SUMMARY SHEET

MULTICULTURALISM

Contents

1 Multiculturalism Meaning

- The term multiculturalism is used to describe a society in which different cultures can coexist. It signifies attempts to balance diversity against cohesion. Multiculturalism not only recognizes cultural diversity, but **also advocates that such differences should be respected and publicly affirmed.**

- It maintains respect for cultural differences and does not favor assimilation of minority culture into the dominant one. Instead of seeking a melting pot in which minority groups assimilate into the majority culture, multiculturalism uses metaphors like salad bowl or glorious mosaic where the **minorities can maintain their distinctiveness.**

- From the multiculturalism perspective, the public policy should not aim for standardization of cultural forms or any type of uniformity or homogeneity, **but instead, heterogeneity should be maintained.**

- It is important to know **culture and identity** from which the idea of multiculturalism flows. In a macro sense, culture is the way of life for people, their values, beliefs and practices. Culture, thus, encompasses **tradition, religion, language, moral principles and social norms.** The concept of culture is central to multiculturalism.

  ➢ Identity is a **sense of unique and separate selfhood and sees individuals embedded in a particular culture or social context.**

  ➢ Identity may be multiple like **gender, religion, ethnicity** etc. Identity is equated with difference as awareness of difference further magnifies an individual's sense of identity.

- Apart from the above-mentioned categories, multiculturalism has been used as an **overarching term to signify the political and moral claims** of other marginalized groups like **women, people with special abilities and LGBT** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender).

- Multiculturalism is not restricted to claims of culture and identity alone, instead, it is also a matter of **political power and economic interest** since it involves demands to rectify political and economic disadvantages suffered by people due to their membership of a marginalized group.

1.1 Definitions

- "Multiculturalism is a term that has come to serve as shorthand for a host of different and not necessarily related cultural and educational issues. Arguments relating to gender studies, ethnic and racial studies, affirmative action, freedom of speech on campus, compromise and corruption among educational administrators have all been aired under the title, multiculturalism."— **A. E. Barnes**

- "With racial and ethnic diversity increasing across the nation as a result of increased immigration, educational leaders were keen to embrace multiculturalism."— **Diane Ravitch**

1.2 Examples

1) **Canada:** This country officially adopted multiculturalism in 1971. It is based on the principle of **ius solis or (the right of citizenship by birth).** Further, the **Multiculturalism Act of 1988** gives all members of Canadian society the freedom to preserve and share cultural heritages and **encourages protection and enhancement of their ancestral languages.** It also asks all federal agencies to promote practices ensuring equal employment opportunities and advancement therein.

2) **Australia:** It sees itself as a country of immigrants. Multiculturalism, in this nation too is based on the right of citizenship by birth. Easy access to the naturalization process and citizenship for immigrants has been established long ago. The government believes multiculturalism to have strengthened the Australian society.

- **Sweden:** Different from the above examples, Sweden operates by **ius sanguinis or (right of blood),** which extends the right of citizenship only if one or both parents are citizens of the country. However, the procedures of naturalization here are easier.

1.3 Goals of Multiculturalism

2 Theories of Multiculturalism

In sociology, multiculturalism describes the manner in which a given society deals with cultural diversity. Based on the underlying assumption that members of often very different cultures can coexist peacefully, multiculturalism expresses the view that society is enriched by preserving, respecting, and even encouraging cultural diversity. In the area of political philosophy, multiculturalism refers to the ways in which societies choose to formulate and implement official policies dealing with the equitable treatment of different cultures. Various theories have been developed for multiculturalism.

The two primary theories or models of multiculturalism as the manner in which different cultures are integrated into a single society are best defined by the metaphors commonly used to describe them—the "melting pot" and the "salad bowl" theories

2.1 The Melting Pot Theory

- **Melt Together**: Theory assumes that various immigrant groups will tend to "melt together," abandoning their individual cultures and eventually becoming fully assimilated into the predominant society.

- **American Example**: Typically used to describe the assimilation of immigrants into the United States, the melting pot theory is often illustrated by the *metaphor of a foundry's smelting pots* in which the elements iron and carbon are melted together to create a single, stronger metal—steel.

- In 1782, French-American immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote that in America, **"individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."**

Criticism: The melting pot model has been criticized for reducing diversity, causing people to lose their traditions, and for having to be enforced through governmental policy. For example, the U.S. Indian

Reorganization Act of 1934 forced the assimilation of nearly 350,000 Indigenous peoples into American society without any regard for the diversity of their heritages and lifestyles.

2.2 The Salad Bowl Theory

- **A more liberal theory of multiculturalism than the melting pot**: The salad bowl theory describes a heterogeneous society in which people coexist but retain at least some of the unique characteristics of their traditional culture.
- **Like a salad's ingredients**: Different cultures are brought together, but rather than coalescing into a single homogeneous culture, retain their own distinct flavors.
- **Example:** In the United States, New York City, with its many unique ethnic communities like "Little India," "Little Odessa," and "Chinatown" is considered an example of a salad bowl society.
- **Unity in Diversity:** The salad bowl theory asserts that it is not necessary for people to give up their cultural heritage in order to be considered members of the dominant society. For example, African Americans do not need to stop observing **Kwanzaa rather than Christmas** in order to be considered "Americans."

Criticism: On the negative side, the cultural differences encouraged by the salad bowl model can divide a society resulting in prejudice and discrimination. In addition, critics point to a 2007 study conducted by American political scientist Robert Putnam showing that people living in salad bowl multicultural communities were less likely to vote or volunteer for community improvement projects.

