

## Lesson - 3

# Bharat : Cultural Unity In Geographical Diversity

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We have learnt about the geographical diversities and social and cultural characteristics of Bharat in previous chapters. After studying and understanding these characteristics, it is apparent as to how rich is Bharat in geographical diversities. These geographical diversities have inspired the people of Bharat in different areas to perform diverse activities. As a result, varied cultural landscapes are visible in different geographical areas. The cultural diversity has endowed the country with multidimensional culture. It has always provided significant status to our country in the world.

Geographical conditions influence both the physiology and thoughts of man. People of Bharat whether living in the vicinity of Kanyakumari or Kashmir have different physique, skin colour etc. due to geographical factors, but their feeling of belongingness to the country is the same. It is attributed to the philosophy or culture of our people.

### Civilization - Culture and Geography

Geographical conditions have a major contribution in the development of civilization and culture of a region. Food habits, living and even the philosophy of the people of a region are affected by geographical conditions. Civilization develops in accordance with the physical needs of man, where as culture develops in accordance with the spiritual development of man.

There are a lot of diversities of relief, climate, vegetation, soil and water availability in Bharat. These diversities have differently shaped

the social structure in different areas of Bharat but the culture and cultural heritage of this country have always kept all the segments united.

Culture means cogent, refined, sophisticated and logical response according to the situation and possession of constructive and lively behaviour and thoughts.

Geographical conditions directly or indirectly influence the development of culture in a region. Its direct effect is seen on food habits, system of medical treatment, living conditions etc. and indirectly on fairs, festivals, language, literature, religion and philosophy. It can be seen and experienced in different areas. Influence of geography on various components of civilization and culture can be understood under the following heads –

**1. Food Habits** – Geographical influence on food habits is obvious in Bharat. There are variations of climate, soils and other conditions in Bharat. As such, a variety of agricultural crops are grown in different areas of Bharat eg. - rice in hot and humid areas with ample availability of water, wheat in temperate areas, Bajra in areas of scarce water supply and maize and jowar in areas with moderate water supply.

Variety in cereals is the contribution of geographical diversity but cultural refinement identifies Bharat as a vegetarian society. It follows the philosophy of **live and let live**. Vegetarians live in all parts of the country. Bhartiya society is identified as vegetarian society in the world. World Food Organization has also recognized



vegetarianism as the best dietary system, western society is also heading towards its adoption. Milk occupies highest place in Bhartiya food. Cow milk

is the top priority. For this reason, cow is given the place equivalent to mother in our country.

Education and means of communication



Fig.3.1 : India : Tourism and Cultural Center



have strengthened the cultural unity, e.g., Punjabi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Bengali and South Indian dishes together with a number of other types of food have not only regional identifications but are also popular part of the menu in almost all social functions in every corner of our country. Besides their taste, these dishes bring the hearts of people closer.

**2. Medical Treatment** – Many systems of treatment are prevalent in India - Ayurvedic, Unani, Allopathy, Homeopathy etc. Ayurvedic system of Bharat is a standard and age old system of treatment. Extensive resources of bio-diversity provide many useful herbs in Bharat. These are not only locally useful but are also sent to all the parts of the country for use. Therefore, trees have been provided the status of God in Bharat. Tree plantation and their protection have been considered as pious task.

Ayurved has not only provided cultural unity to our country but now even the world society is realising its importance. Bharat is famous for variety of herbs in the world. Internationally known doctors have accepted that many incurable diseases can be treated with Bhartiya herbs. Hence, many countries are trying to extend their clutches on the use of Bhartiya herbs by Patent Laws, whereas Bharat had been using these herbs for thousands of years and had been propagating their use. Medical treatment has been considered as a service and not a business in Bhartiya culture. Bhartiya culture follows that the benefits of medical research should be provided to the society as service and not a business.

