

CBSE Class 12 Sociology
NCERT Solutions
Chapter-6
The Challenges of Cultural Diversity

1. What is meant by cultural diversity? Why is India considered to be a very diverse country?

Ans.

- The term 'diversity' emphasises differences rather than inequalities. When we say that India is a nation of great cultural diversity, we mean that there are many different types of social groups and communities living here.
 - These are communities defined by cultural markers such as language, religion, sect, race or caste. When these diverse communities are also part of a larger entity like a nation, then difficulties may be created by competition or conflict between them.
 - Cultural diversity can present tough challenges. The difficulties arise from the fact that cultural identities are very powerful – they can arouse intense passions and are often able to mobilise large numbers of people.
 - Sometimes cultural differences are accompanied by economic and social inequalities, and this further complicates things. Measures to address the inequalities or injustices suffered by one community can provoke opposition from other communities. The situation is made worse when scarce resources – like river waters, jobs or government funds – have to be shared.
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2. What is community identity and how is it formed?

Ans.

- Community identity is based on birth and 'belonging' rather than on some form of acquired qualifications or 'accomplishment'. It is what we 'are' rather than what we have 'become'.
- It is 'ascriptive' – that is, they are determined by the accidents of birth and do not involve any choice on the part of the individuals concerned.
- People feel a deep sense of security and satisfaction in belonging to communities in

which their membership is entirely accidental.

- Perhaps it is because of this accidental, unconditional and yet almost inescapable belonging that we can often be so emotionally attached to our community identity. Expanding and overlapping circles of community ties (family, kinship, caste, ethnicity, language, region or religion) give meaning to our world and give us a sense of identity, of who we are.
 - People often react emotionally or even violently whenever there is a perceived threat to their community identity.
 - A second feature of ascriptive identities and community feeling is that they are universal.
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3. Why is it difficult to define the nation? How are nation and state related in modern society?

Ans.

- A nation is a peculiar sort of community that is easy to describe but hard to define. We can describe many nations founded on the basis of common cultural, historical institutions like a shared religion, language, ethnicity, history or regional culture.
 - It is hard to come up with any defining features for nation. For every possible criterion there are exceptions and counter examples. For example-there are many nations that do not share a common language, religion, ethnicity and so on. On the other hand, there are many languages, religions or ethnicity that are shared across nations.
 - In modern times, there has been a one-to-one bond between nation and state. But this development is new. Nation is a community that has been able to acquire a state of its own. It's, also seen that states are finding it more and more necessary to claim that they represent a nation.
 - A feature of the modern era is the establishment of democracy and nationalism as dominant sources of political legitimacy. This implies that nation is the most accepted or proper justification for a state, while people are the ultimate source of legitimacy of the nation.
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4. Why are states often suspicious of cultural diversity?

Ans. •

- States have generally been suspicious of cultural diversity because they fear that the recognition of varied culturally diverse identities such as language, ethnicity, religion will lead to social fragmentation and prevent the creation of a harmonious society.
- In short, such identity politics was considered a threat to state unity. In addition, accommodating these differences is politically challenging, so many states have resorted to either suppressing these diverse identities or ignoring them on the political domain.
- Policies of assimilation – often involving outright suppression of the identities of ethnic, religious or linguistic groups – try to erode the cultural differences between groups.
- Policies of integration seek to assert a single national identity by attempting to eliminate ethno-national and cultural differences from the public and political arena, while allowing them in the private domain. Both sets of policies assumes a singular national identity.

5. What is regionalism? What factors is it usually based on?

Ans.

- Regionalism in India is rooted in India's diversity of languages, cultures, tribes and religions. It is encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation.
- Indian federalism has been a means of accommodating these regional sentiments. After Independence, initially the Indian state continued with the British-Indian arrangement dividing India into large provinces, called Presidencies. Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were the three major presidencies.
- Soon after Independence and the adoption of the constitution, all these units of the colonial era had to be reorganized into ethno-linguistic states within the Indian union in response to strong popular agitations.
- Language coupled with regional and tribal identity and not religion has provided the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethno-national identity in India.
- But this does not mean that all linguistic communities have got statehood. For example- Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. In their formation, language did

not play any role. A combination of ethnicity based on tribal identity, language, regional deprivation and ecology provided the basis.

6. In your opinion, has the linguistic reorganisation of states helped or harmed India?

Ans.

- The report of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) which was implemented on November 1, 1956, has helped transform the political and institutional life of the nation.
- In the 1920s, the Indian National Congress was reconstituted on linguistic lines. Its provincial units now followed the logic of language – one for Marathi speakers, another for Oriya speakers, etc. At the same time, Gandhi and other leaders promised their followers that when freedom came, the new nation would be based on a new set of provinces based on the principle of language.
- However, when India was finally freed in 1947, it was also divided. Now, when the proponents of linguistic states asked for this promise to be redeemed, the Congress hesitated.
- On the other side, the rank and file Congressmen were all for the redrawing of the map of India on the lines of language. Vigorous movements arose among Marathi and Kannada speakers, who were then spread across several different political regimes. The most militant protests ensued from the very large community of Telugu speakers. In October 1953, Potti Sriramulu, a former Gandhian, died seven weeks after beginning a fast unto death.
- Potti Sriramulu's martyrdom provoked violent protests and led to the creation of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It also led to the formation of the SRC, which in 1956 put the formal, final seal of approval on the principle of linguistic states.
- Though many feared that states based on language might hasten a further subdivision of India. On the contrary, linguistic states have helped strengthen it.
- These states based on language sometimes quarrel with each other. While these disputes are not pretty, they could in fact have been far worse.
- In the same year, 1956, that the SRC mandated the redrawing of the map of India on linguistic lines, the Parliament of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then known) proclaimed Sinhala the country's sole official language despite protests from the Tamils of the

north. One left-wing Sinhala MP issued a prophetic warning to the chauvinists. “One language, two nations”, he said, adding: “Two languages, one nation”.

