

Lensing the Unity in Diversity in Indian Culture

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Abstract-

A multi-cultural country like India faces numerous hazards in formation and deriving of “Oneness” from varied social identities. India is not only an ancient civilization but also a treasure house of rich cultural heritages offering unified identity milieu to citizens. The identity of Indians is dominated by several ethnic groups, religion, class, and linguistic groups. This paper has two aims. **Firstly**, it explores the various diversities present in Indian culture in terms of climate, food, social and linguistic. **Secondly**, this paper critically examines the elements of unity amidst such diversity prerequisite for fraternity, equality and brotherhood.

Editorial Relevance: Reimagining the slogan “Unity in Diversity” as a dynamic cultural process rather than a static theory, this research article indulges in an interdisciplinary methodology fusing cultural analysis, social theory, and ethical inquiry. Thus, it does not only align with the focus of the journal rather it showcases contemporary social challenges through integrated perspectives. This article is particularly relevant to the ethos of Integrated Perspectives because it exemplifies interdisciplinary thinking at its most necessary and urgent. By conceptually “lensing” unity through India’s cultural plurality, the paper brings history, sociology, cultural studies, and political philosophy into a single analytical frame, demonstrating how diversity is not a challenge to national cohesion but its constitutive logic. At a moment when social fragmentation, identity polarization, and cultural essentialism threaten democratic coexistence, this intervention re-centers unity as an ethical, cultural, and civic practice rather than a homogenizing ideal. The essay speaks directly to the journal’s commitment to integrative scholarship that bridges disciplines while addressing pressing social realities, making it a timely and foundational contribution to the inaugural issue.

Keywords- *India, Diversity, Identity, Oneness, Indian Culture.*

Introduction-

India is called a land of diversity. "Unity in Diversity" is deep rooted in the soul of India, which is also known as Bharat and Hindustan. The topography or physical landscape of India is generally divided in four regions. They are known as 1. The Northern Mountain Region, which spreads from Jammu and Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh. 2. The Deccan Plateau which spreads from Kanyakumari in the South and covers the Eastern and West Ghats ranges. 3. The Great Plains of India lies between the Himalayas and the peninsular India. The rivers originating from the Himalayas e.g. The Ganga and those originating from peninsular India such as The Son have contributed this highly fertile plain. 4. The Coastal Plains and the Island groups have been formed between the peninsular mountain ranges and the sea coasts of India. The Coastal Plain consists of two parts (A) The Western Coastal Plain and (B) The Eastern Coastal Plain. The Island groups may be divided into two parts (A) The Andaman and Nicobar Island formed in the Bay of Bengal and (B) The Lakshadweep Islands adjacent to the Kerala Coast, in the Arabian Sea. "The Himalayas and the rivers have had an indispensable influence on the lives, religions, and cultures of the people of India since time immemorial. For this reason, it may not be entirely accurate to call them (the Himalayas and rivers) the soul of India" (Tewari, 2021). Like the physical geography of India, the people of India can be broadly divided into four categories, taking into consideration their ethnic and linguistic background. The first group consisted of the people belonging to the Neo-lithic and Paleolithic who had been the inhabitants of the country since the dawn of civilization. The second group may be categorized as the mongoloid type, settled in Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. The people in the southern part of India are known as Dravidians, and finally the fourth may be categorized as Indo-Aryans, who are tall and have a fair complexion. This group of people has been found to have settled in the northern and western parts of India and have gradually shifted settlements in the entire Ganges basin. Besides the above four categories of Indian people, other races like Kushanas, Huns, Persians, and Greeks have also settled in India over the ages. With the Muslim invasion of India in the 7th century, the Mughals, the Turks, and the Arabs also made permanent settlements in India, and they contributed significantly to the racial diversity and polarization in the sphere of hybrid race, culture, and customs in Indian society.

