

PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

India is a land of pluralities. India is a country with world's second largest population, India represents endless variety of physical features, linguistic groups, cultural patterns, caste and religious divisions. Pluralism is a political philosophy holding that people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and life style can co-exist in the same society and equally participate in political process. Framework of Indian Constitution shows that it is possible to respect cultural diversity without damaging the nation. This paper discusses how people belongs to different categories exist together. This paper also shows that country like India where multicultural, plural societies, multi-ethnic exist so how social justice, political democracy and economic progress can be achieved through accommodation of diverse identities and interests.¹

Key Words: Pluralism, Unity, Diversity, Religion, etc.

¹ *India as a land of Diversities,*

http://www.bhattadevuniversity.ac.in/docs/studyMaterial/Dr.BharatiGogoi_Geography/PG_2ndSem_India_as_unity_in_diversity_by_Dr._Bharati_Gogoi.pdf.

Introduction:

People with different backgrounds, opinions, belief systems, likes, and dislikes co-exist in the same society, such society represents pluralistic society. The problem of the co-existence of cultures, believes arises under modern societies that have a constitutional set-up expressed by pluralism. The strong motivation of India should be the core values of the Indian Constitution, especially pluralism, unity in diversity, so that “We, the People of India” will remain as the sovereign and not a particular caste or group. Pluralism conduces as a model of democracy where different groups of people can raise their voice, give their opinions and ideas. This will help in the development of countries as different people have different aspects of thinking and this will lead to the choose best options given by different people.²

The legitimacy of the system of law and justice derives from not allowing the needs of any one group over the needs of other, which means one group can't eliminate or overshadow the other group. Thus, in India, Pluralism melds the culture with the spirit of liberal democracy.

Advantages of Pluralistic Society:

One of the major strength of pluralistic society is that people who belongs to pluralistic society have more acceptance and tolerance power and while other who does not belong to pluralistic society, they have less tendency to understand different opinion, views, thinking.

People belongs to pluralistic society are much more able to understand the different opinions, point of view as every individual has different point of view to look towards anything and how to deal with all the situations occurs when different group of people exist together. And this leads to leadership skill and it eventually aid in the decision making process.³

Weaknesses of Pluralistic Society:

² J.T. Lott & C. Bennett, *Pluralistic Society*, SCIENCE DIRECT (2010), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/pluralistic-society>.

³ *What is a Pluralistic Society and What are Its Pros and Cons?*, SCIENCE STRUCK, <https://sciencestruck.com/what-is-pluralistic-society>.

There is a high risk of alienation among people belongs to different categories as people have different kind of opinion and one thinks that opinion of one category people overshadow the opinion of other and it also creates misunderstanding among different categories of people. This can also be due to favouritism towards any particular group of the people. People belongs to different categories don't want to follow the opinion given by other as they think they are superior than them.

Diversities of India:

The term 'diversity' asserts differences rather than inequalities. Diversity means variety of religions, castes, races, cultures and languages. The term 'unity' means integration . It stands for the bonds, which hold each member of the society together.

'Unity in diversity' generally means 'unity without uniformity' and 'diversity without fragmentation'. It is based on the notion that diversity enriches human interaction.

Two aspects of demographic diversity of India:

1. Extensive cross cutting diversity along with the lines of languages, religions, tribes and castes. Hindus form a majority of the population, around 79.8% out of total of 1.21 billion. With around 180 million Muslims, approximately 14.2% of the population.
2. Diversity of India is long standing and not a product of recent migration. Different religious, linguistic, and tribal groups of India are all national minorities of one kind or another. It is true that Christianity and Islam are viewed by many Hindu nationalist as foreign religions unlike Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism, which are regarded as the progeny of Hinduism and indigenous of Indian soil.⁴

Various forms of Diversity in India:

1. **Religious Diversity:** India is a land where people belongs to different religions co-exist together. Religion like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain. And each religion like Hindu and Muslim also themselves divided into different sections. Hindu

⁴ *Unity in Diversity in Indian Society,*

http://www.govtgirlsekalpur.com/Study_Materials/Sociology/Sociology_GE_Sem-II.pdf.

such as Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Shaivates, Smartas, etc. Muslim such as Shias, Sunnis, etc.

