International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development (IJERED)
ISSN: 2320-8708, Vol. 12 Issue 3, May.-June, 2024, Impact Factor: 8.376

Diversity of India: Understanding the Unity and Variety

Dr. Basayya Irayya Mathapati

Assistant Professor of History, SMYK Government First Grade College, Telsang-591265, Tq: Athani, Dist: Belagavi, Karnataka

ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity is a vital catalyst for innovation, social resilience, and global peace in an interconnected, rapidly changing world. This paper preserves the unique heritage and identity of communities, safeguarding traditions, rituals, languages, and historical landmarks for future generations. Cultural diversity helps develop and enrich our lives in ways we may not always recognize. Unity in Diversity is a fundamental principle that underpins the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and traditions within the vast and vibrant nation of India. Cultural diversity, including festivals, cuisines, attire, and more, provides opportunities for meaningful interactions among people. Cultural diversity influences the development and integration of the global society through the formation of collective identity.

Keywords: Cultural, unity, diversity, community, development, tradition, society and humanity

INTRODUCTION

India is a mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and traditions. This diversity is reflected in various aspects of life, such as food, clothing, festivals, and art forms. For most people culture suggests high artistic or intellectual achievement, the development of art and science, the humanities, philosophy, the expression of the genius of a people. For the social scientist it includes all this and much more; it may be defined as embracing everything that a person acquires as a member of society; all the habits as a member of society; all the habits and capabilities which are produced by the group. It may be expressed in works of art or scholarship, but also in what we eat and the way we dress, in the nature of our relationship to members of our family or to others in the society, in our system of values, in the education we receive, in our ideas of good and bad, In the kind of houses we build, in the expectations and hopes we have for the future, in our attitude toward strangers.

This list is far from complete, but it should suffice to indicate the range and complexity of the content of cultures. It is not surprising that a number of writers have described culture as a concept of major importance in the social sciences because of the demonstration of the extent to which we belong. In that connection it has served as a needed corrective to the widespread notion that differences in the way of life of different groups are determined mainly, if not exclusively, by biology or race. It is this wider concept of culture which is used in what follows.

It is perhaps not too surprising that in the history of human contacts most groups have been much more impressed by their differences from others than by the similarities. All too frequently this has been associated with the belief that if they are different from us they must be inferior. In the language of many of the pre-literature societies described by anthropologists the expression ‘that people’ referred only to one's own group; other groups were often considered strange, exotic, inferior, and somewhat less than human. This attitude, although widespread, is not necessarily universal, but it has certainly played an important part in the relations between peoples, not only in the obvious cases of colonization and other forms of exploitation, but even in situations which are motivated by liberal high-minded programmes such as technical assistance or cooperation, in which the receiving areas are expected to adopt the standards and models of the donors.

In this respect, however, it is possible to identify certain counter-currents, characterized by a greater willingness to recognize the rights of others to their own cultural identity, and by a greater concern on the part of those ‘others’ to maintain that identity. In the USA, for example, the sociologist Milton M. Gordon has distinguished three stages in the

approach to the complex American ethnic structure. The first, Anglo-conformity, demanded "the complete renunciation of the immigrants ancestral heritage in favour of the behaviour and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group," the second, the melting-pot idea, envisaged "a biological merger of the Anglo-Saxon peoples with other immigrant groups and a blending of their respective cultures into a new indigenous American type"(Keesing, Roger M. and Keesing, Felix M. 201) the third, characterizing the present situation as cultural pluralism, which seeks "the preservation of the communal life and significant portions of the culture of the later immigrant groups within the context of American citizenship and political and economic integration into American society."(Keesing, Roger M. and Keesing, Felix M. 201) Problems remain as to the extent to which such a goal is fully possible or desirable, but certainly the acceptance of a variety of cultural forms within the nation-state is much greater now than it was in the past. The same is true for other countries such as Yogoslavia, the Philippines, Belgium and France, not always to the same extent, but in the same direction.

