ISSN (Online) 2456 -1304

International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management (IJSEM)

Volume 13, Issue 01, January 2026

Cultural Diversity, Secularism and Federalism

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Abstract*— Culture is a learnt and shared behavior. Behavior means thought, emotions and actions. The behavior of a particular individual is not culture. A behavior becomes part of culture only when most members of the group share it. Thus religion, caste, language, food habits, dress pattern all form part of culture. When different cultures co-exist, it is called cultural diversity. Most modern democracies comprise members with diverse cultural viewpoints, practices and contributions. Multi-culturalism seeks to include the cultures of different groups. One great advantage of cultural diversity is that all voices are heard. Through multiculturalism the interests of the oppressed classes in history are protected. India is a great multicultural country that is home to thousands of ethnic and tribal groups Thus, when the Indian constitution was framed by the Assembly, Federalism was considered as one of its main features. It means powers should not concentrate in center or states. The powers should be decentralized and delegated. That is why it is called India represents unity in diversity. The states represent different cultures also. Similarly, secularism is also interconnected with federalism and multiculturalism. In India there are different religions including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism.

***Keywords*— Culture, Cultural Diversity, Multiculturalism, Federalism, Secularism, Languages, Homogeneity.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a learnt and shared behavior. Behavior means thought, emotions and actions. The behavior of a particular individual is not culture. A behavior becomes part of culture only when most members of the group share it. Thus religion, caste, language, food habits, dress pattern all form part of culture.

When different cultures co-exist, it is called cultural diversity. Cultural diversity refers to variety of cultural expressions and practices that exist within a society or community. Cultural diversity is essential for promoting inclusion and mutual respect. For example, in India people believing different religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikh, Buddhist, Jaina and Parsi religion live together for centuries. Since religion is part of culture, co-existence of religions in India is part of cultural diversity. Another example the use of different languages in one country. Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu, and Urdu are spoken in different states in South India. There are hundreds of minor languages like Tulu or Bhojpuri also. This is the classic case of unity in diversity.

In modern days this concept is also called multiculturalism. It can be also called cultural pluralism. Different races, ethnic groups, minorities exist in a state without any discrimination. Most modern democracies comprise members with diverse cultural viewpoints, practices and contributions. Multi culturalism seeks to include the cultures of different groups. Indian constitution defines that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, color and gender. In world today most of the states are multicultural societies. This has happened due to migration in various times. For example, most of the countries in Europe have now become multicultural societies due to migration from Asia and Africa. When France won the football world cup in 1998 it was termed as a defining moment for France since the team consisted of Whites, Blacks and Arabs. Their most celebrated player Zidane is of Algerian descent. In United Kingdom an Indian origin Rishi Sunak became the Prime Minister. In United States the presidential candidate of Democrats in the 2024 elections, Kamala Harris was an Indian origin. Barrack Obama, the two-time president of United States is an African-American. Thus, diversity of color, language, religion, culture, dress, food habits, art forms are celebrated in modern societies.

One great advantage of cultural diversity is that all voices are heard. Through multiculturalism the interests of the oppressed classes in history are protected. India is a great multicultural country that is home to thousands of ethnic and tribal groups. In literature to celebrate cultural diversity translations from one language to another is common. Bengali novels are widely translated into Malayalam. Rendering Hindi film music is a past time of Keralites.

II. FEDERALISM, SECULARISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITIES IN INDIA: INTERCONNECTIONS

Federalism means dividing powers between Union and states. Secularism is the separation of religion and state. Cultural diversities mean multiculturalism or different cultures. How all these aspects are related in India is important in the study of modern India.

When the British had left India there was wide discussion in the constituent assembly (1947-49) about the nature of independent India. Most of the delegates agreed to the fact that independent India should embrace parliamentary democracy as its form of government. The members of the

ISSN (Online) 2456 -1304
International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management (IJSEM)
Volume 13, Issue 01, January 2026

Constituent Assembly were convinced that only democracy can accommodate different interests in Indian society.

Thus, when the Indian constitution was framed by the Assembly, Federalism was considered as one of its main features. It means powers should not concentrate in center or states. The powers should be decentralized and delegated. That is why it is called India represents unity in diversity. The states represent different cultures also.

When the states were formed in India after independence it was formed mainly on linguistic basis. Language was the main base for state formation. Those areas where majority speak a particular language was recognized as a separate state. For example, Kerala (Malayalam) Tamil Nadu (Tamil) Karnataka (Kannada) Andhra Pradesh (Telugu)states in South India. In East India also this was the norm. For example, Orissa (Oriya), West Bengal (Bengali). In West India Gujarati speaking people got Gujarat and Marathi speaking had Maharashtra. In North India the largest states are Hindi speaking areas like Madhya Pradesh, Utter Pradesh and Bihar. Later, for Punjabi speaking people the state of Punjab was created.

Language is one important feature of culture. Thus, in India states were formed taking into this aspect of culture. In parliament, many members speak in their own languages and translation is arranged for others to understand. In this manner federalism and multiculturalism are interconnected India.

Similarly, secularism is also interconnected with federalism and multiculturalism. In India there are different religions including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. In North Eastern India in few states Christians are in majority and in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh in East and Central India, tribals are in majority. In Punjab the Sikhs are in majority. In Kerala, Muslims constitute one fifth of the population. In parts of Kerala, Karnataka and Gujarat there are believers of Jainism. In Ladakh in Northwest India the majority are Buddhists. Hindus constitute the majority of the population of India residing in all states. Thus, India is like a rainbow with different colors. All these religions co-exist peacefully for centuries in this country. The non-believers are also treated equally. Thus, federalism and secularism are interconnected in India in a beautiful manner.

Homogeneity is the opposite of diversity. Homogeneity is defined as the quality of being the same. The disintegration of Soviet Union is attributed to the domination of Slavs over other people. Now Soviet Union is disintegrated into sixteen states. If a nation does not accept diversity it will not succeed. Similarly, Yugoslavia was divided into three counties Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo because it did not recognize religious diversity.

To promote diversity many countries are implementing affirmative actions. It means there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste, class, gender, race or language. Some countries go a mile forward to reserve posts for the marginalized (neglected) groups such as transgenders in employment and government posts. Thus, diversity is the expression of creativity while homogeneity produces monotony.

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