

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-02
Challenges to Cultural Diversity

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. How are ascriptive identities determined?
2. Define 'state nation'.
3. What is 'regionalism'?
4. What is the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethno-national identity in India?
5. Define 'nationalism'.
6. How can the nation be distinguished from other kinds of communities?
7. Threatened by community identities, states try to eliminate cultural diversity. Discuss.
8. Respecting regional sentiments is not just a matter of creating states. Explain regionalism in this context.
9. Describe the concept of a democratic "state nation" in relation to India.
10. Explain regionalism in the Indian context.

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Challenges to Cultural Diversity

1. Ascriptive identities are determined by the accidents of birth and do not involve any choice on the part of the individuals concerned. It is an odd fact of social life that people feel a deep sense of security and satisfaction in belonging to communities in which their membership is entirely accidental.
2. State nation is an alternative to the nation-state where various “nations”- be they ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous identities- can co-exist peacefully & cooperatively in a single state polity.
3. Regionalism is the ideology of commitment to a particular regional identity which could be based on language, ethnicity and other characteristics in addition to a particular geographic area. Regionalism in India is rooted in India’s diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions. It is also encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation.
4. The most powerful instrument for the formation of ethno-national identity in India is language coupled with regional and tribal identity – and not religion. However, this does not mean that all linguistic communities have got statehood. For instance, in the creation of three new states in 2000, namely Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, language did not play a prominent role.
5. Nationalism refers to commitment, usually passionate commitment, to one’s nation and everything related to it. Putting the nation first, being biased in its favour, etc. It is the ideology that commonalities of language, religion, history, race, ethnicity, etc., make the community distinctive and unique.
6. Conceptually, there seems to be no hard distinction between nation and other kinds of communities. Any of the other types of community can one day form a nation. Conversely, no particular kind of community can be guaranteed to form a nation. The criterion that comes closest to distinguishing a nation from other kinds of communities is the state. Unlike the other kinds of communities such as religious community or linguistic community, etc. nations are communities that have a state of their own. That is why the two are joined with a hyphen to form the term nation-state. Generally speaking, in recent times there has been a one-to-one bond between nation and state (one nation, one state; one state, one nation). This is a new development. It was not true in the past that a single

state could represent only one nation, or that every nation must have its own state.

7. Historically, states have tried to establish and enhance their political legitimacy through nation-building strategies. They sought to secure the loyalty and obedience of their citizens through policies of assimilation or integration. Attaining these objectives was not easy, especially in a context of cultural diversity where citizens, in addition to their identifications with their country, might also feel a strong sense of identity with their community – ethnic, religious, linguistic and so on. Most states feared that the recognition of such difference would lead to social fragmentation and prevent the creation of a harmonious society. In short, such identity politics was considered a threat to state unity. In addition, accommodating these differences is politically challenging, so many states have resorted to either suppressing these diverse identities or ignoring them on the political domain.
8. Respecting regional sentiments is not just a matter of creating states.
 - i. This has to be backed up with an institutional structure that ensures their viability as relatively autonomous units within a larger federal structure.
 - ii. In India this is done by Constitutional provisions defining the powers of the States and the Centre.
 - iii. There are lists of ‘subjects’ or areas of governance which are the exclusive responsibility of either State or Centre, along with a ‘Concurrent List’ of areas where both are allowed to operate.
 - iv. The State legislatures determine the composition of the upper house of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha.
 - v. In addition, there are periodic committees and commissions that decide on Centre-State relations.
 - vi. An example is the Finance Commission which is set up every ten years to decide on sharing of tax revenues between Centre and States.
9. The “state nation” is a concept that is an alternative to the nation-state, where various “nations”- be they ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous identities— can coexist peacefully and cooperatively in a single state polity.

Such responsive policies provide incentives to build a feeling of unity in diversity - a “we” feeling where citizens can find the institutional and political space to identify with both their country and their other cultural identities, to build their trust in common institutions and to participate in and support democratic politics.

All of these are key factors in consolidating and deepening democracies and building enduring “state nations”. India’s constitution incorporates this notion. Although India is culturally diverse, comparative surveys of long-standing democracies including India show that it has been very cohesive, despite its diversity.

Historically, India’s constitutional design recognised and responded to distinct group claims and enabled the polity to hold together despite enormous regional, linguistic and cultural diversity. Its citizens are deeply committed to the country and to democracy, despite the country’s diverse & highly stratified society. This performance is particularly impressive when compared with that of other long-standing and wealthier-democracies. Successful strategies to build statenations & do accommodate diversity constructively by crafting responsive policies of cultural recognition. They are effective solutions for ensuring the longer terms objectives of political stability and social harmony.

10. Regionalism in India is rooted in India’s diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions. It is also encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. Indian federalism has been a means of accommodating these regional sentiments.

After Independence, initially the Indian state continued with the British-Indian arrangement dividing India into large provinces, also called ‘presidencies’. These were large multi-ethnic and multilingual provincial states constituting the major political-administrative units of a semi-federal state called the Union of India. In addition to the presidencies, there were also a large number of princely states and principalities all over India. All these units of the colonial era had to be re-organised into ethno-linguistic States within the Indian union in response to strong popular agitations. Language coupled with regional and tribal identity – and not religion – has therefore provided the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethno-national identity in India.

All states however, haven’t been created on the basis of linguistic communities. For instance, in the creation of three new states in 2000, namely Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal & Jharkhand, a combination of ethnicity based on tribal identity, language, regional deprivation & ecology provided the basis for intense regionalism resulting in statehood. Respecting regional sentiments is not just a matter of creating States: this has to be backed up with an institutional structure that ensures their viability as relatively autonomous units within a larger federal structure. In India this is done by Constitutional provisions defining the powers of the States and the Centre.