Lensing the Diversity Prevalent in Indian Culture-

- **Climate & Food-** The vast geographical features of India are responsible for the varied climatic conditions in the different parts of the country. The climate varies from extremely cold to hot due to the presence of mountains, rivers, seas, deserts, plains, etc. “However, some parts of the country experience a pleasant, moderate climate. Food habits vary from region to region and state to state. Basic food is chapatti and rice. While some states prefer vegetable dishes, there are others who have a fascination with non-vegetarian dishes (meat, fish, and eggs). They have different dress codes, festivals, and social manners considering their divergent caste, race, and religious practices.” (Bose ,1961)
- **Social Diversity-** India is known as a land of diversity. Not only does it have diversified geo-physical features, but it has great social diversity too. Thus, social diversity has transversed in a zigzag and complicated manner due to the legacy of caste, creed, and religion deeply enrooted in the minds of the people for a long time. The majority of the population practices Hinduism as their religion. A report estimates nearly 80% of the population is Hindu. The minority community, commonly known as Muslims, is significantly smaller in number in comparison with the Hindus. It is worth remembering that India’s Muslim population is more than the total Muslim population in Pakistan. Muslims practice the Islamic religion. A section of people belongs to Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity, to name a few. All the major and minor religions are divided into different sects. The Hindu religion has been racked by the caste system since ancient times. The term "caste" is popularly used to indicate mainly two types: Varna and Jati. While Varna refers to the four-fold division of Hindu society into Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, Jati refers to the section of the people who stick to their traditional occupations. Not only is the Hindu community riddled with the caste system, but the other religions like Islam and Christianity are also no exception. Apart from the above, there are tribal settlements that have had their own traditional customs and social practices for a long time. They generally follow Hinduism. However, a section of them have been converted to Christianity.

- **Language-** India is rich in its language culture. The people talk in different dialects and languages. Each region/state has its own language, which gives them a distinct identity within the Indian federal committee structure. Important languages are Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Rajasthani, Tamil, Telegu, and Kannda, to name a few. Each Indian language has contributed to the production of high-quality literary works. Sanskrit, which is the mother of many Indian languages, is not much in use today and is only limited to scholars and academicians. The tribes have their own languages. However, with the passage of time and with impact of globalization, many tribal dialects have already been lost or are on the verge of being extinct.

Lensing the Unity Existing in Indian Culture-

. The above discussion so far presents a picture of a divergent India. Now we need to find an answer to the question, where is the Unity in Diversity in Indian Culture? To begin with, the geo-physical diversity of India has never been able to isolate the people of one region from the other regions. The Indian saints and monks inhabiting the banks of the Saraswati in ancient times realized in their tapasya (search for God through meditation) the dawning of "Oneness", which is manifested in different forms pervading in individuals, animals, and every creature of nature, as has been written in the Vedas and Upanishads. As such, unity and diversity are embodied in the soul of India, which has been vibrating for centuries. The realization of the saints has been carried forward by their disciples coming out of their monasteries, crossing the Himalayan valley to the settlements of humans living in tiny settlements across the length and breadth of India in the course of their travels for the welfare of people. The Indian Statesmen or policy makers also understood the substance of realization of "Oneness" and carried forward their message. This vibration of "Oneness" is found to be in existence silently at the present moment and will continue in the future. This realization of "Oneness" by the Hindu Saints has been echoed in the spiritualism of Muslim p

- **Significance of Monsoon-** The Monsoon is the lifeline of India. The rainfall from the monsoon differs from region to region. "However, agriculture starts all over India with the arrival of the monsoon, more or less at the same time. Thus, uniting all the farmers of India under the umbrella of the monsoon. Crop festivals are celebrated differently in different regions, with names such as Makar Sankranti, Baisakhi, Ladakh Harvest Festival, Lohri, and so on. In the event of a flood or a draught, crop production will

suffer as a result.”(Kumar,2017) The people of the concerned region face the disaster in a unified manner, and the farmers and people of other regions show their solidarity by sending food and other assistance.