On the other side of the picture, various ethnic groups in a number of different countries are now actively seeking the preservation of their own cultural identity. One of the most striking recent instances of an ethnic group seeking to establish and maintain its cultural identity is that of the Blacks in the United States. Slavery and its aftermath of an inferior socio-economic position within the larger community were clearly not conducive to the development of a positive sense of identity.

What happened during the 1960s was something approaching a psychological revolution. There was a refusal to accept the notion of "cultural deprivation", since the position of the Blacks was that they had their own culture. With that went the development of a whole complex philosophy (or ideology) of identity. This includes the concept of Black Power, the slogans "Black is beautiful" and "I'm proud to be Black" African roots and a Black or African culture; Black nationalism.
One aspect of culture which Blacks have emphasized is that their self-identity is always a people-identity; "I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am."(Madhavan, 54) This is seen to be in contrast with the Western emphasis on the self as individually unique and different. In a recent book by an American social scientist, Edmund Glenn, an African ambassador in Washington is quoted as saying: "The source of the greatest misunderstanding between Americans and Africans is the positive value attached by the Americans to individualism, and the negative value attached to it by Africans." (Madhavan, 56)

In France today we are witnessing a striking development of concern with ethnic identity and the preservation of minority cultures. In Brittany, Corsica, 'Occitanie', etc., this tendency has increased in strength as it has also among the Catalans and Basques in Spain, American Indians and European minorities in the United States and Canada, the Maori in New Zealand, the aboriginal population in Australia and other ethnic groups in many parts of the world.

All of this development appear to be in a direction which we should welcome. The UNESCO Declaration on Race in 1967 includes a statement to the effect that "ethnic groups which suffer discrimination sometimes accepted or tolerated by the dominant group if they totally give up their cultural identity. Ethnic groups should be encouraged to preserve their cultural values, thus contributing to the enrichment of the total human culture."(Madhavan, 56)

Culture, as has already been indicated, refers to behaviour which is specifically human and also to the distinctive ways of life found in different human populations. From this point of view of education for international understanding, it has frequently been suggested that it is important to supply information as to how others behave; although such information does not necessarily lead to friendly attitudes, it does seem safer to base our relations with other people on knowledge rather than on ignorance. On the other hand, the psychologist Gordon All port suggested a number of years ago that educators had gone too far in stressing the differences among peoples, and presenting others as strange and even exotic in their behavior. He called instead for an "encyclopedia of human similarities," with greater stress on the common human. A more reasonable position would be to include both the resemblances and the differences. Our understanding of culture requires a concern with both similarities and differences, and also with the ease and likelihood with which the differences occur.

A serious difficulty arises when we attempt to identify the characteristics of a particular culture. Every group is a complex, with variations in behaviour according to social class or status, occupation, education or role; that kind of culture exhibited or absorbed by the individual will be somewhat different for men and women, for young and old, for each individual; in a nation-state it may vary considerably from one region to another. These variations are often characterized as sub-cultures, but it is not easy to determine how many subcultures should be distinguished. In addition, cultures change. How much continuity is there between Czarist and Communist Russian, Elizabethan and Victorian England, or the France of Louis XIV and today?

In connection with cultural change, there is an important development in recent years which is usually defined as the 'counter-culture, because of the position taken by its adherents in relation to, and often in opposition to the prevailing values of the larger community. It is mainly confined to the young in industrial societies; it denies the relevance of many of the ideals of the parents; it is not concerned with making preparations for the future, but insists on living intensely the experience of the present (the now generation). Success is seen not in material terms but as personal development, self-fulfillment, and self-realization.

One aspect of this movement is particularly striking in connection with cultural variations. For many of the devotees of the counter-culture, salvation is to be found in the religions of the Orient. Many parents and teachers of the young in revolt against their society find it hard to understand the attraction of Zen Buddhism or Hinduism, but the emphasis on contemplation and inner peace must seem very palatable to those trying to escape from a society which stresses hard work and material success. Not only do the Eastern religions provide an alternative style; they also reduce or remove any feelings of guilt that may be felt as the result of defection from the goals which the young had been brought up to respect, but which no longer satisfied them.