3 Characteristics of a Multicultural Society

1) **Diversity**: Multicultural societies are characterized by people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities living together in the same community. In multicultural communities, people retain, pass down, celebrate, and share their unique cultural ways of life, languages, art, traditions, and behaviors.
2) **Instilling the values among children:** The characteristics of multiculturalism often spread into the community's public schools, where curricula are crafted to introduce young people to the qualities and benefits of cultural diversity.
   - Though sometimes criticized as a form of "political correctness," educational systems in multicultural societies stress the histories and traditions of minorities in classrooms and textbooks.
   - A 2018 study conducted by the Pew Research Center found that the "post-millennial" generation of people ages 6 to 21 are the most diverse generation in American society.

Examples: Far from an exclusively American phenomenon, examples of multiculturalism are found worldwide.

   - **In Argentina**, for example, newspaper articles, and radio and television programs are commonly presented in English, German, Italian, French, or Portuguese, as well as the country's native Spanish. Indeed, Argentina's constitution promotes immigration by recognizing the right of individuals to retain multiple citizenships from other countries.

➤ **Canada's Multiculturalism**: As a key element of the country's society, Canada adopted multiculturalism as official policy during the premiership of Pierre Trudeau in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, the Canadian constitution, along with laws such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and the Broadcasting Act of 1991, recognize the importance of multicultural diversity. According to the Canadian Library and Archives, over 200,000 people—representing at least 26 different ethnocultural groups—immigrate to Canada every year.

Concept Check

Q. Language, dress, stories, food, music, and dance are part of everyone's _____

A. Culture
B. Government
C. Education system
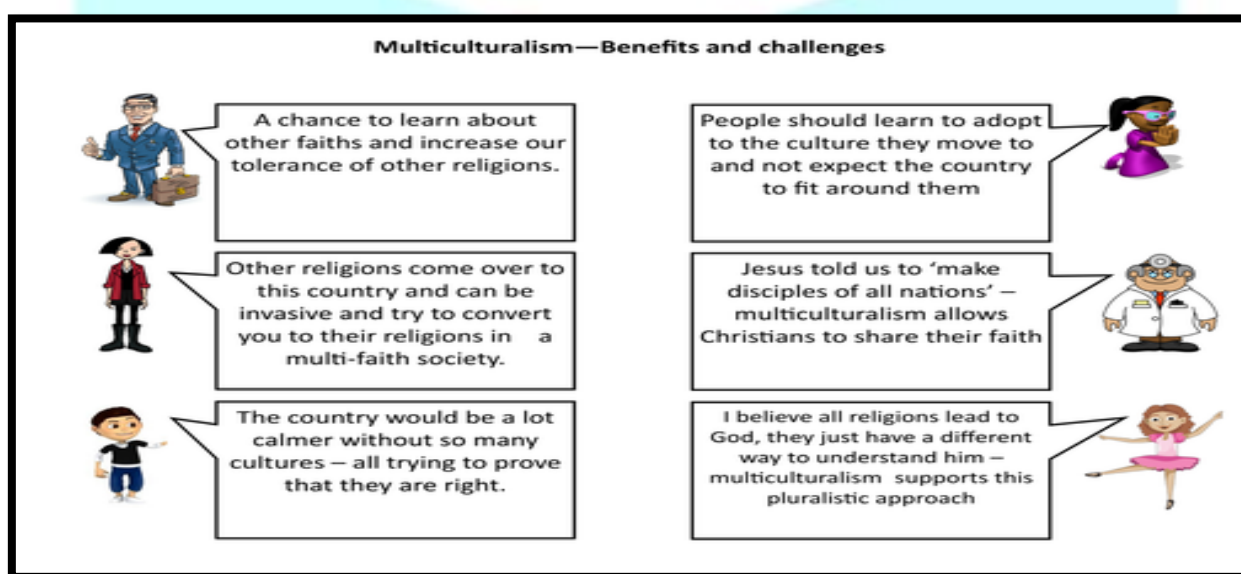D. Social interaction
E. None of the above

Answer- A

4   Advantages of Multiculturalism

1) **Adaptability:** A person living in a multi-cultural society is easily adaptable to new situations. In these societies, every individual develops a sense of understanding to people who may have completely different set of beliefs and sometimes controversial beliefs. When a person is used to an **ever-changing society, changes in other fields of life such as work and education are easily adopted**.

2) **Open Mindedness:** The concept of **racism substantially reduces** when living in a multi-cultural society. The core issues of racism are due to following the ideologies of the ancestors without understanding the real situation. Once a person starts living amongst different cultures, **the person would automatically understand why people behave in certain ways.**

3) **Supportive Environment:** Living in a single belief system would mean that doing anything different would go against the system. There are several cultures that strongly believe that homosexuality is a sin and people who are homosexual are abandoned by their community. When living in a multi-cultural society, **a community that does not have the same belief system would help in understanding and supporting the abandoned individual.**

4) **Fascinating:** One thing about the global village is that everything they do is interesting. The various counters are a bouquet of what the world is like. The carnivals, food festivals and celebrations are always fun and entertaining and learning.

5) **Culture of Food:** The major advantage of living in a multi-cultural society is that **one can taste different cuisines without travelling**. The Biryani, Thai green curry, shawarma, shepherd's pie Turkish grill at the global village where all an amazing encounter.

5   Disadvantages of Multiculturalism

1) **Disappearance of culture:** When multiple cultures live together the chances of adapting other convenient cultures highly increase which may result in erasing an entire culture. The Khmer culture of Cambodia adopted Theravada Buddhism over years erasing the existence of Khmer.