**3. Living** – The same unity is seen in the life style and dresses. Punjabi Salwar suit, Muslim Pathani suit, Lucknowi Kurta-Pajama, Bhartiya Dhoti-Kurta, Rajasthani Ghaghra-Lugri, Gujarati Lahanga-Chunari etc. are worn popularly everywhere in our country. The diversity of dresses can be seen in any ceremony. Bhartiya male normally consider Dhoti-Kurta and Kurta-Pajama as their major traditional dresses while Saree has been traditional costume of ladies for centuries in Bharat. Saree is worn in different ways in Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, etc. Domicile of women can be easily identified on the basis of the style of wearing sarees. Saree is identified as the main costume of Bhartiya

ladies on international platform.

Influence of geographical environment can be easily understood by the costumes of southern Bharat. Rainy season continues for several months in southern Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in southern Bharat, where plateau like surface configuration has a network of small rivers and nallas. Therefore, local residents have to face flooded paths in their movement. Hence, use of lungi and chappals, instead of shoes, are prevalent.

The seeds of our cultural unity germinate among children as they begin to identify our country by observing a variety of costumes since their childhood. They weave their beads of unity while presenting fancy dresses of different regions in the cultural programmes of their schools (Fig. 3.1).

Similarities of customs and traditions, whether it is a birth ritual or a marriage ritual, are observed throughout Bharat. Maiden occupies a special status in the society and giving her away in marriage ritual (Kanyadan) is considered as the greatest sacrifice, because she plays a constructive role as a sister, wife and mother in future. The fact that Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna, Laxmi-Narayan etc. enjoy an important place as ideals of Bhartiya society, proves that women occupy a special respectable status. Their names are placed first while mentioning the couples.

**4. Fairs and Festivals** – Fairs, festivals and folk arts are mesmerizing characteristics of Bhartiya culture. Bhartiya are always full of zeal and energy. It appears as if various streams are pervading and intermingling in the ocean when people belonging to different cults and sects meet in these fairs and festivals.

All the festivals are celebrated by the people of various religions together in Bharat whether it is Deepawali, Holi and Dusshera of Hindus, Id-ul-Fiter, Id-ul-Juha and Barawafat of Muslims, Christmas of Christians, Lohari or Baisakhi of Punjabis or Pongal of South Bharat.

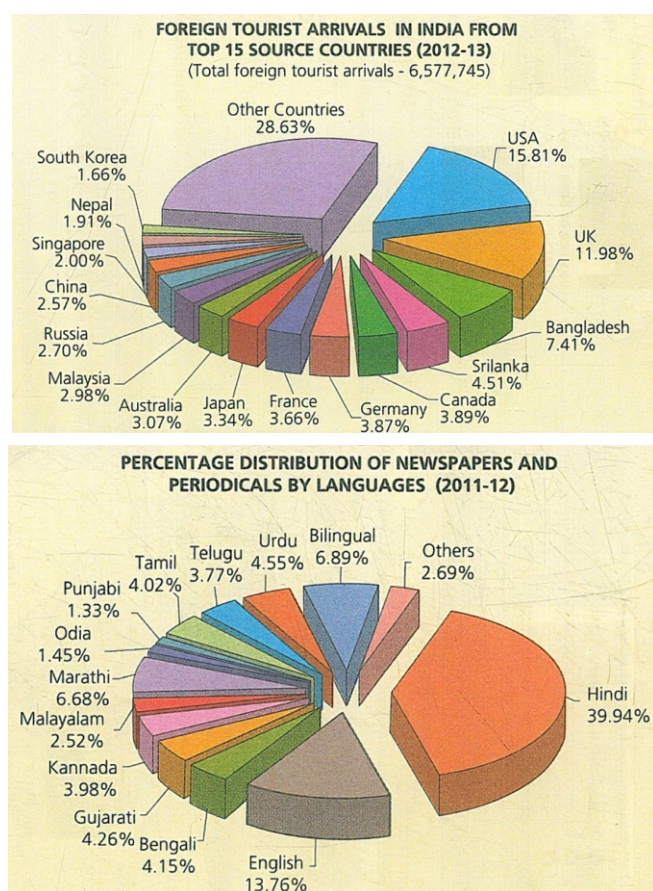
Similarly, the birth-days of great persons and various jubilees are also celebrated by all groups together. Arrival of fresh crops marks jubilation everywhere, whether in the form of Baisakhi or Pongal in northern and southern Bharat respectively. It is characterized by jocund dances, cultural programmes and sports with the participation of all.



element of unity is present in the form of Sanskrit. Whether the Aryan group of languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Marathi, Bangla etc. or the







**Fig.3.3 : India : Tourism and Literature**

Dravidian languages like Kannad, Telugu, Tamil, Malyalam etc., Sanskrit words are present in them. In some of these languages, Sanskrit component exceeds 50 per cent.

