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ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL PLURALISM IN NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI'S MANIFESTATION

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Abstract

Pluralism of Indian culture has come from nature itself. The first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru had coined an ideology of "Unity in Diversity" in his book *The Discovery of India*. Among Indian writers, in English Nirad C. Chaudhuri a Bengali and fluent author described diverse cultures, ethnicity, language, food, religion, and caste. These facets made the country incredible throughout history. Unique traditions in each ethnic group here determined their distinct identity in this enormous country. People's ideologies, their religious philosophy from an early age inspired the whole world. Most of the citizen might not remain quite without appraising Indian culture and her past glories. Many would narrate mythical stories profusely referring mythical as well as historical heroes there. Certainly, hero-worship tendency could be easily recognized in their conversation. While criticism also cannot be avoided about the invaders who raided the Golden Bird. Several aggressions brought changes and caused transcultural activities on the whole continent. Nirad Chaudhuri had good observation and perceived the diversity of India. Forthrightly his works are concerned about Indian sub-continent, where several ethnic groups merged to be one nation. India is an essence of dynamic cultures while contradictory situations made her celebrated culture filthy. In different ages, people have moved all across the country. Their several generations have been surviving in different locations from the colonial period. Cosmopolitan culture raised. People of different language, religions, ethnicity, and caste lived happily but the attitude of people appeal and drew the attention of all that they own distinguished characters.

Keywords: Diversity, integrity, culture, ethnicity, religion, tourism

Introduction

In the whole world India is one of the assorted republics. In various aspects such as geography, ethnicity, language, religion and culture people disclosed their inclination by birth. Region

wise people have their own food habits, clothing, communicate in their own mother tongues. Cultures are totally different and also celebrations too contrast. Eventually, there is charisma of seasons existing across the country. Mainly there exist four seasons namely summer, monsoon, autumn and

winter. These all seasons have provided business opportunities to business classes and farmers to cultivate various seasonal crops. Indeed, people require several things season wise naturally. According to geographical zone temperatures also fluctuates which affected people substantially that is why people have a different type of clothing manners. In warm regions, people deliberately use either fewer garments or a cotton one. In cold regions, people mostly cover their whole body and use warm clothes. Indians can be recognized by their clothing because clothes expose people's culture. From the Mughal period, people have redesigned clothes adopted from other cultures for their convenience. During festivals, people often put cultural costumes and dance on those special occasions. Food too is a part of the culture. Religions, occasions, and regions initiated people to grow the habit of eating veg and non-veg food product everywhere. The unique and diverse cultural features of the sub-continent made the world enthusiastic. Tourism was started by explorers and Vasco De Gama was the pioneer for all sorts of activities in the sub-continent. Anthropologists had already discovered India and explored in their books. The diversity of India was acknowledged through the documents as travel writing by Western and Arabian scholars. This paper focuses on why India is one of the most diverse countries in the entire world. India is an incredible entity that Nirad C. Chaudhuri represented through his critical pieces of writing.

Ethnicity: Almost the entire world migrated to India. Some authorized her to be the permanent abode, some travelled for marketing, some came for robbery and a few to rule. The Indian population had been divided into three major ethnic groups as the Aborigines, Hindus, and Muslims but primarily two categories were observed in ancient time 'Aryan' and 'Anarya'. This concept is animated as geographical individuality one is north and the other is south. In simple terms, it directs color complexion of the population which was classified. Nirad C. Chaudhuri had identified other ethnic groups, for instance, Nigroid, Mongoloid, Dravidian, European, Australoid, and Tibetan. All the ethnic groups were clearly separated from one another by their geographical distribution. In Indian history, three

ethnic groups were observed ruling India for centuries. In *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* Chaudhuri revealed those three cultural and ethnic cycles saying, "By the ethnic test the first is Indo-Aryan, the second Indo-Turkish, and the third Indo-British." (521) Browns had snatched the territory of the darks or yellows and created troubles for all those concerned. There were a lot of struggles among those races for power but succeeded to survive and maintained their own presence. In due course ethnic ecology developed among Indians as in *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri had pointed out, "Each is found in regions which seem to have been made into its fixed and normal habitat. One might even say that each type has as stable an ecology as plants." (30)