2) **Increase of hatred:** When two controversial cultures exist in the same area the **chances of abuse, threats and violence is high.** The communities may try to prove one another wrong or one above the other leading to power issues and increase in hatred such as *the religion in Israel between Palestinian and Jewish causing several causalities*.

3) **Host society may be affected:** The culture of the host society is considerably diluted by multiculturalism. The immigrants may or may not work for the benefit of the host society which may be a threat to the host society.

4) **Offence:** If the cultures one lives in is not completely understood, the chances of offending someone is high. In certain cultures, women should not be touched by a male apart from their husband. When a person that greets with a hug would be an offender if he does not understand how the other culture behaves.

Multiculturalism—Benefits and challenges

A chance to learn about other faiths and increase our tolerance of other religions.

People should learn to adopt to the culture they move to and not expect the country to fit around them

Other religions come over to this country and can be invasive and try to convert you to their religions in a multi-faith society.

Jesus told us to 'make disciples of all nations' — multiculturalism allows Christians to share their faith

The country would be a lot calmer without so many cultures — all trying to prove that they are right.

I believe all religions lead to God, they just have a different way to understand him — multiculturalism supports this pluralistic approach

6 Multiculturalism in India

Multicultural concerns have long informed India's history and traditions, constitution, and political arrangements. Much of the **writings on Indian history, culture and politics are marked by some kind of multicultural concern.** The central question in any discussion of multiculturalism in contemporary India is **how a vast, multi-ethnic country – in terms of religion, language, community, caste, and tribe – has survived as a state in conditions of underdevelopment, mass poverty, illiteracy, and extreme regional disparities.**

6.1 Historical Background

1) **India - A Cradle of Civilization**: India is the second most populous country (population now over a billion) after China, and socially and culturally the most diverse in the world. Formed over many thousands of years as a country of immigrants who brought their own cultures and traditions, India's diversity is proverbial.

2) **India - Abode of Different religions**: Although predominantly inhabited by "Hindus" (over 82 per cent) who are regionally rooted, plural in beliefs and practices, and divided by castes and languages, India's population also includes a large proportion of Muslims (about 12 per cent), Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, and Jains.

3) **The diversity is coupled with enormous cultural diversity:** It is based on factors like language, caste, and ethnicity. There are 114 spoken languages in this country, of these 22 were spoken by more than one million people. The state lists 630 communities as Scheduled Tribes. There is diversity even among these groups and many of the identified communities are said to be internally heterogeneous, comprising several smaller different tribes.

4) **The Multi-Religious and Multicultural Character of the Indian Society:** It is deeply rooted in history from the pre-independence period**.** The Independence movement against a colonial regime sought to unite the nation through its culturally diverse people together towards a nationalist goal.

5) **India - Theatre of Multiple Languages**: It is the home of **some hundred languages** and dialects and, so far, eighteen languages have been "officially" recognized and placed under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

   ➤ There are, **however, sizeable sections of the population, most notably in the North-East, who are a majority in their locality but whose first language is not yet "officially" recognized.**

   ➤ Most of the states have some dominant ethno-linguistic and ethno-religious groups (Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, North-East), although within each of them there are religious and linguistic minorities.

6) **Quest for National Identity**: Freedom movement was a struggle for acquiring a national identity. It sought to unify the **groups belonging to various religious and cultural groups** within a nationalist fold. During the course of the nationalist struggle **many culturally diverse groups were jointly and gradually consolidated on a nationalist platform.**

7) **Fight for Identity**: India's social and cultural landscape is dotted with various movements towards statehood rooted in identity searches for communities. There are such movements as **Harit Pradesh in western Uttar Pradesh, Vindhyachal in Madhya Pradesh, Telengana in Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Kodagu in Karnataka, Gorkhaland and Kamtapuri in West Bengal, and Bodoland in Assam.**

6.2   Multicultural Aspect of Constitution of India

1. The Indian Constitution can be said to be a multicultural document in the International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS), sense of **providing for political and institutional measures for the recognition and accommodation of the country's diversity.**

2. **Fundamental Rights**: The Indian Constitution makes the conservation and cultivation of such rights the fundamental rights of every citizen of India.

   ➤ **Article 29 (1):** says that any section of the citizens of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the fundamental right to conserve the same.

   ➤ This means that if a cultural minority wants to preserve its own language and culture, **the state cannot by law impose on it any other culture belonging to the local majority.** Both religious and linguistic minorities are protected by this provision. The constitution also **defines a positive, directional role for the state in this respect.**

   ➤ **Article 29 (2): forbids any discrimination against any citizen** on the basis of religion, race, caste, or language in the matter of admission into educational institutions maintained or aided by the state.

   ➤ As far as the institutional means of protection and cultivation of minority culture is concerned, Articles 29 (1) and 30 (1) stipulate that minorities can **establish and administer educational institutions of their own choice, and the state cannot compel them to attend institutions not to**

their liking. The Supreme Court, in a series of judgments over the years, has expanded the scope of those provisions.

3. **Instruction in Mother Tongue (350 A):** The constitution directs every state (federal unit) to **provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education of children belonging to linguistic minority groups and** empowers the President to issue proper direction to any state (Article 350 A).

4. **Unity in Diversity- Theme of Constitution**: When India attained independence in 1947, the **political leadership and the framers of the Constitution kept this diversity in view while deliberating a framework that would provide for an amalgamated yet culturally a diverse nation-state** that is based on the principle of unity in diversity.