The whole movement included within the concept of the counter-culture has lost many of its adherents, and is frequently considered to have abandoned a good part of its programme. This may be the case, but recent research on the attitudes of young men and women with regard to work and their future, indicates that at least some of its components continue to have an impact. Unity in diversity is a core aspect of India's identity, a beacon of hope and inspiration for the world. It is a testament to the power of human understanding and cooperation, demonstrating that people from different backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony.

We turn now to a number of specific issues in connection with culture contact in the contemporary world which create problems for institutions like UNESCO and the United Nations and for all those who agree with them that the variety of human cultures should, as far as possible, be preserved. These issues take the form of apparent contradictions or paradoxes which require careful consideration.

The first of these relates to the general programme of technical assistance or cooperation designed to improve the standard of living in developing countries, but which in practice involves the introduction of industrial and technological models from the 'modern', usually the Western world. This, too, reflects the United Nations programme; the question arises as to whether it is compatible with the survival of traditional cultures. The American anthropologist Edward Hall reminds us that the various facets of a culture are interrelated; "touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected."(Tylor, Edward, 72) The Australian psychologist Stephen Bochner insists that "there are many examples of societies which have lost their cultural integrity as the price for modernization." (Tylor, Edward, 72)

Such 'modernization' is, however, precisely what the leaders of the developing countries are requesting. The Norwegian sociologist Johan Caltung points out that Third World representatives are urging the creation of "a New International Economic Order (NIEO) to have faster industrialization, increasing exports, better raw material prices, more financial and technological transfers."(Tylor, Edward, 72) The question then arises: Can this be done without destroying, or at least disrupting, the existing indigenous, traditional culture?

It has frequently been pointed out that there is a tendency in the industrially world to see itself as a universally valid model to be imitated by others. In this connection Galtung analyses the important question of human needs, their universal and variable character, and the necessity of avoiding cultural ethnocentrism, paying more direct attention to what the recipient societies want, and less to what the donors think they ought to want. What they want may, however, be difficult to determine since the political leaders and the leaders in many developing countries have themselves adopted a position close to that of the Western world.

The fact remains that technological change is not always accompanied by the disappearance of traditional culture. There can be no doubt as to the industrial and technical achievement of the Japanese, but at the same time they have retained many distinctively Eastern and national traits. It has been suggested, for example, that their life continues to be affected by the notion of mutual dependence, whereas the West, centred on the individual, tends to develop more self-reliance. In Japan a business enterprise, no matter how large, is seen in the image of a household, with the accompanying interdependence and loyalty characteristic of the family.

There is a second paradox to be considered. The United Nations/UNESCO position is in favour of contact among the peoples of the world, and extensive programmes of "exchange of persons" have been developed by both national and international agencies. Bochner, however, in discussing the forces antithetical to cultural preservation, includes

international educational exchange "which acts as the main vehicle for the uncritical diffusion of Western culture and therefore the erosion of non-Western life style." (Keesing, Roger M. and Keesing, Felix M. 201)

The real question we ought to ask ourselves is whether, among the patterns of universal character put forward there is one more likely to respect diversity in the overall development scheme. For there are many advantages in diversity and these advantages are not only cultural but also economic. Are there, then, patterns and ideologies which, while necessarily being presented as they are that is of universal character are more likely than others to maintain diversity rather than consider it as an obstacle to development, and how can they be applied?

CONCLUSION

Diversity in India is not merely a fact but a fundamental feature that strengthens the very essence of national unity. The rich tapestry of cultures, languages, religions, and traditions woven across this vast nation serves as a unifying force, exemplifying the profound concept of 'Ek Bharat shresht Bharat

REFERENCES

[1] Keesing, Roger M. and Keesing, Felix M. (1968), *New Perspectives in Cultural Anthropology*. Rinehart and Winston, London.
[2] Madhavan, S. (2012). *Cross-cultural management: Concepts and cases* New Delhi: Oxford University Pres
[3] Tylor, Edward, 1920(1871): *Primitive Culture*, New York: J.P. Putnam's Sons.
[4] Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions.* Vintage Books.