2. Linguistic Diversity: In India, there are several languages. In Indian Constitution itself has 22 official languages.

3. Racial Diversity: According to 1931 census, racial diversity of India, classified in the following groups, the Negrito, the Proto-Australoid, the Mediterranean, the Mongoloid, the Western Brachycephals and the Nordic. The representative of all the three major races of the world, namely Negroid, Mongoloid and Carcasoid, are found in the country.

4. Caste Diversity: At the land of India, there are people belongs to different caste co-exist together. We can also say that, India is a country of castes. Caste refers for both varna as well as jati. According to functional differentiation, Varna is divided into four categories, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Jati, there are more than 300 jatis, it is not static it is mobility in nature.

5. Cultural Diversity: Cultural diversity actually reflects regional variation. As in India, there is wide population diversity. In India, there is immense variety of cultures as India is a blend of various forms of cultures. Different caste, religion, region follows their own traditions and cultures. Thus, in India, there is variation in art, science, forms, architecture, music, etc.

6. Geographical Diversity: India is a country with large diversity of physical features like evergreen forests, dry deserts, perennial and non-perennial river systems, lofty mountains fertile plains and long coasts.⁵

Factors leading to Unity amidst Diversity in India:

1. Constitutional Identity: In India, there is one single constitution i.e. Constitution of India govern the entire country. Fundamental Rights of all the citizens guaranteed by the Constitution of India regardless of their gender, age, caste, group, class, religion, etc.

⁵ Id.

2. Religious Constitution: People belongs to different religion co-exist together in India. Freedom of religion and religious practice is guaranteed under our Constitution i.e. Constitution of India, In India, State has no religion and all religions are equally respected by State.

3. Inter-state mobility: Under Article 19(1)(d) of the Constitution of India , we have freedom to move throughout the territory of India. Through this process, there is promoting a sense of brotherhood and unity among the different categories of people who belongs to different region. Other factors such as uniform pattern of law, administrative work, penal code, etc. lead to uniformity in policy implementation in the criminal justice system, etc.

4. Economic Integration: Under Article 301 of the Constitution of India also secures the freedom of trade, commerce and intercourse within the territory of India. Government also introduced Goods and Services Tax under Indian Constitution having aim of ‘one nation, one tax’. Thus, facilitating unity among different regions.⁶

Constrained and Segmented forms of State Power favoured pluralism:

- Sense of brotherhood,
- Respecting internal rules and social practices,
- Incorporation of external group in the order,
- Asymmetric hierarchy,
- Unidentified structure of dominance.⁷

Factors necessary for Constitutional response:

- The magnitude of the cultural diversity in India: These diversities had to be accommodated to become one unified nation. This will lead to secular pluralistic nation.

⁶ Id.

⁷ India needs ‘pluralism’, not ‘majoritarianism’, IAS SCORE (Jan. 19, 2021), <https://iascore.in/current-affairs/mains/india-needs-pluralism-not-majoritarianism>.

- The pattern of India and the aftermath that followed made secularism a necessity here, accommodating the demographic minority groups into the framework of the polity.

In *Keshvanand Bharti v. State of Kerala*, AIR 1973 SC 1461, it was held that secularism is the basic structure of the Constitution. Then all religions are equally respected by State. Secularism creates nationalism among the people irrespective of the religion. Secularism separates religion from State and it leads to pluralism and it balances the society & helps in the development of State.

Issues faced by India as a Pluralistic Society:

Central problem lies with the relationship between individuality and sociality, order and freedom.

- **Shifting towards polarization:** The principle of secularism maintaining cultural and political pluralism and this is being challenged by sectarianism and this lead to shifting of Indian Society from pluralism to polarization.
- **Shifting towards fragmentation:** the increase in caste politics and localism lead to Indian society to change from pluralism to fragmentation.
- **Social Integration:** Due to inherent nature, pluralistic society faces challenges and this is created by economic growth.⁸
- **Language Concern:** As people belongs to different region, they are not able to understand the language of other region and this may create confusion among individuals belongs to different region.
- **Regionalism:** Regionalism emphasize the interest of the particular region/regions over the national interest. Regionalism also adversely effect the national integration. And due to regional demands, situation of law and order hampered and leads to agitation.