6.3 Problems posed by Multiculturalism

India's experiment with creating political unity out of unequal and diverse social order has not been without problems. Multiculturalism poses various problems like,

1. **Entrenchment of Identities**: In the post-independence period the identities of language, religion, caste, and tribe have been used and appealed increasingly for the mobilization of political support so much so that these diversities have acquired a sharp political presence and have become instruments of adversarial politic.

2. **Myopic Vision of Indians**: It is pointed out that Indians see themselves first and foremost as members of a caste, tribe, village, and religion. These community identities constitute people's self-understanding and shape their social and political choices.

3. **Ever-going Conflicts**: Even after so many years of independence, social and political conflicts around the issues of religion, caste and tribe-based community identities have not diminished. On the other hand, social conflicts have increased and so have incidents of communal violence.
   ➢ There is a demand for caste census and caste based Khap Panchayats are active in some states. All these pose tremendous challenges to our polity and society.

4. **In the Indian context**: Bhargava has identified three problems with multiculturalism in so far as identity is concerned.
   ➢ Overemphasis on identity may be exclusive in the sense of excluding people or "others" from an essential identity.
   ➢ Encouragement of culture particularity deepens divisions and undermines the "common foundation for a viable society".
   ➢ It may result in curbing individual freedom by advocating "aggressive community power over individual freedom", and thus corroding the values of liberal democracy.

6.4 Multiculturalism and States

1. **Strong federal character**: The strength and viability of the Indian federation in accommodating diversity is illustrated by the creation of three new states – **Chhattisgarh (carved out of Madhya Pradesh), Jharkhand (carved out of Bihar), and Uttaranchal (carved out of Uttar Pradesh).**

2. **Masterstroke - State's Creation**: The formation of states on the basis of language was a pledge and a demand of the anti-colonial nationalist movements. The Indian National Congress (INC), as the main party of independence, from the beginning of the **1900s began to encourage the idea of linguistic states to obtain a better deal for ethnic groups,** and officially endorsed the demand as early as 1920 when it reorganized its units on the basis of linguistic regional boundaries.

- The INC's cultivation of support for ethnic groups also strengthened its bases. The essence of the nationalist pledge in this respect was to reorganize the Indian State after independence on the basis of linguistic reorganization of the country's territory.
- **This encouragement led to an awakening among various nationalities and ethnic groups of the desire** for self-rule and identity prior to independence. Many of the **post-independence movements for statehood had their origins in this pre-independence phase.** The statehood movements thus enjoy some kind of prior legitimacy.
- In the beginning (1950) there were twenty-seven states of differential status and powers, which were reduced **by the first major territorial reorganisation in 1956 to fourteen with equal powers and functions.**

3. **Formation of States**: The first state created in **recognition of the linguistic principle** in the post-independence period was Andhra Pradesh (Telegu language, 1953), and that after its legendary leader Sri Ramalu's fast unto death. This prompted the Government of India to form the **States Reorganization Commission in 1953** and, on the basis of its recommendations, to pass the famous States Reorganization Act of 1956.

4. **Ethno-regional or linguistic Basis of formation**: The basis in the first major reorganization of states in 1956 was strongly linguistic: **federal units were created to corresponded largely with linguistic boundaries.** Since 1956, the formation of new federal units in India has remained more or less a continuous process. The basis for state creation has been **ethno-regional or linguistic.**
   - In the 1950s and 1960s, the linguistic factor played the most determining role with the sole exception of the creation of Punjab (1966) in which it was combined with religion. In the 1970s, India's north-east (now comprising seven federal units) became the area of major state reorganization, giving birth to three new states as **political recognition of tribal identity.**

7   Diversified aspects of Multiculturalism in India

- **Ascriptive Identity**: 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'. We don't have to do anything to be born into a community – in fact, no one has any choice about which family or community or country they are born into. **These kinds of identities are called 'ascriptive'** – that is, they are determined by the **accidents of birth and do not involve any choice on the part of the individuals concerned.** It is an odd fact of social life that 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.** That is why people often react emotionally or even violently whenever there is a perceived threat to their community identity.
   - **Universal Feature**: A second feature of ascriptive identities and community feeling is that they are universal. Everyone has a motherland, a mother tongue, a family, a faith… This may not necessarily be strictly true of every individual, but it is true in a general sense. **And we are all equally committed and loyal to our respective identities.**

- **Fostering Animosity**: Each side in the conflict thinks of the other side as a **hated enemy, and there is a tendency to exaggerate the virtues of one's own side as well as the vices of the other side.** Thus, when two nations are at war, patriots in each nation see the other as the enemy aggressor; each side believes that God and truth are on their side. In the heat of the moment, it is very hard for people on either side to see that they are constructing matching but reversed mirror images of each other.

The Manifestation of ascriptive identities turning into major issues is seen in the form of Regionalism and Religion which are discussed below.

