

Unity in Diversity

Synopsis: India has been culturally one country and nation since time immemorial with its many diversities notwithstanding. Geographically also it has been one country with its boundaries well-defined. Indian geography and cultures have been great unifying factors. Tolerance has been a hallmark of Indian thought and culture. Consequently, there has flourished many religions and innumerable sects, co-existing and living in peace with one another. The communal violence in recent years is an aberration and legacy of the British rule. During the course of its long history many other cultures have been absorbed and assimilated here making Indian culture a composite one without losing its Indian mould and traits. It is because of these qualities of tolerance and assimilation that it has never stagnated or ceased to evolve. It also signifies wisdom and inner growth of man. Modern economic, political and scientific changes and common interests and attitudes have further strengthened these bonds of unity and integrity amidst diversity.

India, with the second largest population in world, scores of languages and dialects, many religions and innumerable sects, different styles of living and varies cultures, one of the most ancient and continuous civilizations of the world etc. presents the best example of unity in diversity. India has been a melting pot of various civilizations, cultures, religions and philosophies since hoary past. Unity and synthesis run through the entire fabric of the Indian society.

Besides cultural unity there is geographical unity with its well defined political and physical boundaries India is the largest democracy in the world with 50-years of modern democratic history behind it. It is so fascinating and fantastic with all its variety of colors, climates, regions, dresses, diets, races customs, rites, rituals and cults. All these varieties and diversities notwithstanding, India has always been one integrated whole as a nation from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Dibrugarh to Dwarka.

When we think and talk of India, we think of one great ancient country, culturally, politically and geographically well-knit as a nation. Indian culture and civilization have been a great unifying factor,. The much diversity of faith, manner, life-style, food-habits etc. may confound a stranger but in essence they represent the different patterns, colors and designs of the same fabric. They look many and separate but collectively derive their strength and life from the same one eternal source. This spirit of unity in diversity is well enshrined in our Constitution which says that it is the primary duty of every citizen to “promote

harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending religions, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities. “

Indian unity in diversity has been an unbroken tradition, faith and conviction since time immemorial. All the citizens of the country are like millions and millions of leaves of one majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots, because they are deep down in the bowels of history, tradition and civilization. At heart all Indians are one as a nation and civilization. Unity among different religions, races, castes, communities, philosophies and styles of living in India has been at the root of its nationalism and common bonds since the dawn of civilization. There has been a kind of divine unity of purpose and togetherness being so many apparent diversities. Truth is one but the sages call it by many different names. Similarly, India has always been one as a country and nation in spite of numberless diversities and varieties.

Tolerance and respect for all faiths and religions has been the hallmark of India philosophy and practice. The Religious life of Indian makes a complex but a wonderful pattern. This tolerance is the only thing that makes persons belonging to different faiths to live like fellow citizens, good neighbors and friends. Hinduism has the largest following. More than 80 per cent of the population are Hindus, Then there are Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs etc. Muslims in India form the largest religious minority and that makes India one of the largest Islamic nations. Christianity in India is very old. St. Thomas, one of the twelve Disciples of Christ, was the first to preach Christianity in India. The Parsis came to India seeking refuge from religious persecution in Iran. The Jews came quite early, nearly 2000 years ago. All these faiths, philosophies and religions have been here all these centuries in harmony, peace and tolerance and the communal clashes and violence in recent decades may be regarded as an aberration and legacy of the British rule. Fundamentally, India is a secular country and yet profoundly spiritual and religious. India has always believed in freedom of thought, expression, faith and worship. The people of this ancient and holy land have always been at liberty to pursue cultural, religious, spiritual and material goals of their own selection and choice. They have various views and opinions on religion, political systems, economic order, social problems etc. and yet they belong to one nation. This variety of thought and life-styles springs from one common root of its cultural unity. In the course of history many diverse cultures and traditions have fused into one pattern. First there was fusion of Aryan and non-Aryan cultures and then there was that of many other races, cultures and faiths. There has been fission as well within larger social and ethnic groups but without any harm to national unity and integrity. Indian rituals, traditions, social systems, literary and artistic

achievements have always been the same. The institutions like family, marriage etc. are the same throughout the country. Most of Indian festivals are observed with great enthusiasm by all the sections and casts of the society.

The cultural and emotional bonds in Indians are very strong. They are equally strong among non-resident Indians (NRIs) spread all over the world. They find their best manifestation during cultural events, festivals, fairs, celebrations and nation's crisis. Indian culture has its roots in generations thousands of years ago reaching to Indus Valley Civilization, and beyond. It has an immense power and capacity to imbibe and absorb all good alien influences. Had it not been this tolerance and power to assimilate foreign cultural influences, Indian culture, thought, philosophy and civilization would now have been extinct as has been in the case of many ancient civilizations of the world. There has been useful interaction between the culture of India and that of other countries for the last several millennium and in the process the India mind has assimilated much of the useful thoughts and concepts of the cultures of other nations and yet the basic elements of Indianans remains,. Thus, Indian culture has never stagnated because of its great powers of tolerance, assimilation, dynamism and depth, Indian culture has had enormous effect on the cultures of the world. Indian culture also means wisdom and inner growth of the people of Indian who have great capacity and power to understand and appreciate the other peoples and nations.

Under the influence of this one common culture, the different races, communities, religions and sects have come together blending into one organic national whole. The impact of modern science, technology, economy and unity of interests and attitudes has further strengthened these bonds of unity, fraternity and nationalism. Our common values, traditions, customs, art forms etc. constitute what may be called national culture and civilization. In India there has been a great cultural unity. Our arts, crafts, way of living and thinking, customs and traditions have been basically the same.

The cultural unity and integrity of India has never been in doubt. India has always been invincible culturally and historically. The invaders came and conquered India geographically but its spirit and essence remained unconquerable. The conquerors then settled down and were finally assimilated and conquered by the culture of India. India's integration and unity in diversity is based on its rock foundation of centuries old culture. Human values, traditions and the way of living, which constitute culture, have been common to all the people of India.