

Chapter-6

The Challenges of Cultural Diversity

Facts That Matter

- The term ‘diversity’ emphasises differences rather than inequalities. When we say that India is a nation of great cultural diversity, we mean that there are many different types of social groups and communities living here.
- These are communities defined by cultural markers such as language, religion, sect, race or caste.
- When these diverse communities are also part of a larger entity like a nation, then difficulties may be created by competition or conflict between them.

Cultural diversity presents tough challenges

- The difficulties arise from the fact that cultural identities are very powerful – they can arouse intense passions and are often able to mobilise large numbers of people.
- Sometimes cultural differences are accompanied by economic and social inequalities, and this further complicates things.
- Measures to address the inequalities or injustices suffered by one community can provoke opposition from other communities.
- The situation is made worse when scarce resources – like river waters, jobs or government funds – have to be shared.

Community Identity

- A group of people who are together due to infrastructure, resources, facilities.
- Most of the time community identity is ascribed status and you learn to love them.
- It can also be achieved but it is very individualistic.
- Community identity is universal as it is present everywhere (every religion, country) in terms of mother tongue or culture, values, beliefs, etc.
- When two countries or groups are in conflict with each other, very rarely does one country or group accept they are wrong. Even though either both are wrong or one is

wrong.

Nations

- A nation is a sort of large-scale community – it is a community of communities.
- Members of a nation share the desire to be part of the same political collectivity. This desire for political unity usually expresses itself as the aspiration to form a state.

State

- In its most general sense, the term state refers to an abstract entity consisting of a set of political-legal institutions claiming control over a particular geographical territory and the people living in it.
- In Max Weber's well-known definition, a state is a "body that successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate force in a particular territory."

Nation

- A nation is a peculiar sort of community that is easy to describe but hard to define. It is hard to come up with any defining features, any characteristics that a nation must possess.
- Many nations are founded on the basis of common cultural, historical and political institutions like a shared religion, language, ethnicity, history or regional culture.
- There are many nations that do not share a single common language, religion, ethnicity and so on.
- On the other hand, there are many languages, religions or ethnicities that are shared across nations.

Nation, Multiple States

- In today's world we believe in one nation one state.
- USSR-Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. It was a nation state but had many countries which had their own culture and state nation since the government in counted, the people were not able to voice their opinions. Broke up in 1991.
- Dual Citizenship of Israeli's in USA. US has given citizenship to these Jews only in the US (only if born and brought up). No person except them can get dual citizenship.

Policies to accommodate cultural diversity

1. Policy of Assimilation

Where everybody decides to follow one norm, one belief and one culture and common value. The whole country follows the majority as they are more powerful.

This is for convenience sake and unity of the country.

e.g., in India Hindus are majority and there are so many festivals as compared to the festivals of the Christians, Parsis, etc.

2. Policy of Integration

-All people follow national culture or pattern in public life and keep all non-material cultures in private life.

e.g., Jana gana mana is national but Vande Mataram would be non-national.

-Because community identities can act as a basis for nation formation, the already existing states view them as dangerous rivals e.g., Khalistan Sikh community wanted a separate nation.

-Therefore, states tend to favour a single homogenous national identity in order to have unity and togetherness.

-But this does not mean we should suppress the identity of the minority as it can lead to revolts and there will be no unity.

-By suppressing the non-national culture of minorities or smaller sections, it can lead to problems and instead of unity the country will divide.

-Thus the government allows people to maintain cultural differences in order to have peace and harmony in the country.

Indian nation-state

- The Indian nation-state is socially and culturally one of the most diverse countries of the world.
- The population speak about 1,632 different languages and dialects. As many as eighteen of these languages have been officially recognised and placed under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, thus guaranteeing their legal status.
- In terms of religion, about 80.5% of the population are Hindus, who in turn are regionally specific, plural in beliefs and practices, and divided by castes and languages.

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- About 13.4% of the population are Muslims, which makes India the world's third largest Muslim country after Indonesia and Pakistan.
 - The other major religious communities are Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%) and Jains (0.4%). Because of India's huge population, these small percentages can also add up to large absolute numbers.

India's case (Nation-state and relationship with community identity)

- The Indian case fits neither the assimilationist nor the integrationist model.
- From its very beginning the independent Indian state has ruled out an assimilationist model. However, the demand for such a model has been expressed by some sections of the dominant Hindu community.
- Although 'national integration' is a constant theme in state policy, India has not been 'integrationist'.
- The Constitution declares the state to be a secular state, but religion, language and other such factors are not banished from the public sphere. In fact these communities have been explicitly recognised by the state.
- By international standards, very strong constitutional protection is offered to minority religions. In general, India's problems have been more in the sphere of implementation and practice rather than laws or principles.
- On the whole, India can be considered a good example of a 'state-nation' though it is not entirely free from the problems common to nation-states.

Regionalism

- Regionalism is connected with the diverse culture, languages, regions, castes, tribes present in our country.
- Language helped in strengthening of India's Unity.
- After independence we decided to follow the same pattern of the British, leading presidencies.
- Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, Princely states people in Madras spoke Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada (different languages under one state).
- The country was divided on the basis of language under Nehru (he was apprehensive earlier, but after thought the decision was good) because of Vallabhai Patel (Home Minister).

- Language is a binding force, would bring about efficient communication, unity, state boards (educational purposes), could spread love for language
- When the Madras state was formed, Telugu people were unhappy as Tamilians were given more important posts and were dominant.
- Thus they rebelled for separate state. Potti Serrimallu wanted a separate state (went on hunger strike) for Tel speaking people. After his death, protest continued and the government gave them Andhra Pradesh in 1956. The Telugu people had an option whether to stay in the Madras state or shift to Andhra Pradesh.