7.1 Regionalism in The Indian Context

- **Tracing the roots**: Regionalism in India is rooted in **India's diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions.** It is also encouraged by the **geographical concentration of these identity markers** in particular regions, and fueled by a sense of regional deprivation. Indian federalism has been a means of accommodating these regional sentiments.
- **Colonial Framework**: After Independence, initially the Indian state continued with the British-Indian arrangement dividing India into large provinces, also called **'presidencies'. (Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta were the three major presidencies;** incidentally, all three cities after which the presidencies were named have changed their names recently).
  - ➤ **Nature of Provinces**: These were **large multi-ethnic and multilingual provincial states c**onstituting the major political-administrative units of a semi-federal state called the Union of India. For example, the old Bombay State (continuation of the Bombay Presidency) was a multilingual state of Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, and Konkani speaking people. Similarly, the Madras State was constituted by Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam speaking people.
  - ➤ In addition to the presidencies and provinces directly administered by the British Indian government, there were also a **large number of princely states and principalities all over India.** The larger princely states included Mysore, Kashmir, and Baroda. But soon after the adoption of the Constitution, all these units of the colonial era had to be reorganised 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 therefore provided the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethnonational identity in India. However, this does not mean that all linguistic communities have got statehood.
- **Recent Instances**: For instance, in the creation of three new states in 2000, namely Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, language did not play a prominent role. Rather, a combination of ethnicity based on tribal **identity, language, regional deprivation and ecology provided the basis for intense regionalism resulting in statehood.** Currently there are 28 States (federal units) and 8 Union territories (centrally administered) within the Indian nation-state.
- **Respecting regional sentiments is not just a matter of creating States**: This has to be backed up with an institutional structure that ensures their viability as relatively autonomous units within a larger federal structure. **In India this is done by Constitutional provisions defining the powers of the States and the Centre.** There are lists of 'subjects' or areas of governance which are the exclusive responsibility of either State or Centre, along with a 'Concurrent List' of areas where both are allowed to operate.
  - ➤ The State legislatures determine the composition of the upper house of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha. In addition, there are periodic committees and commissions that decide on Centre-State relations. An example is the **Finance Commission** which is set up every five years to decide on

sharing of tax revenues between Centre and States. Each Five-Year Plan also involves detailed State Plans prepared by the State Planning Commissions of each state.

➤ On the whole the federal system has worked fairly well, though there remain many contentious issues. **Since the era of liberalization (i.e., since the 1990s)** there is concern among policy makers, politicians, and scholars about increasing inter-regional economic and infrastructural inequalities.

- **Vicious Cycle of Inequality**: As private investment (both foreign and Indian) is given a greater role in economic development; considerations of regional equity get diluted. This happens because private investors generally want to invest in already developed States where the infrastructure and other facilities are better.

- **Need of Proactive Role of Government**: Unlike private industry, the government can give some consideration to regional equity (and other social goals) rather than just seek to maximize profits. So left to itself, the market economy tends to increase the gap between developed and backward regions. Fresh public initiatives will be needed to reverse current trends.

7.2   Religion- The Most Contentious Aspect of Multiculturalism

- Perhaps the most contentious of all aspects of cultural diversity are issues relating **to religious communities and religion-based identities.** These issues may be broadly divided into two related groups - the **secularism and communalism** set and the minority–majority set.

- Questions of secularism and communalism are about the **state's relationship to religion and to political groupings that invoke religion as their primary identity.**

- Questions about minorities and majorities involve decisions on how the state is to treat different religious, ethnic, or other communities that are unequal in terms of numbers and/or power (including social, economic and political power).

7.2.1   Minority Rights and Nation Building

- In Indian nationalism, the dominant trend was marked by an inclusive and democratic vision. Inclusive because it recognised **diversity and plurality.** Democratic because it sought to do away with **discrimination and exclusion** and bring forth a just and equitable society.

- The term 'people' has not been seen in exclusive terms, as referring to any specific group defined by religion, ethnicity, race or caste.

- However, for a strong and democratic nation, special constitutional provisions are required to ensure the rights of all groups and those of minority groups in particular. When minority is used without qualification, it generally implies a relatively small but also disadvantaged group.

- The sociological sense of minority also implies that the members of the minority form a collectivity – that is, **they have a strong 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**.

- However, it is possible to have anomalous instances where a minority group is disadvantaged in one sense but not in another. For example, **religious minorities like the Parsis or Sikhs may be relatively well-off economically.** But they may still be **disadvantaged in a cultural sense because of their small numbers relative to the overwhelming majority of Hindus.**

- Religious or cultural minorities need special protection because of the **demographic dominance of the majority.**

- In democratic politics, it is always possible **to convert a numerical majority into political power through elections.** This means that religious or cultural minorities – regardless of their economic or social position – are politically vulnerable.
- They must 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 distinctive identity.**
- In the long years of struggle against British colonialism, Indian nationalists understood the imperative need to recognize and respect India's diversity. **Indeed 'unity in diversity' became a shorthand to capture the plural and diverse nature of Indian society.**
- The makers of the Indian Constitution were aware that a strong and united nation could be built only when all sections of people had the freedom to practice their religion, and to develop their culture and language.
- One of the many contentious issues that formed the backdrop of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was the imposition of Sinhalese as a national language. **Likewise, any forcible imposition of a language or religion on any group of people in India weakens national unity** which is based upon a recognition of differences.
- Indian nationalism recognizes this, and the Indian Constitution affirms this. Finally, it is useful to note that minorities exist everywhere, not just in India. **In most nation-states, there tend to be a dominant social group whether cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious.** Nowhere in the world is there a nation-state consisting exclusively of a single homogenous cultural group.
- Even where this was almost true (as in countries like Iceland, Sweden, or South Korea), modern capitalism, colonialism and large-scale migration have brought in a plurality of groups. Even the smallest state will have minorities, whether in religious, ethnic, linguistic, or racial terms.

