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# **EDUCATION PLUS**

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EDUCATION & HUMANITIES**

**Chief Editor**

**Dr. T. Pradeep Kumar**

**Co-Editor**

**S.B. Nangia**

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May - June, 2018

*(Special Issue)*

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# Impact of Tolerance in Indian Culture

Dr. Mrs. A. Jesintha Vilveena\* and Mrs. S. Sahaya Mary\*\*

## ABSTRACT

In everyday usage, the word culture refers to a desirable quality. We can acquire by attending a sufficient number of plays and concerts and trudging through several miles of art galleries. India is a land of living traditions. Religion, food habits, customs have been expressed through various facets of life from time immemorial. Often we tend to question ourselves as to what makes India so different from other countries. The single answer we could think of is, her unique cultural heritage. Culture includes knowledge, belief and morality whereas civilization is meant for attaining other objectives. Culture is a strong part of people's lives. It influences their views, values, humour, hopes, loyalties and their worries and fears. Inequality and conflict are problems which in one form or another beset every human society. There are also problems which have been pondered over by thinkers of all ages. Tolerance implies an unswerving respect for others, whether in agreement or disagreement with them. The tolerant man will always consider the case of others sympathetically, be they relatives or friends and irrespective of the treatment he is given by them, be it often positive or negative nature. In social life, friction between people does occur in every society, different arising from religion, culture, traditions and personal tastes persist. In such a situation, the superior course of action is to adopt the ways of concessions and large-heartedness without any compromise of principle. Lack of tolerance leads to fighting, violence and finally it destroys the peace and security of society.

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. V.A. Smith says, "The essential fundamental Indian unity rests upon the fact that diverse peoples of India have developed a peculiar type of culture and civilization, utterly different from any other in the world and that civilization may be summed up in the term of Hindustani".

Mark Twain wrote, "India is one country under the sun that is endowed with an imperishable interest for alien prince and alien peasant, for the lettered and the ignorant, the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, the bonded and the free – one land that all men desire to see and having seen even by a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all rest of the globe combined". The unity of India lies in its diversity – people bound together by centuries of common traditions, faith and philosophy. In everyday usage, the word culture refers to a desirable quality. We can acquire by attending a sufficient number of plays and concerts and trudging through several miles of art galleries.

Culture, then, refers to innumerable aspects of life. Some anthropologists think of culture as the rules or ideas behind behaviour. Most anthropologists think of culture as including the learned behaviours as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population.

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## MEANING OF CULTURE

Cultures provide diverse ways of interpreting the environment and the world, as well as relating to other people. To recognise that other people can see the world differently is one thing. This can be seen in the evaluation of the connotative meaning of the word barbarian from its initial use in the Greek of Herodotus to its meaning in contemporary English (Cole, 1996). To better understand the origins of hostilities between the Greeks and the Persians, Herodotus visited neighbouring non-Greek societies to learn their belief systems, arts and every day practices. He called these non-Greek societies "barbarian", a word in Greek in his time that meant people whose language, religion, ways of life and customs differed from those of the Greeks. Initially, barbarian means different from what was Greek. Later, the Greeks began to use the word to mean "Outlandish, rude, or brutal". When the word was incorporated into Latin, it came to mean "uncivilised" or "uncultured". The Oxford English Dictionary gives the contemporary definition as "a rude, wild, uncivilised person", but acknowledges the original meaning was "one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's".

## DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Culture and civilisation are two different terms and both can be distinguished in nature and character. Culture is more comprehensive a term than civilisation. Culture includes knowledge, belief and morality whereas civilisation is meant for attaining other objectives. According to White, "Culture is symbolic, cumulative and progressive process".

