

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Course Name	Sociology 03 (Class XII, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Challenges of Cultural Diversity – Part 1
Module Id	lesy_10601
Pre-requisites	Concept of Cultural Diversity
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cultural diversity2. The meaning and significance of community identity3. The difference between nation, state and nation-state4. The strategies used by nation states to suppress diversity
Keywords	Diversity, Cultural, Assimilation, Nation, State, Nation-state, Integration, Community, Identity

2. Development Team

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Meaning of Diversity

Ordinarily diversity means differences. For our purposes, however, it means something more than mere differences. It means collective differences, that is, differences which mark off one group of people from another. These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. **The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.**

The term **diversity is opposite of uniformity**. Uniformity means similarity of some sort that characterises a people. 'Uni' refers to one; 'form' refers to the common ways. So when there is something common to all the people, we say they show uniformity. When students of a school, members of the police or the army wear the same type of dress, we say they are in 'uniform'. Like diversity, thus, uniformity is also a collective concept. When a group of people share a similar characteristic, be it language or religion or anything else, it shows uniformity in that respect. But when we have groups of people hailing from different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity.

FORMS OF DIVERSITY IN INDIA

RACIAL DIVERSITY

Herbert Risley had classified the people of India into seven racial types. These are (i) Turko-Iranian, (ii) Indo-Aryan, (iii) Scytho-Dravidian, (iv) Aryo-Dravidian, (v) Mongolo-Dravidian, (vi) Mongoloid, and (vii) Dravidian. These seven racial types can be reduced to three basic types-the Indo-Aryan, the Mongolian and the Dravidian. In his opinion the last two types would account for the racial composition of tribal India. He was the supervisor of the census operations held in India in 1891 and it was data from this census, which founded the basis of this classification. As, it was based mainly on language-types rather than physical characteristics; Risley's classification was criticised for its shortcomings.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others.

There are many other forms of diversity that exist in India such as caste diversity, linguistic diversity and so on.

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. This is why 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.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Every human being needs a sense of stable identity to operate in this world. Questions like — Who am I? How am I different from others? How do others understand and comprehend me? What goals and aspirations should I have? – constantly crop up in our life right from childhood.

We are able to answer many of these questions because of the way in which we are socialised, or taught how to live in society by our immediate families and our community in various senses. **The socialisation process involves a continuous dialogue, negotiation and even struggle against significant others** (those directly involved in our lives) like our parents, family, kin group and our community. Our **community provides us the language (our mother tongue) and the cultural values through which we comprehend the world**. It also anchors our self-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. We often identify so strongly

with communities we have done nothing to ‘deserve’ – passed no exam, demonstrated no skill or competence... This is very unlike belonging to, say, a profession or team. Doctors or architects have to pass exams and demonstrate their competence. Even in sports, a certain level of skill and performance are a necessary pre-condition for membership in a team. But our membership in our families or religious or regional communities is without preconditions, and yet it is total. In fact, **most ascriptive identities are very hard to shake off; even if we choose to disown them, others may continue to identify us by those very markers of belonging.**

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.

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. Once again it is possible to come across people who may not be particularly committed to one or the other aspect of their identity. But the possibility of this commitment is potentially available to most people. Because of this, conflicts that involve our communities (whether of nation, language, religion, caste or region) are very hard to deal with. 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.

CONCEPT OF NATION

Etymologically, the term 'Nation' emerges from the Latin term '**Natio**' meaning "to be born'. A nation is a people descended from a common stock with homogeneous factors. It means a people brought together by the ties of blood relationship. Nation is a body of people united by

common descent and language. In the views of Barker, nation is a body of persons inhabiting a definite territory and united together by the fact of living together on a common land. They may come from a number of races but by living together, they develop certain things in common. It is necessary that the people living within the state have a feeling of oneness. Lord Bryce defines nation as a nationality which has organized itself into a political body either independent or desiring to be independent. The definition given by Barker explains that people become a nation when they live together by exercising their right of political self-determination. The World Book Dictionary defines a nation as "the people occupying the same country, united under the same government, and usually speaking the same language".

