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Topic : **Characteristics of Indian Culture**

Unity in diversity, race, colour, language custom, Indian as secular state

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Commissioner,
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Unity in Diversity in India

1. Geographical Unity:

Country that lies to the north of the ocean and to the south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata where dwell the descendants of Bharat." The kings of ancient India like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Pushyamitra Shunga, Kanishka, Chandragupta II, Harshavardhan and others considered India as one geographical unit. In the medieval period Akbar, Shahjahan and others considered this land as a single entity and ruled over it. The British authorities also did the same thing.

After independence, India maintained and still maintains that uninterrupted geographical entity. Thus goes the popular saying – 'from Kashmir to Kanyakumari India is one'. The concept of 'Bharatmata' our national song 'Vande Mataram' and national anthem 'Jana-gana-mana' clearly project India as one geographical unit. The poets, philosophers, prophets, reformers had conceived this geographical unit of this land and to-day the Indians are preserving that ideal with all its sanctity.

2. Political Unity:

Article 1 of the Indian constitution speaks, "India that is Bharat shall be a union of states". This political unity is not recent. It had its origin in the long past. For the first time India was

united under one umbrella by the redoubtable leadership of Chandragupta Maurya. Right from him, the concept of 'Rajachakravartin' or the Paramount Sovereign began to evolve and Ashoka, Samudragupta, Chandragupta, Harshavardhan, Akbar and many others maintained it.

Even after the British conquest of India, this political unity was maintained like today with uniform pattern of law, penal code, administrative works etc. Everywhere inside the country. The concepts of 'dandasamata' (uniformity of penal code) and 'vyavahara samata' (uniformity in judicial procedure) invoked by Ashoka became the ideal for all the rulers of India. No Mughal rule, British rule or the present democratic set up of India could escape it. Thus, politically India remained one, remains one and will remain one in future.

3. Religious Unity:

Diverse religions found their ways in the Indian subcontinent. Spiritualism became the most essential part in one's life. Many sects and creeds began to rise in this soil and gained momentum. Everybody pays respect to Ramayana, Mahabharata and other scriptures anywhere and everywhere in the country. Many Holy Places of India are adored by the people of North, South, East and West.

Everybody Takes Pride In Chanting Such Place Names Ignoring The Differences Of Regions

4. Cultural Unity:

Cultural unity amidst various diversities is found in India. In spite of differences in language, religion, dress and manners, Indian culture is homogeneous. In ancient time, the rock-cut architecture of the Mauryan period found its expression throughout India. The Gandhara school of art and Mathura School of art also flourished in this land. The Indo-Islamic art and architecture were alike in the nook and corner of India.

Several inscriptions found from different parts of the country bore uniformity in many respects though the events and narratives were different. Similarly many festivals like Holi, Diwali, Dashahara, Rakshabandhan, Eid, Shab-e-barat, Christmas, Good Friday are observed throughout the country with their colourful lustre.

Further, the Kumbhmela at Allahabad, Hardwar and Ujjain are attended by people from different parts of the country. Similarly many rites like birth-rite, funeral-rite etc. are observed throughout the country. The caste system, family sanctity, modes of offerings, several social ceremonies are celebrated almost in a similar manner in different parts of the country. Thus, the cultural unity in India amidst several diversities is a unique phenomenon.

5. Racial Unity:

Various races have dwelt in India down through the ages. By circumstance, some Indian Hindus were converted to Islam and Christianity. However, they preserve the Indian identity. The Greeks, Sakas, Kushanas, Mongols, Turks and Mughals who came to

India were absorbed in the Hindu way of life. With the gradual march of time they were termed as Hindustani irrespective of the state they belong to.

This identity as an Indian effaces all the racial discrimination. All the Indians belonging to any race feel pride in the name of India, their mother country. That is why Indian army accepts Indians without any inhibition of their caste or race. The racial difference is not at all found inside our country.

6. Unity of Language:

Amidst diversity in language unity is also maintained in the same sphere. During Asoka's period prakrit became the vehicle of spreading the message of moral-ethical codes of conduct. Prof H.C. Raychaudhuri writes –

“Prakrit was the one single language sufficient to bring the message of a royal missionary to the doors of his humblest subject throughout this vast kingdom.”

With the advancement of time, Sanskrit took the place of prakrit. During medieval period Hindi emerged as a great language to bring coherence among all the languages. Although sixteen and more languages and numerous dialects exist in India, now Hindi is trying to be the cementing force among all the languages and rightly it has been called the national language.

However, English is used more or less for carrying on the official correspondence. Although Oriya, Bengali, Punjabi, Telugu, karnada, Gujarati and numerous other languages exist in India but they express in national level either through Hindi or English. Thus, diversity in language mingles bringing linguistic unity.

7. Unity in Literature:

In different parts of India literature has been written in several languages. The ancient literature like the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Dharmasastras etc. were written in Sanskrit. Basing upon those, literature has been written in different languages.

The theme and characters of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Raghuvamsam etc. are same in different languages may be Oriya, Kannad, Bengali, Ahamiya and so on. Thus, the influence of Sanskrit is greatly felt over those literatvire and really it plays a cementing force to bind together the literary traditions of different parts of the country.

8. Social Unity:

It is a well known fact that Indian society is diversified. In dress, food-habit and customs, the northern Indians are quite different from the southern Indian people. However, there are certain common factors that guide all the societies of India. Treatment of guests, offering alms to beggars, to help others at the times of need, to show mercy to the poor, destitute and needy etc. are certain common practices found in every Indian society. The magnanimity of Indian society is well recognized by all the people of the world. For this greatness, the Indian society has received commendation from the tourists who came to visit India from abroad.

9. Philosophical Unity:

India is the birth place of many philosophical systems of the world. The Vedic philosophy, the philosophy of the Sankhyas, Yogas, Advaita Vedantins, Buddhists, Jainas, Saivas, Shaktas etc. vary in many respects from each other. Buddha, Mahavir, Sankaracharya,

Ballavachaiya, Nimbarka, Kabir, Nanak, Sri Chaitanya, Nizamuddin Auliya, Eknath, Tukaram and many other saints preached their philosophy. Monotheism and polytheism have been preached in this subcontinent. However, the ultimate aim of every philosophy is to lead a life full of bliss and happiness, the concept of Nirvana, Moksha, Mukti etc. or the life in this world and the other are certain other aspects of each philosophical system. This unity in Indian philosophical system has allured the attention of the people of the world at large.

10. Promoter of this Unity:

There are several agencies which have promoted the unity amidst diversity. The sages, saints, reformers and pilgrims who have visited throughout India sing the glory of several places like Kurukeshtera, Allahabad, Hardwar, Rishikesh, Dwaraka, Mathura, Kanchipuram so on and so forth. Their description makes Indians feel that they belong to a glorious land, their motherland, India.

In the past the conquerors like Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Chandragupta II and Akbar wanted the unity of this land which inspired the leaders of the past and inspires the present leaders too to maintain the unity and integrity of our country.

Among other factors, uniform administration, language and religion, modern means of transport and communication, common history and nationalism and the present democratic set up act as agencies for maintaining this fundamental unity of India amidst various diversities.

Unity in diversity is the basic postulate of Indian culture. It is a wonder that in spite of several diversities Indian culture preserves

unity. That is quite unique and unparalleled in the chequered annals of history. That is why, perhaps Herbert Risley had rightly pointed out

Beneath the many-fold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India, there can still be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