Geography: Mostly people can be seen speaking and distinguishing themselves as North Indian and South Indian. This ideology differentiates from each other historically and geographically. South consists of the Dravidian group while North has the Indo-Aryan race. In *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri wrote:

Further east and south was the Madhya Desa, or Middle Country, and all these hierarchical regions, with the rest of the whole great plain between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, were in their whole extent called Aryavarta, the Land of the Aryans. (144)

India has integrated various cultures. Twenty-nine states and seven union territories have been formed for the administrative purpose. Each of the states was formed on the basis of linguistic and culture of that particular geographical area. Each state represents their cultural identity and uniqueness. Indians not only diverse in geography but by their costumes, color, food, dance, nature, and attitude also is distinct. Chaudhuri described the eastern part of India that is his ancestral land. The scenery of paddy fields, river site, and the wood. Aboriginal folks were seen coming to the bank of the river and filled their water pot and disappeared in the wood. The author himself had noticed the habitats of people in rural, urban, plain areas, fields, jungle, and at the bank of river sites. Human life was typical in every vicinity.

Language: Several living languages made India incomparable and multilingual country. Linguistic diversity may not be avoided because that is an epitome of the ethnic group. Any language in the world signifies a group of people, area, community and certainly a nation. Languages and dialects are very diverse representing multilingual societies in every part of the country. In the colonial era, people of different language groups had moved to several places. All the recognized languages have been surviving since they have written manuscript in the form of literature. Those pieces of literature were preserved as their writers had composed several stories intending moral education to those communities. There are twenty-two languages recognized as official languages while several dialects still exist. Nobody knows how all these languages and dialects came into existence. Each and every language and dialect represent a different culture. Chaudhuri in his book *The Heart of India* suggested his foreigner friends to call people by their linguistic identity because they are proud of them:

Please, please do not use that word. Say "Hindu" if you have in mind a human type common to the whole continent; otherwise, according as you want to refer to this or that group, say "Bengali, Punjabi, Hindustani, Marathi, Tamil, Sikh, Muslim", and so on. (25)

Both English and Hindi languages are studied and learned by Indians. English was acquired as link language but later on, it became the first language and mother tongue of many Indians. Sanskrit and Tamil languages are the two oldest living languages of the Indian sub-continent. By the influence of some prominent languages, many languages disappeared. Various cultures also disappeared as people discontinued their peculiar mother tongues. Something was a deficit in foreign languages so people became aware to preserve their languages and cultures. If people will use their own language for communication definitely their culture will be saved in the transcultural era. There is a great threat of deculturation of India since western influences have brought many changes among Indians.

Costumes: Dressing sense of Indians show the varied cultures and regional identity. Easily one can find out

differences between two cultures' individuals by clothing styles and attitude they have. Religion and climate of the regions could be the elementary reasons for developing such different types of costumes used. There has been a fashion among all that people have approved other's culture even their costumes. In spite of the prohibition of wearing other cultural clothes, people have a passion for them. In Hindu culture, people wore unstitched cloths. Garment clothes were adopted from others' cultures when people came into contact with outsiders. Some instances have been traced about clothes that are practical in putting Muslim Salwar suit making it popular in so many colors. They changed it for their convenience. Hindu clothing manner was totally different from the Muslim. Muslim clothes were disliked by Hindu conservative having moral prejudice against the Muslim costume for women. Chaudhuri was conservative and disliked Muslim clothes but he had a passion for English coat pant and the hat. In the book, *Culture in the Vanity Bag* Chaudhuri expressed his own view saying:

English clothes secured the right of entry into the inner house and became an alternative costume for the Hindus for certain special purposes. The convention on which this was based was roughly this: that it would be permissible to put on English clothes for business, official duties and inter-racial intercourse, but in personal and social life only the formal Hindu dress should be put on. This was particularly the case in Bengali Hindu Society.