- It is the formation of linguistic states that has allowed India to escape an even worse fate. If the aspirations of the Indian language communities had been ignored, what we might have had here was – “One language, fourteen or fifteen nations”.
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7. What is a 'minority'? Why do minorities need protection from the state?

Ans.

- Minority usually involves some sense of relative disadvantage. The sociological sense of minority implies that the members of the minority form a collectivity i.e. they have a sense of group solidarity, a feeling of togetherness and belonging. This is linked to disadvantage because the experience of being subjected to prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feelings of intra-group loyalty and interests.
 - Religious minorities like Parsis or Sikhs may be relatively well off economically but they may still be disadvantaged in the cultural sense because of their small numbers compared to overwhelming majority Hindus.
 - However, religious or cultural minority groups need special protection because of the demographic dominance of majority.
 - These groups are politically vulnerable. They might face the risk that the majority community will capture political power and use the state machinery to suppress their religious or cultural institutions, ultimately forcing them to abandon their identity.
 - The protection of minorities requires that they be given special consideration in a context where the normal working of the political system places them at a disadvantage vis-s-vis the majority.
 - This leads to the accusation of favouritism. But supporters would state that without this protection, secularism can turn into an excuse for imposing majority community's values and norms on minorities.
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8. What is Communalism?

Ans.

- Communalism refers to aggressive chauvinism based on religious identity. Chauvinism is itself an attitude that sees one's own group as the only legitimate or

worthy group, with other groups being seen as inferior, illegitimate and opposed.

- This is a peculiarly Indian or South Asian meaning which is different from the ordinary English word. In the English language, 'communal' means something related to a community or collectivity as different from an individual.
- Communalism is about politics not about religion. Although, Communists are intensely involved with religion, there is no necessary relationship between personal belief and communalism. A communalist may or may not be a devout person, and devout persons may or may not be Communists.
- Communalists cultivate an aggressive political identity and are prepared to condemn or attack everyone who does not share their identity.
- One of the most important features of communalism is that religious identity overrides everything else, it, also, constructs large and diverse groups as singular and homogenous.
- Examples of communal riots in our country-Anti Sikh riots of 1984; the Gujarat riots. But, India also has a long tradition of religious pluralism, ranging from peaceful co-existence to actual mixing or syncretism. This syncretic heritage is reflected in the devotional songs and poetry of the Bhakti and Sufi movements.

9. What are the different senses in which 'secularism' has been understood in India?

- Ans.** 1. The Indian meanings of secular and secularism imply that state does not favour any religion. This implies equal respect for all religions rather than separation or distancing.
2. In the western context, secularism implies separation of church and state. This implies the progressive retreat of religion from public life, as it was converted from a mandatory obligation to a voluntary personal practice.
3. Secularization was related to the arrival of modernity and the rise of science and rationality as alternatives to religious ways of understanding the world.
4. One difficult issue that arises from this is the tension between the western sense of state maintaining distance from religion and the Indian sense of the state giving equal respect to all religions.

10. What is the relevance of civil society organisations today?

- Ans.** • Civil society is the name given to the arena which lies beyond the private domain of the family, but outside the domain of both state and market.

- Civil society is a non-state and non-market part of the public domain in which individuals get together voluntarily to create institutions and organisations.
- It is a sphere of active citizenship: individuals take up social issues, try to influence the state or make demands on it, pursue their collective interests or seek support for a variety of causes.
- It consists of voluntary institutions formed by group of citizens. It includes political parties, media institutions, trade unions, NGOs, religious organisations and other kinds of collective entities.
- The main criteria for inclusion in civil society are that the organisation should not be state controlled, and it should not be purely profit making entity.
- Examples-Doordarshan is not a civil society entity though private television channels are. The Indian people had an encounter with authoritarian rule during 'Emergency' enforced between June 1975 and 1977. Forced sterilisation programmes; censorship on media and government officials; civil liberties revoked.

Civil Society Today

- Today the activists of civil society organizations have a wide range of issues including advocacy and lobbying activity with national and international agencies as well as active participation in various movements.
- The issues taken up range from tribal struggles for land rights; devolution of urban governance; campaigns against rape and violence against women, primary education reform, etc.
- Media, also, has started to play an important role in the civil society initiatives.
- Example-the Right to Information. Beginning with an agitation in rural Rajasthan for the release of information on government funds spent on village development, this effort grew into a nation-wide campaign. Despite opposition from the bureaucracy. Government was forced to respond to the campaign and pass a new law formally acknowledging citizens' right to information.