Time spirited and eternal treatises of Bhartiya culture - Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads are written in Sanskrit. These are being read and understood throughout the country even today. The fact that many countries are translating the treatise in their languages to provide the knowledge, contained therein, to their young generation, shows their importance. Germany is leading the process.

Bhartiya literature also prospered with the development of Sanskrit and other languages. Despite the use of different languages, Ram, Krishna and Shiva remained main ideals in the literature.

Eternal treatise like Ramayan, Mahabharat and Gita have become identifications of Bhartiya culture. Presentations are being made on the contexts taken from Ramayan, Mahabharat and Gita through plays, folk dances and other folk arts for

providing the knowledge and sacraments. Meera, Raidas, Dadu, Kabir Nanak, Soordas and Tulsi have enriched and unified Bhartiya culture with their contributions.

**6. Religion and Pilgrimage** – Bharat is known as the land of religions. Maximum number of religions and sects of the world have originated on this land. Geographical environment of Bharat and its diversities have influenced thinkers, so that their thoughts are diverse and modest. The influence of geography, therefore, is obvious on Bhartiya religions and philosophy. Five basic elements (Panch Mahabhoota) have been recognized in our culture. These have been considered as the basic components of cosmos and human body. Thinkers have observed generation and destruction of flora and fauna in nature. It led to the belief of rebirth in the philosophy of life.

Bhartiya populace have experienced the effects of natural powers like water, wind and insolation which have been given the status of gods and have been worshipped. The balanced receipt of these powers is the basic requirement for raising crops. Their adversities affects the agricultural production. Therefore, natural powers have been recognized as Gods. Rivers have been considered as life givers (because civilizations have prospered in river valleys) and have been given the status of mother. Hence, Ganga, Yamuna, Narmada, Shipra, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri rivers etc. occupy special status in Bhartiya culture. The fairs and festivals celebrated on the banks of these rivers bear the testimony to this fact. Bhartiya populace have learnt to lead life with positive aptitude by experiencing positive effects of natural powers. Hence, he is theistic and pious. Consequently, he has many qualities of kindness, tolerance, harmonization and adoption.

The pilgrimage centres are important contributors of cultural unity in Bharat. The places related to any thinker's, saint's or a great person's birth, salvation or any other reason have become famous sacred or pious places. These places gradually become pilgrimage centres due to people's devotion and reverence.

Such pilgrimage centres are located on river banks, sea coasts, lake coasts, in mountainous areas and caves. Pilgrims from all over the country visit those places throughout the year and strengthen the

fabric of our cultural unity. A few important pilgrimage centres related to all religions of Bharat are given below (Fig. 3.2 & 3.3) –

**Sapta Sindhu (Seven sacred rivers)** – Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Narmada, Godavari, Sindhu and Kaveri.

**Five major ponds** – Mansarovar (Himalaya), Kurukshetra (Punjab), Galtaji and Pushkar (Rajasthan) and Pampa pond (southern Bharat).

**Major Caves** – Ajanta-Ellora and Elephanta (Maharashtra), Bagh (Madhya Pradesh), Udaigiri-Khandgiri (Orissa).

**Major Pilgrimage Towns** – Varanasi, Haridwar, Ayodhya, Prayag, Ajmer (Pushkar), Ujjain, Mathura, Nasik, Amritsar, Patna, Dwarka, Sarnath, Nalanda, Sanchi etc.

**Pilgrimage Centres in Hilly Areas** – Kailash, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Jamunotri, Gangotri, Pawagarh, Palitana, Sammed Shikhar, Girnar mountain, Pawapuri, Dilwara, Ranakpur etc.

**Four Seats (Math) of Shankaracharya** – Jyotirmath (Himalaya), Shringeri Math (Mysore), Sharda Math (Dwarka) and Govardhan Math (Puri).

