick, is a common way for Spaniards to eat, if they

are not eating full meals. And just as we like our snacks with our drinks, the idea of 'cañas' (small glasses for beer) and 'tapas' (small bites of food) are popular in Spain.

Sangria, made from red wine, chopped fruit and juice, has a Spanish origin. Myriad flavours are available in India now, but Barcelos is where you have more than 21 different types of Sangria! Olive oil, widely used in India now and known for its healthy properties, is of Spanish origin. Spanish cuisine is being enjoyed here, a testimony to that are several specialty restaurants like Sevilla and Pintxo in New Delhi serving exquisite paellas and tapas. Major spices that form an essential ingredient of the cuisine of both the countries are surprisingly similar- saffron, cumin, coriander, nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon.

While I was watching a game of football at the Santiago Bernabéu (home to Real Madrid), I could relate to the ISL, the fourth biggest football league. The strong affinity for football is a commonality between the two nations. Though it has been prevalent in Spain for far longer than in India, the sport is witnessing a boom. With the upcoming FIFA U-17 scheduled to take place in India in 2017, this passion is surely just the beginning.

Many other things Spanish are beginning to catch India's fancy. The language itself, for starters. The cultural institute of Spain, Instituto Cervantes, opened its doors in 2009 in India and is enjoying an ever-increasing popularity, as more and more students are now learning both Spanish language and culture at the institute. We certainly hope to see a great blend of the two cultures in future. Viva India. Viva España!