## IMPORTANCE OF TOLERANCE

Tolerance is a noble humanitarian virtue, which has been described in different terms gentle behaviour, showing concern for others, being soft-hearted, being compassion-ate. Tolerance means, in essence, to give consideration to others. In social life, friction between people does occur in every society, difference arising from religion, culture, tradition and personal tastes persist. In such a situation, the superior course of action is to adopt the ways of concession and large – heartedness without any compromise of principle. On 16<sup>th</sup> November we celebrate worldwide, 'The International Day for Tolerance'-an annual observance declared by UNESCO in 1995 to generate public awareness of the dangers of intolerance and to help people understand the importance of tolerance. The annual celebration of this day reminds us that how important and crucial these values are. Tolerance implies unswerving respect for others, whether in agreement or disagreement with them. The tolerant man will always consider the case of others sympathetically, be they relatives or friends and irrespective of the treatment he is given by them, be it of a positive or a negative nature. Lack of tolerance leads to fighting, violence and finally it destroys the peace and security of society.

Tolerance can be between one person and another person, as between husband and wife, mother and child among friends. It may be between one individual and group, group and another group, community and community, race and race class and class. There can be toleration in religion-oriented culture; at the same it is possible for toleration to prevail in entirely secular culture.

## IMPORTANCE OF INDIAN CULTURE

Culture is a strong part of people's lives. It influences their views, values, humor, hopes, loyalties and their worries and fears. So, when we are working with people and building relationships with them, it helps to have some perspective and understanding of their cultures. But as we explore culture, it's also important to remember how much we have in common. We all love deeply, want

to learn, have hopes and dreams and have experienced pain and fair. It is becoming clear that in order to build communities that are successful at improving conditions and resolving problems, we need to understand and appreciate many cultures, establish relationships with people from cultures other than our own and build strong alliances with different cultural groups. The following few points will help in understanding the importance of culture:

1. In order to build communities that are powerful enough to attain significant change, we need large numbers of people working together. If cultural groups join forces, they will be more effective in reaching common goals, that if each operates in isolation.
2. Each cultural group has unique strengths and perspectives that the larger community can benefit from. We need a wide range of ideas, customs and wisdom to solve problems and enrich community life. Bringing non-mainstream groups into the center of civic activity can provide fresh perspectives and shed new light on tough problems.
3. Understanding cultures will help us to overcome and prevent racial and ethnic divisions. Racial and ethnic divisions result in misunderstandings, loss of opportunities and sometimes violence. Racial and ethnic conflicts drain communities of financial and human resources, they distract cultural groups from resolving the key issues they have in common.
4. People from different cultures have to be included in decision-making processes in order for programs or policies to be effective. The people affected by a decision have to be involved in formulating solutions – it's a basic democratic principle. Without the input and support of all the groups involved, decision-making, implementation and follow through are much less likely to occur.
5. An appreciation of culture diversity goes hand-in-hand with a just and equitable society.
6. If we do not learn about the influences that cultural groups which have on our mainstreams history and culture, we are all missing out on an accurate view of our society and our communities.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

In sociology, culture means a heritage of a child and that the culture persists through traditions. It is the product of human behaviour and gaining knowledge through group. It is system of learned behaviour and set procedure. Some of the salient characteristics of sociology are as under:

1. Culture includes all which man has created and which he can possibly improve upon.
2. Culture is something which is learnt and acquired e.g., wearing clothes or dancing. It is not something natural to the person.
3. Every introduction of a new element increases social complexities.
4. Culture is not individual concept but on the other hand it is a social concept. It does not relate to individual behaviour but concerns group behaviour.
5. Culture is communicated from generation to another in physical form.
6. Culture has a link with the past. Without past culture would not have survived. Culture preserves those features of the past which are of eternal nature. It discards what has been socially condemned.
7. Since preserving past is the quality of human society, therefore it is found not in the animal but in the human society alone.
8. Culture is something ideal and in fact it is always idealised. Every effort is made to achieve that idealised target.
9. Culture helps in meeting such needs of society which are end in themselves or are the recurring demands of mankind. In actual practise culture can exist only after meeting these demands. It also suggests sure and smooth for meeting these demands.