**Char Dham** – Badrinath, Dwarkapuri, Jagannathpuri and Rameshwaram.

Places of pilgrimage are the major fabric of Bhartiya cultural unity. Four Mathas are the symbols of strength of the four directions. The biggest advantage of the growth of the four Dhams is that people come here from all parts of the country throughout the year. The congregation symbolizes their feeling to have a glimpse (Darshan) of the Almighty and dedication towards His existence directly and strengthen the unified cultural identity of the country indirectly.

Pilgrimage centres of river banks, hilly areas and caves bring the people close to nature. The natural panorama generates positive thinking about nature and its creator in human minds. These thoughts help them in the adoption of positive attitude towards life, take for example - rivers. A person thinks that it is his river, so long he sees it near his village or town. When he observes its religious significance, then he starts thinking in

terms of our river or rivers. These become rivers of the country when he see it flowing across various regions and states. These thoughts orients a person to develop a feeling of devotion towards the country. Thus, the feeling of 'my' grows into 'our' and ultimately the country becomes important, e.g. 'my river' converts into 'our river' and 'my country' into 'our country'. The same feeling applies to mountains also.

The same feeling of 'I' germinating into 'we' is the feeling of unity in Bhartiya culture. With the strengthening of the feeling, subjects like river water disputes are automatically solved, because waters of the country's rivers are meant for the development all the citizens. As a mother nurtures all her children equally and lovingly, the same feeling develops towards rivers.

It may be concluded that Bharat encompasses a treasure of geographical diversities arising due to its huge size and specific situation. It has resulted into diverse ways of life, yet maintaining its identity as a nation in the world for centuries due to its unique culture. Bharat enjoys the place of World Guru due to its civilization-culture and philosophy.

### Important Points

1. Geographical conditions influence both human structure and his thinking.
2. Geographical conditions of an area have a major contribution in determining the civilization and culture of a region.
3. Culture means to be cogent, refined, to do such deeds and to adopt such thoughts which are life-giving for self and others.
4. Bharat is identified as a vegetarian society.
5. The Ayurvedic system of treatment is age old and standard method.
6. Bharat is famous for different types of herbs and medicinal plants in the world.
7. Dhoti-kurta and Kurta-Pajama, and sarees are the traditional costumes of males and females respectively in Bharat.
8. Baisakhi is the main festival of Punjabis.
9. Words of Sanskrit language are found in almost all the languages of Bharat.
10. The vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayan,

Mahabharat, Gita etc. are the major treatise of Bhartiya culture.

11. The rivers are considered as mother and are worshipped in Bhartiya culture.
12. Four seats (Mathas) and four Dhams symbolize the cultural unity of the country.
13. The pilgrimage centres have indirectly unified Bharat, Bhartiyata and Bhartiya Cultural.
14. The trees have been considered as God in Bhartiya culture. Tree plantation and protection are considered as pious deeds.
15. Bharat is known as world teacher due to its sympathy, tolerance, kindness, co-ordination and spiritual knowledge.

### Exercise

#### Multiple Choice Questions

1. Number of rivers included in Sapta-Sindhu, are-  
(A) Seventeen (B) Hundred  
(C) Eleven (D) Seven.
2. The original system of treatment of Bharat, is –  
(A) Allopathy (B) Homeopathy  
(C) Ayurvedic (D) Unani.
3. The state of which Baisakhi is the major festival, is –  
(A) Madhya Pradesh (B) Bihar  
(C) Andhra Pradesh (D) Punjab.

#### Very Short Answer Type

4. What is meant by culture?
5. In which language are Vedas-Puranas written?
6. Which are the four seats (Mathas) of Shankaracharya?

#### Short Answer Type

7. What are pilgrimage centres and how did they develop as such?
8. How geography influences the dietary system?
9. Name the Sapta Sindhu and five ponds.

#### Essay Type

10. Write an essay on 'Cultural Unity in Geographical Diversity'.
11. Explain the role of pilgrimage centres in cultural unity.

#### Answer Key

1. (D), 2. (C), 3. (D).