ISSUES

Majority and Minority

- Majority and minority in sociology is connected with religion.
- Minority in any religion are those who are numerically weaker as compared to majorities.
- In India, Hindus are majority class (81 %)

1. Inclusive Nationalism

- When all religions work together for one cause benefit of the country, to create unity in diversity.
- It recognises fanality and diversity but in spite of this we come together.
- We try to do away with discrimination and create a democratic set up.

2. Exclusive Nationalism

- When each religion does what in their point of view will benefit the country.
- The best way for the country to be progressive is by including inclusive reasoning in the constitution where all sections of society (including minority) are taken care of.
- The Constituent Assembly tried to include social, political and economic justice when the constitution was drafted.

Features of Minority

1. They are numerically weaker and their needs are not taken care of.
2. They do not have a say in many matters.
3. They have low/less opportunities in comparison to the majority.
4. Minorities are often discriminated against.

5. There is a fear of insecurity and they feel that they are at a disadvantage as they are a smaller group.

6. All minorities have a sense of collective belonging, togetherness and they are always together and protect their rights.

7. They have a sense of loyalty towards their nation.

- Jains, Parsis are communities who are economically strong (businessmen) but they are culturally and socially weak. e.g. Bohras, Vohras,

- Hindu's are given many holidays but for the festivals of Parsis and Jains there are no holidays.

Minorities and Policies

- In elections it is very easy for the political parties to convert the numerical majority into political power.
- Minorities are at risk and are variable.
- Thus a 'minority block' takes place.
- At times, they have to give up their identity to save their position.
- All religions have the freedom to practice, preach and profess their religion.
- Article 29 and 30 are for the protection of the minorities.

Provisions of Article 30

(a) Any religious community can start an educational institution.

(b) All facilities that are given to other majorities should also be given to the minorities. - No religion should be imposed on a person because it will affect national unity.

- We believe in unity in diversity.

- Every country has minorities, in Europe Christians are majority class whereas Hindus, Sikhs and Jews are minorities.

Communalism

- Extreme love for your religion, you consider every religion as inferior and subordinate.
- The western meaning of communalism is to do with community which is a group of people doing something in common.
- Communalism is more to do with politics than religion in India because politicians use vote banks in the name of religion. They give seats for religion.
- India is diverse because, whenever there are more people and diversity there is more

an issue of communalism.

- Communalism i.e. aggressive political ideology linked with religion. Love for your religion but in a negative way.
- A communalist develops aggressive political identity which condenses every other religion and leads to communal riots.

Reason for Communal riots are

(1) Political instigation

(2) One community wants revenge on a community or average another community in the past.

(3) To regain lost pride or protect their community.

(4) During riots violence, loss of lives, destruction of property and assault, looting, rape take place all around.

Whenever there is a communal riot the government in power must take responsibility and should protect the victims.

Secularism

- Indian Meaning: All religions should have and be given equal importance and every individual is allowed to freely practice, preach, profess any religion of their choice.
- Western Meaning: Earlier the state was controlled by the church. The word 'secular' is used when the state is separate from the church. The church is not allowed to interfere in matters of the state.
- Though secularisation evolved religion is restricted to private domain and not public.
- Secularisation came into being through modernity.
- When you consider various view points, related to rationality where you don't attribute everything to religion allow science to play a role, broadening of mindsets.
- The Indian meaning is a combination of both and opposite of communal because we allow all religions to exist equally.
- One kind of difficulty that exists in our country is the western meaning and Indian meaning of secularism.
- Majority questions the government that giving reservations is unfair.
- Minority demands reservation because they will get out shadowed by majority.
- Other difficulty is that government tries to protect the minority but it is the majority values, festivals, etc. are being followed.

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- These controversies are further being aggravated by the interference of political parties.
 - In spite of all these problems we are still a secular nation.
 - We take care of the minority without upsetting the majority at the same time maintaining peace, tolerance and harmony among communities.
 - When we got Independence Nehru said that we are a democratic, secular and sovereign country.

State and Civil Societies

Democracy: Form of government where people have a say and have the right to vote for their leader (Political party) and can use their fundamental rights.

Authoritative: Form of government where people cannot question the government or hold them accountable, all civil rights are curtailed.

The institutions are unable to respond to the needs of the people under authoritative government (banks).

Civil Society: Non State, voluntary, private domain, not commercialised, profit is not important. It is an organization which is not commercialised or profit oriented and outside private domain.

Civil societies are those societies/organizations that fight for the rights of people, specially the suppressed classes.

Civil societies keep a watch on the government actions and fight for injustice e.g. Political parties, mass media, NGO's newspaper, women associations.

Emergency 1975-77

- Mass sterilization campaigns were held where indiscriminately people were sterilised.
- Tubectomy (women), vasectomy (men) were done forcibly
- Civil rights were curtailed
- People were put in Jail without a trial
- Civil rights were suspended
- Lower cadre of people who carried out the actions and people were put in jail who spoke against like emergency.
- Many political leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan were put in Jail.
- Indira Gandhi lost election after this.

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- After emergency there was uproar in the nation and importance of civil societies went up. **Tribals**
 - Healthcare and displacement

Civil Societies work to

1. Keep a watch on government and to see if they are using funds fairly.
2. To see that laws are being implemented.
3. If government is functioning properly. e.g. Right to Information Act

Right to Information Act 2005

When government funds were allotted to villages for construction of roads, building of schools, etc.

- They took it up with the government and looked into it.
- According to this act any person can demand to the government allocation of funds, tax and copy the funds document.
- It is the right of people to demand from the government. The funds have been allocated for different projects.
- This was to do with the government only not with the private sector, people have rights to question the government.