In the British period, Western clothes attracted countrymen and started to wear them as their own cultural clothes. Transculturation was ultimate as the education valued for it in the world. The lifestyle of each and every community people have been changed causing cultural mixing up.

Religion: Though the majority of the population is considered as Hindu, Indians follow all major religions of the world. Indian Constitution has made India a secular country. It is understood that no single religion can overpower the Indian mind. Indians never followed one religion but people had different religions as the nature is miscellaneous.

Atheists also live there who have no faith in any existing religions. Christian conversion activities had begun after the study of Hindu religion and languages as Buddhism had spread in the world. Sanskrit was learned to acquire knowledge regarding Hinduism. In the book *Hinduism: A Religion to Live By* Chaudhuri commented on conversion:

Their interest was natural because they could not preach Christianity in India without some knowledge of the religion of those whom they wanted to convert, and also without acquiring the ability to read and speak the languages of the Hindus. (108)

In Islam also people got converted. In Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism people get converted majorly. Religion is existing in Indian's life. Self-Conversion is a step of transculturation among many Indians who have done this for their spiritual gain. Many aboriginals have been converted to Hinduism, Christians, and Islam. Buddhism also welcomes the outcast people. High caste people of the Hindu community also had got converted into Islam and Christianity. Religion is one but ways are different to worship God. Louis Fischer had seen an image of Jesus Christ that was put on the wall in Gandhiji's ashrama. His curiosity led him to ask Gandhi why did he put Jesus Christ's image there. In *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* Fischer quoted Gandhi's reply on religion, "I am a Christian, and a Hindu, and a Moslem and a Jew." Gandhi was not a Christian but had faith in Christ. He respected all the religions of the world. In the same way, Indians give respect to every religion always.

Festivals and Fair: Fair and festivals are inclusive in Indian culture. So, India is called a country of Fair and festivals. Entertainment and commercial activities give people happiness and buy their household things sold in the fair. As the Indians depend on agriculture mostly take advantage of commercial activities in the fair. In the agricultural background, societies fairs play an imperative role because they don't get excess time to go to towns for marketing drive. Thus, it has become a trend of organizing fairs as periodic merriment for the public. Fairs are usually organized near the banks of holy rivers,

villages, where there are small markets and also surrounding religious places. Apart from these fairs, religious fairs too are held in the country known as Kumbha Mela. Traditionally Kumbha is organized in four of the places in Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik, and Ujjain once in twelve years period. This is the world's largest religious gathering. Crores of devotees take a holy dip in the river. According to Hindu belief, devotees want to get rid of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth at the Kumbha Mela. The largest gathering makes it so unique in the world and it can be said that it's a kind of celebration. There used to be one or the other festivals across the country. Diwali, Dussehra, Navratri, Holi, Ramzan, Id, Christmas, Onam, Pongal, Baisakhi, and Bihu are some major festivals. In spite of these several celebrations are held in every season region wise. Different celebrations and occasions remind cuisine prepared in the Indian kitchen. Indian cuisine is traditionally full of varieties. In every region and culture food habit of people are completely different. Even religion has a role in making people vegetarian and no-vegetarian. Religion influences the choice of cuisines. Geographical, climate, and traditions significantly develop a culture of different cuisines.

Conclusion

India is a multi-cultural country. She is pluralistic Social and cultural aspects are idiosyncratic. Ethnicity, geography, language, religion, castes, colour complexion, costumes, fair, and festival represent Indian diversity. Her incredible features invite tourists. India has several sites for all sorts of Tourism. There are various natural as well as religious sites to visit. Religious persons perform pilgrimages every year. The largest religious gathering is organized as Kumbha Mela once in twelve years in four sites Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik, and Ujjain. The unique feature of India is physically the largest country. Her population distribution also differs state wise. Nirad Chaudhuri a post-colonial Bengali writer has described all the aspects of the largest democracy of the world. He has dealt with all the historical, socio-cultural, religions, and political scenario from the Aryan migration to Independence of India from British.

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