Right to Self Determination is recognized as an international principle of law based on equal rights, opportunity for the states to choose their political status with no external compulsion or interference. The United Nations Organization has given its approval to this cardinal principle. The U.N. General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) grants independence to colonial countries. In other words, question of government ought to be decided by the governed as a matter of the right to self-determination. The concept nation encompasses the feeling of oneness that is 'We' among the people. A nation also has certain essential elements, such as:

- Common race
- Common religious sentiments
- Common residence on a defined territory
- Common political aspirations
- Common language Common culture
- Common interests of trade economy
- Common historical traditions

India's struggle for independence from British regime is the classic example of its people uniting themselves to form a nation, to establish India as an independent sovereign state. The preamble of the Indian Constitution states that the people of India have resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Part I of the Constitution of India (Articles 1 to 4) describes the Union and its Territory; Part II of Constitution (Articles 5 to 11) describes the conditions for being a citizen of India; Part XVII of Constitution (Articles 343 to 351) describes the official languages of India.

STATE

The State is usually described as 'society politically organized'. Society is an association of human beings, who live a collective life and form social relations to fulfil their needs of life. That may be physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. The presence of the societal institutions like family, clans, tribes, villages, religious institutions, educational institutions, workplace associations etc. in a society is a fact, which cannot be denied. Society is the whole web of social relationship based on kinship affinity, language affinity, religious affinity, common conscience of individuals and territorial affinity. Social relationships are governed by necessity, custom, courtesy, morality, mutual understanding, agreement or even contract.

When a society is governed by common set of laws, rules, regulations, and obey a supreme authority, it qualifies for being a State. The State fulfils the need of political organization of society to realize the purpose of collective living. This is what we understand from the famous phrases used by Aristotle (384 -322 BCE) in his treatise Politics, where he observed that 'Man is a social animal; Man is a political animal'. Thus, the State is formed out of society.

The Society is the primary association. A State is formed to regulate the political activity of individuals for social order. The State depends on society for its existence, and not vice versa. R.M. MacIver (1882-1970) in his famous work "The Modern State" has observed thus: 'There are social forms like the family or church or the club, which owe neither their origin nor their inspiration to the state; and social forces, like custom or competition, which the state may protect or modify, but certainly does not create; and social motives like friendship or jealousy, which establishes relationships too intimate and personal to be controlled by the great engine of the state..... The State in a word regulates the outstanding external relationships of men in society.' There is no accepted definition of the state and it has been differently defined by various writers from time to time. Machiavelli, in his book "The Prince" defined state 'as the power which has authority over men'. Notwithstanding the disagreement amongst these writers, most of them agree in ascribing to the state the three elements: **people, territory and government**. Disagreement became prominent in respect of the fourth element, that is, sovereignty. However, the concept of the state is the central theme of the political theory. The state is a social Institution that evolves according to the socio-

economic conditions of society. The state is only an aspect of the whole social system. State is a particular portion of society politically organized for the protection and promotion of its common interests. It is main political consciousness which formed the state. An illustrative list of definitions provided by some of the leading political thinkers is provided below:

Harold J. Laski (1893-1950), a British political philosopher in his literary work *An Introduction to Politics* (1931) defines State as 'a territorial society, divided into government and subjects claiming within its allotted physical area supremacy over other associations'. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) defines State as 'an associations of families and villages for the sake of attaining a perfect and self -sufficient existence'.

Salmond defines state as 'an association of human beings established for the attainment of certain ends by certain means, the ends being defence against external enemies and the maintenance of peaceable and orderly relations within the community itself.'

J.L.Brierly defines state as 'an institution, that is to say,... a system of relations which men establish among themselves as a means of securing certain objects, of which the most fundamental is a system of order within which their activities can be carried on.'

Max Weber's well-known definition, a state is a "body that successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate force in a particular territory" (Weber 1970:78).