7.2.2 Communalism

7.2.2.1 Introduction

The term communalism has its roots in the term **commune or community** which means a group of people who swear allegiance to one's own community, religion, or ethnic group than the society at large. Further, to elaborate, in sociological lexicon the concept of communalism can be seen as a form of collective outburst of one community against the other. To understand the social phenomenon of communalism, it is pertinent to understand the very nature of it.

7.2.2.2 What is Communalism?

It is basically an ideology which consists of **three elements**: -

1. A belief that people who follow the same religion have **common secular interests** i.e., they have same political, economic, and social interests. So, here socio- political communalities arises.
2. A notion that, in a multi-religious society like India, these common **secular interests of one religion are dissimilar and divergent** from the interests of the follower of another religion.
3. The interests of the follower of the different religion or of different 'communities' are seen to be **completely incompatible**, antagonist and hostile.

Communalism is political trade in religion. It is an ideology on which communal politics is based and communal violence are conjectural consequences of communal ideology. Various factors are involved for the growth of communalism.

7.2.2.3 Factors Responsible for The Growth of Communalism in India

There may be several factors that may be attributed to the cause and growth of Communalism in India. Some scholars attribute this cause due to stagnant economy during the British Rule. The stagnation of economy may have affected the aspirations and economic prosperity for certain sections within society.

Scholars opine that this section of society usually termed as 'Middle Class' used communalism as a weapon for their own survival at the cost of other classes in society. Subsequently, other leaders from the community and political parties joined to fuel the tension of Communalism in India.

This may be well illustrated with the emergence of modern politics with its roots in partition of Bengal in 1905 and feature of separate electorate under Government of India Act, 1909. Later, British government also appeased various communities through Communal award in 1932, which witnessed strong resistance from Gandhiji and others.

All these acts were done by the British government to appease Muslims and other communities, for their own political needs. This feeling of communalism has deepened since then, fragmenting the Indian society and being a cause of unrest. Let us now discuss the core factors in detail.

British Policy of Divide and Rule

1) **Genesis of Communalism:** In the pre-independence period, the British used the policy of Divide and Rule to weaken the nationalist aspirations by creating a cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims, favoring one community against the other in terms of services and opportunities. It resulted in communal tensions between the two groups and therefore, it is considered that the Hindu-Muslim disunity took shape during the continuation of British Rule in India. In this regard, clear demarcation was made by many historians between the ancient period of Indian history and the medieval.

2) **Seed of Communalism**: Prominent among them was British historian James Mill of the early nineteenth century. They endorsed that since ancient India was ruled by Hindu rulers, it was a period of growth and prosperity against the continuous decay of the medieval period under the Muslim rulers. This readily suggests that the basic character of polity in India is defined by religion which relied on the beliefs that Indian society and culture had reached ideal heights in the ancient period. On the contrary, Muslim communalism harped upon the glory of the Muslim rulers. Such distorted texts of Indian history significantly contributed to the rise of communalism.

3) **Growth of Communalism**: During the national movement, a strong Hindu religious element was introduced in nationalist thought. The orientalist writings which glorified the Hindu religion and period in history became the basis for the propagation of nationalist ideas and pride for the motherland. In the process the Muslim were seen as alien.

Role of Society

Society plays a very important role in genesis of communalism. It is important to note that Indian society was never homogenous throughout history. It was highly diverse- culturally, religiously, caste-wise, and linguistically. But there was hardly any tension between these groups. The reasons that can be taken into consideration for this disharmony are: The British divisive policies, competitive nature of colonial rule, political and social structure, and backwardness of colonial society with stunted economic growth.

Other factors

1. **Rumors and distorted News** - Rumors and distorted news publicized by media which disseminates false information to the public.
2. **Politics of appeasement** - political parties resorted to the politics of appeasement whereby sanctions were used to appease different ethnic, religious, cultural groups for votes.
3. **Vote bank politics** - The vote bank politics greatly followed tactics of appeasement by provisioning services and opportunities to a few sections of the population against the other sections.

7.2.2.4 *Communal Riots*

Having discussed the concept of communalism, the other concept which needs discussion is "Communal Riot", which is a collective manifestation of religious feelings and sentiments against the others. A communal riot, in general refers to a collective violent manifestation of one's identity, ideas and beliefs, etc. in relation to other religious community for the realization of certain interests. These differences are sometimes openly manifested and sometimes hidden but presented in a subtle way. It is, most often, a consequence of the spread of communal ideology. Many examples of communal riot could be cited in the Indian context.

Infamous among them are the following

1. **Partition of India, 1947**: After partition, millions of populations were forced to move from both sides of the border. Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were killed in masses, women were raped, and many children lost their parents. There was hatred everywhere, violence didn't see anything except bloodshed. Later, it turned in the problem of refugees and their rehabilitation became one of the biggest challenges for independent India.
2. **Anti-Sikh riots, 1984:** This is one of the bloodsheds in India, where Sikhs in large number were massacred by anti- Sikh mob. This massacre took place in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by his own Sikh bodyguard in response to her actions authorizing the military operation.
3. **Ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pundits in 1989:** Kashmir is known as the heaven of India and was known for its Kashmiriyat, i.e., the reflection of love, peace and harmony through brotherhood and unity of Hindu, Muslims and other communities living together.
   ➢ But the brotherhood saw a serious blow due to Extremist Islamic terrorism in the Kashmir valley, which led to mass killing and large-scale exodus of Kashmiri Pundits from the valley to the various regions and corners of India, giving them the status of refugee in their own country.
   ➢ Since then, the valley is under the grip of communal violence and the ongoing unrest has become a problem for the development of the people.
4. **Babri masjid demolition in Ayodhya, 1992:** According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhaya is birthplace of Lord Rama and therefore it is sacred place for Hindu religion. But in medieval period Mughal general Mir Baqi, built a mosque, named after Mughal ruler Babur. There were disputes since then and riots also took place.
   ➢ But in 1990, due to some political mobilisation, there was atmosphere of protest by Hindu religious groups and in large scale "kar sevak" visited Ayodhya from all parts of India, in support of **demolishing Babri masjid and building Ram temple** there. These movements caused huge amount of bloodshed and since then it is a disputed matter.
   ➢ After this, violence was followed **by the Godhra incident in 2002**, when "kar sevak" returning from Ayodhya in a Sabarmati Express were killed by fire in the coaches of train. This act was followed

by the extended communal violence in Gujarat. That violence is like black spot in the history of the Gujarat and nation too, as people were killed without any mercy.

