

CHAPTER 6

CHALLENGES TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The term 'diversity' emphasises differences rather than inequalities.

1. India is a culturally diverse country having communities of different religions, languages, sects, races and castes.

- Cultural identities are very powerful-can arouse intense passions.
- Able to mobilise large numbers of people.
- Sometimes cultural differences are accompanied by economic and social inequalities can provoke opposition from other communities.
- Situation becomes worse when scarce resources like rivers waters, jobs of govt. funds have to be shared.

2. Cultural identities can be a challenge if competition, conflict or social, economic inequalities exist among them.

The importance of community identity

- Our community provides us with languages (our mother tongue) and cultural values. It also anchors our self identity.
- Expanding and overlapping circles of communities (family, kinship, caste, region or religion). They give us a sense of identity of who we are.
- People react emotionally or even violently whenever there is a perceived threat to their community identity.

3. Community identities are universal

- ascriptive, based on birth rather than choice.
- give a sense of security and identity.

4. **Nation** is a large scale community consisting of different communities. A state refers to an abstract entity consisting of a set of political legal institutions claiming control over a particular geographical territory & people living in it.

- **Nation States** are communities that have a state of their own in the modern world.

5. Indian Nation State

- Population-1,029 million.
- Languages & dialect — 1,632
- Religions — Hindus (80.5%), Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhist (0.89%), Jains (0.4%).

Why is it easy to describe a nation but hard to define it?

A nation is a peculiar sort of community but is easy to describe but hard to define. Nations can be founded on the basis of common cultural, historical and political institution like a shared religion, language, ethnicity, history or regional culture.

However for every possible criterion these are exceptions and counter examples.

The criterion that comes closest to distinguishing a nation is the state.

Unlike the other kinds of communities, 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.

State feel threatened by the cultural diversity and adopt assimilation or Integration policies to create a harmonious society.

6. Assimilation policy aim at persuading, encouraging or forcing all citizens to adopt a uniform set of cultural values and norms.

7. Integration policy aim to restricting public culture to common national pattern while a non-national cultures to be limited to the private sphere.

How do assimilationist and integrationist strategies try to establish singular national identities.

Interventions are :

- Centralising all powers to forums where the dominant group constitutes a majority, and eliminating the autonomy of local or minority groups.
- Imposing a unified legal and judicial system based on the dominant groups traditions and abolishing alternative systems used by other groups.

- Adopting the dominant groups language as the only official national language and making its use mandatory in all public institutions.
- Promotion of the dominant groups languages and culture through national institution including state controlled media and educational institution.
- Adoption of state symbols, celebrating the dominant groups history, heroes and culture, choice of national holidays or naming of streets etc.
- Seizure of lands, forests & fisheries from minority groups and indigenous people and declaring them "National resources."

In terms of the nation-states relationship with community identities, the Indian case fits neither the assimilationist nor the integrationist model.

The constitution declares the state to be a secular state, but religion, language and other such factors are not banished from the public sphere. By international standards very strong constitutional protection is offered to minority religions.

8. Regionalism in the Indian Context

- 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 fueled by sense of regional deprivation.
- Language coupled with regional and tribal identity are the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethnonational identity of India. However all linguistic communities have not got statehood. for instance, in the creation of three new states in 2000, namely Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, language did not play a prominent role.
- **Indian federalism and the three lists of subject.**
There are lists of subjects or areas of governance which are the exclusive responsibility of either states or center along with a concurrent list, of areas where both are allowed to operate

9. Sociological Definition of the term 'Minority'

- The notion of minority groups is widely used in sociology

- It usually involves same sense of relative disadvantage.
- The sociological sense of minority also implies that the members of the minority form a collectivity i.e. they have a strong sense of group solidarity, a feeling of togetherness and belonging.
- Subjected to prejudice and discrimination.

Minority group is disadvantaged in one sense but not in another. For e.g. religious minorities like parsis and sikhs may be relatively well-off economically. But may be disadvantaged in cultural sense because of small numbers. Religions of cultural minorities need special protection because of the demographic dominance of the majority.

10. Privileged Minorities

Extremely privileged or wealthy people are not referred to as minorities.

Why should the minorities by given constitutional protection?

- Cultural minorities need special protection because of the demographic dominance of the majority.
- In democratic politics, it is always possible to convert a numerical majority into political power through elections.
- This means that religious or cultural minorities are politically vulnerable.
- Minorities also face the risk that the majority community will capture political power and use the state machinery to suppress their religious or cultural institutions, ultimately forcing them to abandon their distinctive identity.
- Article 29 and Article 30 are a part of the Indian constitution with special reference to Minorities and Cultural Diversity.

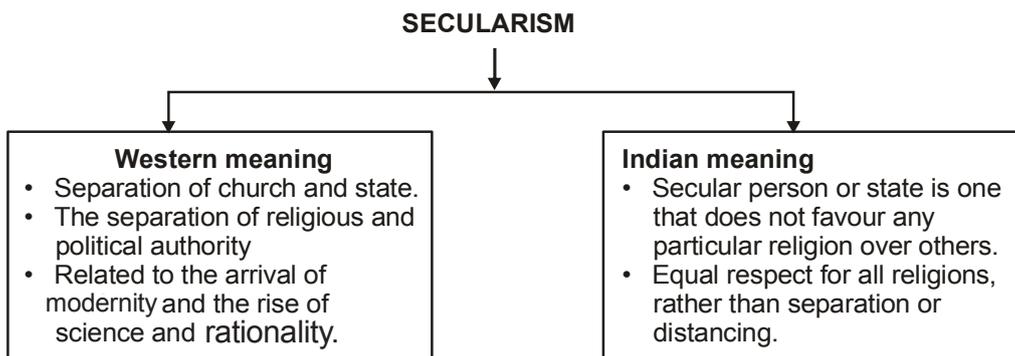
11. **Communalism** refers to aggressive chauvinism based on religious identity where one religious group sees itself as a legitimate, superior and worthy with other groups being inferior, illegitimate and opposed.