NATION-STATE

The nation-state developed fairly recently. Prior to the 1500s, in Europe, the nation-state as we know it did not exist. Back then, most people did not consider themselves part of a nation; they rarely left their village and knew little of the larger world. If anything, people were more likely to identify themselves with their region or local lord. At the same time, the rulers of states frequently had little control over their countries. Instead, local feudal lords had a great deal of power, and kings often had to depend on the goodwill of their subordinates to rule. Laws and practices varied a great deal from one part of the country to another. In the early modern era, a number of monarchs began to consolidate power by weakening the feudal nobles and allying themselves with the emerging commercial classes. This difficult process sometimes required violence. The consolidation of power also took a long time. Kings and queens worked to bring all the people of their territories under unified rule. Not surprisingly, then, the birth of the nation-state also saw the first rumblings of nationalism, as monarchs encouraged their subjects to feel loyalty toward the newly established nations. The modern,

integrated nation-state became clearly established in most of Europe during the nineteenth century.

Pre-1500s	Most people lived in small villages; they paid tithes to feudal landlords, didn't travel, and cared little for anything beyond the village.
1485	Henry VII wins the War of the Roses in England, begins the Tudor dynasty, and starts the development of the English nation-state.
1492	Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella finish taking back all of Spain from the Muslims; the era of Spain as a global power begins.
1547–1584	Ivan the Terrible rules Russia; he unifies the government and creates the first Russian nation-state.
1638–1715	Louis XIV of France creates an absolute monarchy; France emerges as the dominant power in Europe.
1648	Peace of Westphalia cements the legal status of the nation-state as sovereign.
1789	The French Revolution begins; it creates the modern French nation-state and sparks nationalism around Europe.
1871	Unification of Italy and Germany is complete.
1919	Treaty of Versailles ends World War I; it breaks up several multinational empires and creates many new nation-states.
1945	The United Nations forms.

One of the characteristic features of the modern era is the establishment of democracy and nationalism as dominant sources of political legitimacy. This means that, today, 'the nation' is the most accepted or proper justification for a state, while 'the people' are the ultimate source of legitimacy of the nation. In other words, states 'need' the nation as much or even more than nations need states.

Threatened by community identities, states try to eliminate cultural diversity

Historically, states have tried to establish and enhance their political legitimacy through nation-building strategies. They sought to secure ... the loyalty and obedience of their citizens through policies of assimilation or integration. Attaining these objectives was not easy, especially in a context of cultural diversity where citizens, in addition to their identifications with their country, might also feel a strong sense of identity with their community – ethnic, religious, linguistic and so on. Most states feared that the recognition of such difference would 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 assume a singular national identity. Assimilationist and integrationist strategies try to establish singular national identities through various interventions like:

- Centralising all power to forums where the dominant group constitutes a majority, and eliminating the autonomy of local or minority groups;
- Imposing a unified legal and judicial system based on the dominant group's traditions and abolishing alternative systems used by other groups;
- Adopting the dominant group's language as the only official 'national' language and making its use mandatory in all public institutions;
- Promotion of the dominant group's language and culture through national institutions including state-controlled media and educational institutions;
- Adoption of state symbols celebrating the dominant group's history, heroes and culture, reflected in such things as choice of national holidays or naming of streets etc.;
- Seizure of lands, forests and fisheries from minority groups and indigenous people and declaring them 'national resources'...

Source: Adapted from UNDP Human Development Report 2004, Ch.3, Feature 3.1

Policies that promote assimilation are aimed at persuading, encouraging or forcing all citizens to adopt a uniform set of cultural values and norms. These values and norms are usually entirely or largely those of the dominant social group. Other, non-dominant or subordinated groups in society are expected or required to give up their own cultural values and adopt the prescribed ones. Policies promoting integration are different in style but not in overall objective: they insist that the public culture be restricted to a common national pattern, while all 'non-national' cultures are to be relegated to the private sphere. In this case too, there is the danger of the dominant group's culture being treated as 'national' culture.