⁸ Id.

- **Divisive Politics:** Politicians always evoke the identities of individuals by their caste, religion, etc. just because of their own sake and these type of divisive politics leads to violence among people.
- **Imbalance Development:** Inadequate economic policies, uneven pattern of socioeconomic development and consequent economic disparities leads to backwardness of a region and this also leads to violence among people.
- **Inter-state conflict:** Because of the feeling of regionalism, trade and communication between states also effected.

The problem arises because the fruits of development not equally distributed among different categories of people.

What accounts for India's Pluralistic Constitution:

The framers of the Indian Constitution were conscious that India is a plural society but they were also concerned about the need for consolidation and unity of India. The Indian Constitution accommodationist with regard to the diversity along with the axes of caste, religion, tribe, language, although there is difference between them. It was ahead of its time in taking affirmative action for historically disadvantaged groups and instituting cultural rights for minorities within a broadly liberal democratic framework.

Affirmative action includes quotas (popularly known as reservation in India) in government jobs, educational institutions, legislatures for tribal groups and lower caste as well as self government rights for linguistic and tribal groups. In Indian Constitution, Cultural rights/ Group rights includes legal pluralism in religious family law (Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians).⁹

Provisions related to Pluralistic Society under Indian Constitution:

Article 14 of the Constitution of India deals with the people's right to 'equality before the law' and 'equal protection of the laws'.

⁹ Rochana Bajpai, *Why Did India Choose Pluralism?*, GCFP 1, 6-7 (2017), https://www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/India_EN.pdf.

Article 15 (1) & (2) of the Constitution of India deals with the prohibition of discrimination against citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

Article 15 (4) of the Constitution of India deals with the authority of State to make ‘any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens’ (besides the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes).

Article 16(1)&(2) of the Constitution of India deals with the citizens’ right to ‘equality of opportunity’ in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State – and prohibition in this regard of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India deals with the Authority of State to make ‘any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 25(1) of the Constitution of India deals with the people’s freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion – subject to public order, morality and other Fundamental Rights.

Article 26 of the Constitution of India deals with the right of ‘every religious denomination or any section thereof –subject to public order, morality and health – to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, ‘manage its own affairs in matters of religion’, and own and acquire movable immovable property and administer it ‘in accordance with law.

Article 27 of the Constitution of India deals with the prohibition against compelling any person to pay taxes for promotion of any particular religion.

Article 28 of the Constitution of India deals with the people’s ‘freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions’ wholly maintained, recognized, or aided by the State.¹⁰

Suggestions:

¹⁰ *Constitutional rights and safeguards provided to the minorities in India*, http://ncm.nic.in/home/pdf/about%20ncm/constitutional_provisions.pdf.

- Establishment of transitional governing body with full executive powers, for establishing a neutral environment for the transition.
- An inclusive national dialogue.
- A review of the Constitutional Order and legal System.
- Commitment to accountability, comprehensive package for transitional justice and national reconciliation.
- Gender equality, provisions of humanitarian aid and protection of vulnerable groups.

Conclusion:

Cultural, linguistic diversities, religious pluralism are the strength of India and they strengthen the Indian Constitution also. Basic structure of Indian Constitution will collapse if these features will collapse. In our Indian Constitution, it is specially mentioned that “we the people of India” are government of the India. “We the people of India” will remain as sovereign and not a particular group, caste, religion, etc.

It is our social and moral responsibility to educate the people to unite India rather than polarize India. As education is very important for everyone especially for youth as youth will become future of India. So, this will be responsibility of youth to think about the development of our nation that what type of nation they want for better future. To protect the India's pluralism, it is the State's duty to protect the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

‘Sabka sath, sabka vikas’ would only be possible if efforts should be taken towards betterment of the people belongs to different categories as also create awareness among the individual about the core values of Indian Constitution. The Constitution of India has done just for citizens that has become the best guarantee for a viable and vibrant nation.