- **Constitutional Unity-** The constitution of India acts as an invisible guardian of the fundamental rights of its citizens across the length and breadth of the geo-political entity of India, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, and sex. Most states follow a three-tier administration such as the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, manifesting uniformity.
- **Geographical Unity-** It is mentioned in the Puranas and the Epics that in the ancient days there was a King named Bharat, and after his name, modern India was called "Bharatvarsha". The concept of "Bharatvarsha" as a geo-political unit comprising the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western (in contrast to small fragmented states) was as old as the fourth to eleventh century B.C. when the Puranas were believed to have been written. Whenever any slogan is chanted in the name of "BharatMata", it is understood to mean the entire geo-political India as a single and united unit.
- **Political Unity-** All the prominent rulers of ancient India aspired to establish their suzerainty authority over Indian geo-political entity. The grand rituals like Rajasuya, Vajapeya etc. (as mentioned in the puranas and epic) was nothing but to suzerainty over India as a single geo-political unit. In the medieval period Gupta Kings Ashoka and later Mughal Empire Akbar and Aurangzeb were no exception. Later, British followed the same policy to rule India. From the above discussion it is established that the rulers as well as their subjects were exposed to the concept of “Oneness” in spite of the presence of vast odds and diversity.
- **Religious Unity-**The people of India practice divergent religions. Even the majority of Hindus worship different gods and goddesses such as Shiva, Krishna, Vishnu, Devi Kalika, etc. The most important thing is that the worship of such deities is not concentrated in one locality or region, but is spread over all of India, resulting in making the masses aware of the rituals and customs associated with a particular form of

worship. The same is applicable to the rituals and culture of Islam, Buddhism, etc. The people of India are blessed with rare traits of religion. For this reason, the general population holds in high esteem every kind of religion and spontaneously participates in mutual religious ceremonies. People equally respect the Ramayana, the Gita, the Koran, the GranthiSaheb, and the Bible. As such, religion, rather than dividing the community, has brought them together and projected them as a united India. The rivers also played an important role in uniting the people of all regions on the occasion of rituals to melt into "Oneness", forgoing diversity.

- **Cultural Unity-** India is rich in culture. It has different festivals spanning over different regions. Durga puja, Holi, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Baisakhi, Pangal, to name a few, unite India with the participation of people from all walks of life, in spite of divergent beliefs and faiths. Cultural unity is manifested in ceremonies such as Annaprashan (first offering of rice to a baby), marriage, and ceremonies after death, etc. There may be negligible variation in rituals from region to region. Culture and rituals have proven to be strong factors in keeping India united in the face of diversity.
- **Unity of Language-** Indian people speak in different languages. Prakrit was the language of the people before the advent of the Christian era. King Ashoka spread Buddhism in this language. "Later, the Pali and Sanskrit languages took the place of Prakrit. Sanskrit is revered as the language of God. The sacred Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the epics are written in Sanskrit, which is revered by all sections of the people, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion, throughout the country. Sanskrit is also called the mother of many Indian languages. English education was introduced to India as a result of British rule."(National Committee For Gandhi Centenary, 1968). During the British rule, English medium education flourished. The British left India, but it is not an exaggeration to say the English language flourished more and more after their departure. The English language has played an important role in the judiciary, central government offices, and tribunals, which has further united India in the face of divergent regional Indian languages contending for supremacy in a particular language. At present, the national language, Hindi, is trying to achieve the same and is quite popular in India. With the passage of time, the Aryans, the Huns, the

Sakas, and the Pathans who settled in India generation after generation at different periods of time had lost their separate identity and individuality and had become completely intermingled and interwoven within the Indian fold and culture.

Conclusion- However, it would be a denial of hard reality if it is not admitted that there are some sporadic incidences in some pockets and regions where communal and fundamentalist forces raise their ugly heads to challenge the unity of India. With the spread of education and the basic needs of the people being fulfilled, the divisive forces will be neutralized in mainstream society. In simple words, national integration means accommodating all the Indian people into one single nation. The National Integration Council was established in the year 1961 with the task of integrating the different sections of society under one umbrella to counter communalism and separatism. The best example of showcasing "Oneness" and united India is the Indian Army. The Indian Army, the second largest in the world, is manned by the people of all states, irrespective of regions. They have one slogan: "first Indian, last Indian" irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India is one and no force on earth can disunite India.

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