12. Characteristics features of communalism

- Cultivates aggressive political identity
- Religious identity overrides everything else.

- Communalism is a recurrent source of tension & violence in India—
 - Anti Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984
 - Anti Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002

13.



14. Authoritarian State

- It is a state in which the people have no voice and those in power are not accountable to anyone. Authoritarian states often limit or abolish civil liberties like freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of political activity, right to protection from wrongful use of authority, right to the due processes of the law, and so on.

15. Civil Society is the name given to the broad arena which lies beyond the private domain of the family but outside the domain of both state and market.

- Civil society is the non-state and non-market part of the public domain in which individuals get together voluntarily to create institutions and organizations. It is the sphere of active citizenship; here, individuals take up social issues, try to influence the state or make demands on it, pursue their collective interests or seek support for a variety of causes. It consists of voluntary associations, organisations or institutions formed by groups of citizens. It includes political parties, media institutions, trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- The Indian people had a brief experience of authoritarian rule during the 'Emergency'
 - enforced between June 1975 and January 1977.
 - Parliament was suspended
 - New laws were made directly by the government.
 - Civil liberties were revoked
 - Large number of politically active people were arrested and jailed without trial.
 - Censorship was imposed on the media and government officials could be dismissed without normal procedures.

Civil Society Activities

- Today the activities of **civil society** organizations have an even wider range, including advocacy and lobbying activity with national and international agencies as well as active participation in various movements.
- **The issues taken up by Civil Society** today are diverse.
 - tribal struggles for land rights.
 - devolution in urban governance.
 - campaigns against rape and violence against women.
 - rehabilitation of those displaced by dams and other developmental projects.
 - fishermen's struggles against mechanised fishing.
 - rehabilitation of hawkers and pavement dwellers.
 - campaigns against slum demolitions and for housing rights,
 - primary education reform.
 - distribution of land to dalits.
 - keeping a watch on the state and forcing it to obey the law and so on.
 - Among the most significant recent initiatives is the **campaign for the Right to Information**. It illustrates the crucial

importance of civil society in ensuring that the state is accountable to the nations and its people. The answer to the RTI has to be given within 30 days.

1 MARKS QUESTIONS

1. The policy which persuades or forces all citizens to adopt a common set of cultural values and norms is-----
 - a. Cross cultural policy
 - b. regionalism policy
 - c. assimilation policy
 - d. favouritism policy
2. Suspension of parliament and censorship of media usually takes place during.
 - a. Democratic rule
 - b. communal unrest
 - c. authoritarian rule
 - d. none of the above
3. Appeasement of minorities by giving special consideration is considered by the majority community as---
 - a. Injustice
 - b. Favouritism
 - c. Partiality
 - d. Competition
4. When religious identity overrides everything else it leads to----
 - a. Secularism
 - b. Communalism
 - c. Nation state
 - d. Diversity
5. Ethno-national identity in India has mainly been formed by factors like----
 - a. Language & religion
 - b. language & tribal identity
 - c. language & infrastructure
 - d. none of the above
6. Community identities give a sense of----- and-----
7. Geographical concentration of identity markers like languages or tribes along with a feeling of 'deprivation' leads to-----
8. When a 'small group' of people experience the 'same sense of relative disadvantage' they are known as a-----
9. The states adopt assimilation or integration policies to create a harmonious society because they feel----- by cultural diversity, which may result in disunity.

10. (Act) is the most recent initiatives of the Civil society which makes the state accountable to the citizens of India.
11. The term diversity emphasizes inequities rather than differences. (True or False)
12. People react emotionally when their community identity is threatened. (True or False)
13. Minorities like Parsis and Sikhs are economically and socially strong. (Correct the statement)
14. The contentious issues of the 'federal system' today is determined by the role of private backward regions. (True or False)
15. Political parties, media, institutions, NGOs are part of authoritarian society. (correct the statement)

2 MARKS QUESTIONS

1. What does the term cultural diversity mean?
2. Differentiate between western and Indian meaning of secularism.
3. What are ascriptive identities?
4. Define nation-State.
5. Who are minorities in sociological sense?
6. State the features of an authoritarian state.
7. What is 'regionalism'?
8. Who are privileged minorities?
9. How are minorities politically vulnerable?
10. How can commitment to the protection of minorities can also be a challenge to the state?
11. Why are states often suspicious of cultural diversity?
12. Write a note on religious diversity found in India.
13. State any two constitutional provisions meant to protect minorities rights.

14. What do you understand by the term communalism?

4 MARKS QUESTIONS

1. Discuss communalism in the Indian context.
2. Explain how India as a state has managed cultural diversity.
3. Describe some of the important characteristics of communalism.
4. Differentiate between the Western and Indian meaning of secularism.
5. Mention the contentious issues found in the federal system, which led to inter-regional disparities.
6. Differentiate between a democratic and authoritarian state.
7. Explain Regionalism in the India context.

6 MARKS QUESTIONS

1. What is a Civil society? What is its role and significance today? Support your answer with suitable examples.