➢ Hindu and Muslim community became antagonist to each other. Till now people are fighting for justice in Supreme Court, with a ray hope from the Indian Judiciary.

5. **Assam Communal violence,2012:** North eastern states are known for its distinguished tribal population & ethnic diversity and large-scale Bangladeshi immigration has changed the demography of North eastern states, which often becomes reason for clashes.

• In 2012, there were ethnic clashes between Bodos (Tribal, Christian & Hindu faith) and Muslims. Ethnic tensions between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims escalated into a riot in Kokrajhar in July 2012, when unidentified miscreants killed four Bodo youths at Joypur.

6. **Muzaffarnagar violence, 2013:** The cause of this ethnic clash between Jat and Muslim community is very much disputed and has many versions. According to few, it was started after some suspicious post on social media platform Facebook. According to some, it was escalated after the eve-teasing case in Shamli, Uttar Pradesh. Let the reasons be unknown, but what matters is, the nature and scale of loss to the country with respect to human resources and peace.

7.2.2.5 Conclusion

Communal violence is common now days throughout the world. They are known by various alternative names,

• **As in China**: The communal violence in Xinjiang province is called ethnic violence. Communal violence and riots have also been called non-State conflict, violent civil or minorities unrest, mass racial violence, social or inter-communal violence and ethno-religious violence.

• **Myanmar:** Violence between Buddhists and the Muslim Rohingya, inhabit Rakhine state (formerly Arakan province) which stretches along most of Myanmar's coast up to the Bay of Bengal and borders the Chittagong province of Bangladesh, erupted in 2013. Such violence in neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan causes violence in retaliation in India also. It also catalyses the problem of refugees, as in the case of Pakistani Hindus, etc.

• **Sri Lanka**: Sri Lanka is also facing international critics and United Nations related to ethnic clashes and the action of government against minority Tamilians, which has direct bearing on India and Sri Lanka relations and India's internal security.

• Increasing diversity, due to influx of populations from all corners of world in western countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, etc. is posing the challenge of ethnic clashes and violence in their respective societies.

Communalism can be combated with the help of globalisation as a tool. In the globalised world, all countries are becoming integrated and dependent on each other. Movement of people from one place to other is becoming very easy, in such conditions to avoid such potential violence, governments are already promoting cultural exchanges through shows, programs, heritage walk, cultural visit by students and parliamentarians. Promoting learning of each other's local language for easy exchange of ideas. With respect to this, US President Barak Obama's message on Diwali festival can be seen as an active step to promote cultural mingling and living peacefully. If all the countries cooperate with each other, they can face and solve even the deadliest challenge of terrorism and groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc.

7.2.3 Secularism

7.2.3.1 Meaning of Secularism

Secularism is a principle which **advocates the separation of religion from politics**. It is the principle of separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries. Thus, religion should be separate from aspects of state and governance. Secularism is a normative doctrine which seeks to realize a secular society that is, one devoid of either inter-religious domination or the intra-religious domination. It promotes freedom within religions and equality between, as well as, within religions. It also includes separation between the state and religion. In fact, the nature and extent of separation may take different forms, depending upon the specific values it is meant to promote and the way in which these values are spelt out.

7.2.3.2 Difference Between Western Concept of Secularism and Indian Secularism

	Western secularism	Indian secularism
Interpretation of Definition	Separation of state and religion as **mutual exclusion,** it means both are mutually exclusive in their own spheres of operation.	**Equal protection by the state to all religions**. It reflects certain meanings. First secular state to be one that protects all religions, but does not favor one at the cost of other and does not adopt any religion as state religion
Interpretation of Rights	Interpreted liberty as liberty of individual and freedom as freedom of the individual and equality as equality between individuals. There is little scope for community-based rights or minority-based rights.	The idea of inter-religious equality is at the core of Indian secularism. Equal focus has been given on the inter-religious and the intra-religious equality. It not only deals with the religious freedom of the individuals but with the minority communities also.
Focus on Intra-religion or Inter-religion	There is a mechanism for the **intra-religion equality in the western notion of secularism**, not of inter-religion equality thus state maintains an arm's length distance from religion in all matters	It promotes state sponsored reforms in the religious sphere on equal footing.
Historical reason behind adoption of Secularism	West adopted this model due to the two reasons it was more or less **homogenous society in comparison to India,** so they naturally focus on the intra-religious domination and strict separation of the state from the church is emphasized to realize the individual freedom.	Indian secularism allows for **principled state intervention in all religions**. Such intervention betrays disrespect to some aspects of every religion. The secular state does not have to treat each aspect of every religion with equal respect. It allows equal disrespect for some aspects of organized religions. Example practicing social evils as essential part of religion

In the context of India, it is sometimes argued that the concept of secularism has been imported from the west. But it is clear from the above differences that in the west, strict church and state separation is the main area of focus, while in India peaceful co-existence of all religions is the focus.