10. In the changing course of history culture manifests men's mind in varying moods.
11. Culture constantly undergoes change and adapt itself to the environments. Internal adaption is absolutely necessary due to environment development.
12. Culture can become integrated and has a definite order and system. Every new element which is introduced in the culture gets integrated in it.

## TYPES OF CULTURE

Culture may broadly be divided into two parts namely (a) Material culture and (b) Non-material culture. From material culture, we understand material and physical objects, such as houses, roads, vehicles, etc., In non-material culture, we include non-material objects e.g. religion, art and poetry etc., Some of our modern thinkers believe that non-material objects should not form part of culture because these can more appropriately come under the category of civilisation. But that does not appear to be true because culture and civilisations have very clear fields of distinction.

## REVIVAL OF INDIAN CULTURE

The eagerness that characterised the Indians towards the second half of the nineteenth century for the revival of Indian heritage continued unabated during the twentieth century. In the field of culture, revival of all India Oriental Conference, Indian History Congress, Bhandarkar Research Institute, Bharat Itihas Samsodhan Mandal, Indian, Historical Record Commission and Bangiya Sahitya Parishad made considerable contributions.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RACES TO INDIAN CULTURE

The various races have profoundly influenced the Indian culture. Each has contributed its own share to the common storehouse of Indian life and civilization. All aspects of Indian culture – material, mental and spiritual – have been enriched by such contributions most of which are perceived even today. The primitive or jungle tribes have left distinct traces of their culture.

The Dravidians had offered substantial contributions to the Indian culture. They were a fairly civilized race. They had evolved urban culture and had established cities where many of the refinements and luxuries of life could be enjoyed. The Aryan contributions to Indian culture are their philosophical doctrines, religious and spiritual conceptions and Sanskrit language and literature. All these together with others dealt with later on as the legacies of the Aryans.

## CULTURE IN MAURYAN AGE

The advent of the Mauryas marks the passage from darkness to light for the historian.. it was in the Mauryan Age that the whole of India was politically united for the first time under one head and rule. The founder of the Mauryan Empire, Chandragupta, swept away the Greek garrisons from the Punjab and Sind and established a vast empire in Northern India which he and his successors were able to maintain for more than one hundred years. The Mauryan Emperors claimed supremacy not only in India, but over lands beyond the borders of India. This political unification makes the chronology precise. Uniform administration under Chandragupta and his successors had also brought in its train the cultural unity of the country. It was in the Mauryan Age that India became the cultural ambassador of the world, sending out missionaries to spread out India's civilization and religion to all distant parts of the globe. It was the missionary zeal of Asoka that inspired many messengers of Dharma to go beyond the borders of India to fulfil their mission by carrying out actual measures of humanitarian

service for the relief of suffering of all humanity. Asoka's religious policy was broadly based on toleration and universal brotherhood.

## CULTURE UNDER THE GUPTAS

The cultural revivalist movement was passed on to the new ruling dynasty of the Vakatakas. The master artisans breathed the spirit of the age and shook off the influence of the Graeco-Buddhist School of Gandhara in the sphere of fine arts. Indian intellect and character blossomed forth under the Guptas and the spirit of the age manifested itself in art, architecture, painting and music. Indian culture spread abroad and India now entered her glorious period of expansion and colonization and her foreign relations which had a setback were re-established with their former dignity and prestige.

## EXPANSION OF INDIAN CULTURE

From time immemorial, the people of India had been maintaining free and intimate intercourse with outside world. From very ancient times, India had commercial relations both neighbours on all sides and this stream of exchange led to the planting of Indian civilisation and colonies in the Far East and South-East Asia.

Indian culture went abroad not to destroy but to awaken. Wherever the Indian went they spread their own culture but at the same time absorbing the native cultural trends. It is pertinent to note that the culture of India is the way of life of the people of India. India's Languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs differ from place to place within the country. The Indian culture, often labelled as an amalgamation of several cultures, spans across the Indian subcontinent and has been influenced by a history that is several millennia old. Many elements of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian religions and Indian cuisine, have had a profound impact across the world.