Constitutional Provisions Regarding Secularism in India
In India, freedom of religion is a Fundamental Right and is guaranteed through the following provisions:

- **Article 25**: guarantees freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion.
- **Article 26**: Every religious denomination has the freedom to manage its religious affairs.
- **Article 27**: Freedom from payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
- **Article 28**: Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.

Other Constitutional safeguards regarding religion include the following:

- **Article 15**: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 16**: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and no citizens shall be ineligible for employment on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth.
- **Article 29**: Protection of distinct language, script, or culture of minorities
- **Article 30**: Rights of all minorities, whether based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The **Preamble of India** states that India is a secular country (added after 42nd Amendment Act, 1976)

7.2.3.3 Distinctive Features of Indian Secularism

- **Roots of Indian Secularism**: The Indian idea and practice of secularism, though was inspired by its western origins yet, was firmly rooted in India's own unique socio-historical circumstances- i.e. the remarkable religious diversity in contrast to the mono-religious nature of western societies, the freedom struggle which advocated an equal support & equal respect for all religions, upon the fact that the practice of one's religion was not seen as antithetical to practice of democracy but as one which would strengthen it in the long run.
- **Sarva Dharma Sambhava**: The Indian conception of secularism thus recognized the deeply religious nature of Indian society & infused *the principle of equality within the practice of religion*.
  - ➢ Secularism was turned into a non-negotiable basic feature of constitution & the term itself was reinvented to allow intervention of state into religious matters when it was being done to promote not only inter religious equality (i.e., equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their religious preferences, along with added protection for religious minorities) but also intra religious equality (by ensuring that one sect of a religion does not dominate over other).
- **State Intervention in religion**: The desirability of state intervention into religious matters has been upheld under the Indian conception of secularism to give space to progressive voices within every religion and to allow disagreement with some aspects of religions.
  - ➢ For example, the abolition of untouchability, sati, dowry, the amendment of Hindu marriage & inheritance laws & the demand for establishing the uniform civil code etc. can be seen as an application of this concept.
  - ➢ At the same time, the Indian ideal of secularism clearly cautions against allowing religion to interfere in state matters, thereby disallowing mobilizing the electorate on religious lines for

winning elections on one hand while strictly spelling out that the Indian nation-state shall have no state religion.

Cultural diversity can drive economies, here are lessons from India: World Economic Forum

- In times when globalization seems to challenge local certainties, people often rediscover their emotional, cultural, and religious identities, and project them onto the nation state. **But they tend to forget that nation states are primarily occupied with political, administrative, and legal controls.**

- Increasingly however, transnational communities, as well as **communal pluralism, are having an economic, social, and political impact.** In this regard, **India and South Asia are role models,** holding an advantage in the new global order.

What are the benefits of cultural and religious pluralism in today's world? How do South Asia and in particular India performs?

- Indians and most people in neighbouring South Asian countries **commonly speak more than one language daily, as a matter of routine.**

- Their **highly diverse expat, diaspora and migrant communities** provide them not only with global access, but also with global sources of income.

- India and other South Asian countries are among the **largest recipients of monthly transfers** from their diaspora workers.

- Due to their religious, ethnic, and social diversity, **more than 30 million Indians access and transfer remittances from countries** as various as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Malaysia, Singapore, the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia.

- **Regional languages and minority religions** have established themselves as global community networks. This is as much true for the **Tamils in Malaysia** as for the **Sikhs in Canada.** Such connections **provide them with access to education and jobs,** partly through professional visa arrangements, and despite the limitations and constraints of our current times. These communities have created their own formats, many of which have become **international actors, such the Global Tamil Forum and the World Sikh Organisation.**

- India may be in disagreement with China over historical borders, but it still shares with it (and with its other neighbours in the Northeast, such as Myanmar) **local languages and Buddhist religious minorities.** Issues that are today seen as a liability, such as the problems surrounding the Tibetan exile community and the Rohingya, could become an asset of shared cultural capital, if treated differently.

- This also applies to the world's 600 million South Asian Muslims. While they are perceived by some **Islamic institutions as living on the margins of the Muslim world, they more than double Arabic-speaking Muslims in number.** They make significant contributions to the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the Muslim world, allowing India economic, social, and political access to diverse international actors, including Iran, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and countries in Central Asia.

Diversity for development

- There are **2.2 million Indians working in the UAE and 1.5 million in Saudi Arabia.** The diaspora community from the state of Kerala in South India has become a development and social factor in the Gulf region, with **Kerala providing 40% of Indian workers in the UAE.** Keralan Muslims run their

own centers of Islamic teaching there, offering lessons in Malayalam. One of these is the Indian Islami Centre, founded in 1995.

- This turn in **global politics and economics has enabled and advanced the mobilization of emotional capital,** drawing on local diversities for the development of areas and communities that feel left behind.

- Notions of piety and cultural identity are used as a source of development. **Faith and identity are marketed or used to sell other services and goods.** This can either promote awareness of diversity or increase tension based on differences.

- Accordingly, **inclusiveness is the most important quality of this transformation** - not only in cultural and religious or sectarian terms, but also in social matters. This quality is just as important within communities as between different ones, since they are all highly diverse themselves. **Inclusiveness is therefore becoming an important development tool, turning diversity into an asset for achieving broader social and economic development goals** in India and across South Asia.