India's diversity has inspired any writers to pen their perceptions of the country's culture. These writings paint a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India.

## INDIAN CULTURE UNDER THE MUGHALS

The growth of the converted Indo-Muslim Community and its mixing freely with The Hindu community, the demand for peace, justice, security and proper government, the spirit of tolerance, the desire to admire and assimilate each other's customs, broader and tolerating outlook of the Hindu and Muslim saints and their attempts to unify the communities.

The Muslim age and the Mughal rule had considerably influenced the Hindu culture. Habits, manners, dress and social amenities introduced by the Mughal found general acceptance. There across uniformity of social manners and dress among the people, irrespective of their creed. Achakan and Pyjama occupied prominent position. Our present-day dress, both for male and female has been the same. In fact, on our dress, etiquette, speech, manners, thought, literature, music, painting and architecture, the impress of the Mughals is clearly visible. They are neither purely Hindu nor purely Muslim, but a happy and harmonious fusion of the two. The earlier Muslims aimed at destroying everything that was Hindu, whereas the Mughals assimilated and synthesized Hindu and Muslim things and recreated them in immortal forms. In fact, in the realm of culture, the Mughal period witnessed both a harmonization and a revival.

## IMPACT OF WESTERN COUNTRIES IN INDIAN CULTURE

The Christian sea-power in India brought with them western civilization and culture into the country. It not only introduced many new elements into the Indian cauldron but also disturbed the existing disposition of various forces in Indian society like the last stone which starts an avalanche; a process



of change began, but it has not yet ended and its future no one could yet foresee. We are witnessing a silent revolution in Indian society due to the impact of the west. On one side there is the group of conservatives and reactionaries who warned the people of the invidious encroachments by the west, hindered all kinds of progress and persuaded the people loudly to follow old traditions and customs and maintain social solidarity. On the other side, there is the group of progressive persons. They focused the attention of the people on the major social evils like the untouchability, inequality, backwardness of women, child-marriage, parda system, illiteracy, polygamy, devdasi system, etc., and induced people to accept good things of the west. This had aroused our social consciousness and helped in the growth of middle classes.

The impact of western civilization and culture introduced radical changes in the realm of our religion. Superstition was replaced by reason and conservatism yielded to independent thinking. The traditional explanations of the Sastras were subjected to critical scientific examination. A new conception of religion appeared in the light of western rationalism. Old beliefs, habits and traditions were critically and rationally examined. Many of them were denounced as they came from the past encumbered with effete practices and conceptions. Hindusim appeared to many a bundle of superstitions and they began to embrace Christianity and assimilated many western ideas. They began to study the Bible and follow its principles. This produced a reaction. A revivalist group rose in prominence. Religious reformers and saints like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo and others began to emerge.

It is fact that India witnessed reawakening due to the impact of the west. But India also considerably influenced the western outlook in many ways. European travellers and Jesuit priests had travelled all over India and taken to Europe in abundance the cultural inspiration from India. A group of orientalisists encouraged the first regular study of Indian culture. In the present century many European countries are taking keen interest in Indian culture. The famous French Savant, Roamain Rolland, is well noted for his "deep understanding of the intrinsic meaning of Indian culture".

## CONCLUSION

To make our country economically stronger we have to follow the path of progressive approach and pass through this process of advancement. Often certain doubt are enshrouded such as how can we safeguard Indian culture experiencing the drastic change in every sphere of life even touching as far as our rural life. We have to be optimistic and attempt to foresee an inner strength that our culture posses. Our culture is strikingly dynamic and is expressed in several ways. The internal dimensions are countless and variegated; when any damage takes place in one sphere, it has the internal force to raise to magnitude. Indian religion, literature, social institutions and customs have moulded the lives of primitive races and made a thorough conquest of these far-off lands. In fact, these were raised to a higher plan of culture and civilisation. A greater India was established gentle fusion of races, by richly endowing the original inhabitants with the spiritual heritage of India.

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