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## Multiculturalism In India With Special Reference To Jammu And Kashmir

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### Abstract:

*The term Multiculturalism refers to an applied ideology of racial, cultural & ethnic diversity within the demographics of a specified place. Some countries have policies of multiculturalism aimed at recognizing, celebrating & maintaining the different cultures or cultural identities within that society to promote social cohesion. In this context multiculturalism advocates a society that extends equitable status to distinct cultural & religious groups, with no one culture predominating.*

*Multicultural concerns have long informed India's history and traditions. Jammu & Kashmir is the home of different races & sects and their history goes thousands of years back. It is a composite culture, being an ingredient of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist elements.*

### KEYWORDS:

Multiculturalism, linguistic, Ideology, Demographic, Ethnic.

### INTRODUCTION:-

Multiculturalism usually refers to the fact of cultural diversity and communities containing multiple cultures to the demographic make up of a specific place. In a sense it is a newer term for cultural pluralism. It allows diverse social groups to preserve and enhance their separate cultural identities while participating as equal partner in a society.

India is culturally, linguistically religiously and to a certain extent, ethnically, the most diverse country in the world. Multicultural concerns have long informed India's history, traditions, constitution and political arrangements. The paradigm of multiculturalism is based on positive equality wherein state endeavours to treat people and make them equal. India is most culturally and genetically diverse geographical entity after the African continent. It is the most religiously diverse country in the world.

#### Ethnic Composition & Distribution

The demographics of India are inclusive of the second most populous country in the world with over 1.21 billion people as per 2011 census. India has more than 2000 ethnic groups & every major religion is represented. There exists four major families of language – Indo-European, Dravidian, Astro-Asiatic & Tibeto-Burman languages. There are two language isolates – The Nihali language spoken in parts of Maharashtra & the Burushaki spoken in parts of Jammu and Kashmir. India is universally recognized as prominently inhabited by Hindus, according to 2011 census account (80.5%) of the country's population. The term Hindu originally had a geographical origin. It is applied to all the inhabitants on the Indian side of the Sindhu river. But Hindus are in minority in a number of states including Mizoram (3.6%), Lakshdeep (3.7%), Nagaland (7.7%), Meghalaya (13.3%), Jammu and Kashmir (29.6%) & Punjab (36.9%) of these Nagaland, Mizoram & Meghalaya are predominantly Christian majority states. Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep are predominantly Muslim majority areas. Punjab is sikh majority state.

Muslims constitute the second ranking religious community, accounting for (13.4%) of the country's population. According to 2001 census, Lakshadweep (95.5%) among union territories and J&K

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(67%) are areas where Muslim population are in majority other areas where that have a considerable proportion of Muslims population include Assam (30.9%) West Bengal (25.2%), Kerala (24.7%), Uttar Pradesh (18.5%), Bihar (16.5%) & Jharkhand (13.8%). Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Maharashtra & Andhra Pradesh have also considerable Muslim population.

Christians account for (2.3%) of country's population & their proportion is highest in Nagaland (90%), Mizoram (87.0%) & Meghalaya (70.3%), Goa (26.7%), Andaman & Nicobar (21.7%), Kerala (19.0%), Arunachal Pradesh (18.7%), Pondicherry (6.9%) Sikkim & Taminadu have also considerable portion of Christian population.

Sikhs who account for (19%) of the country's population have their concentration in Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh. In Punjab covering (59.9%), Chandigarh (16.1%), Haryana (5.5%) & Delhi (4%). In Punjab Hindus account for (36.9%) of the states population

Buddhists account for 0.8% of the country's population & the concentration of Buddhists occurs in Sikkim (28.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (13%), Mizoram (7.9%), Maharashtra (6%) & Tripura (3.1%), Jammu & Kashmir (1.17%).

Jains account for (0.4%) of country's population. Mainly they are (1.3%) in Maharashtra (1.2%) in Rajasthan (1.1%) in Delhi & (1%) in Gujrat.

India has the diverse cultures based on religion, region, language, faiths, tribes from east to west and north to south. India has the distinction of being a place of origin of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Like the religious diversity, there are cultural, social and linguistic diversities in all the states & union territories of India. There are different customs and traditions, dresses & dances, foods & festivals, ideals & values. Rich social composition of the country is perhaps the most sacrosanct characteristic that has the potential for holding the country together in the midst of varied diversities.

#### JAMMU & KASHMIR – A UNIQUE CULTURAL BLEND

**Location** – The State of Jammu and Kashmir is located in extreme north of India between 32° – 15' to 37° – 5' latitude & 72° – 35' to 80° – 20' longitude east in the Himalayan region. Its borders touch china in the north & east, Afghanistan in the north-west & Pakistan in the west. The states of Punjab & Himachal Pradesh border in the south with Kathua & Doda districts of the state.

**Area** – A total geographical area of Jammu & Kashmir state is 2,22,236 sq. km. which include 120849 sq. km under the occupation of China & Pakistan. The geographical area of the J&K state comprises 6.93 percent of the total Indian territory. Out of the total area Laddakh region covers 70%, Jammu 19% and Kashmir 11%.

**Population** – The population as per census of 2011 is 12548926 of which male & female are 6665561 & 5883365 respectively. Out of total population of Jammu and Kashmir 27.21% live in urban regions. The total figure of population living in urban areas is 3414106. The urban population in the last 10 years has increased by 35.66%. Literacy rate in the state has been upward trend & is 68.74 %. Male literacy stands at 78.26 percent while female literacy is 58.01%. In 2001, literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir was 55.52%.

**Religions** – The community wise population of J&K state as in 2011 has not been worked out and published so far. However the breakup given in 1981 census depicts the position as under :

a)	Muslims	64.19%
b)	Hindu	32.24%
c)	Sikhs	2.23%
d)	Buddhists	1.17%
e)	Jains	0.03%
f)	Christians	0.14%

#### COMPOSITE CULTURE

Jammu & Kashmir is famous not only for its scenic beauty but also due to its many sided composite culture. All the three regions namely Jammu, Kashmir and Laddakh have different people with their diverse cultures & traditions & have different distribution of population. Jammu region has major Hindu population, Kashmir is predominated by Muslim population & in Laddakh, most population follow Buddhism.

In each region there is great cultural diversity. It is the home of different races & sects & their history goes thousands year back. Many strange & interesting customs & social usages are prevailing

among them and any detailed account of their history will fill a volume. In Kashmir, one may not be astonished to know that the Hindus & Muslims were holding in reverence the Hindu shrines & Muslim Khanqahs situated closely or almost in the same premises. The notable examples are the great Khanqah of Shah Hamdan, Temple of Kali, Hari Parbat etc. Muslims equally become part of the Amarnath Shrine annual pilgrimage.

The eminent Indologist Dr. Grierson has placed the Kashmiri language in the Dardic branch of non-Sanskrit languages in his Linguistic survey of India. But recent researches have proved it to be Vedic. Kashmir has rendered a valuable contribution to Indian Literature. Kalhana & Bilhana are remembered for their historical works. The former wrote 'Rajatarangini' which throws a flood of light not only on the history of Kashmir but also the history of India. Bilhana's 'Vikramadeva Charita' is concerned with the history of south India. Charka & Koka studied medical and sex respectively. Vamana, Mammata, Anandevardhana, Ruyaka Kuntala, Abhinava Gupta are noted for literary criticism.

#### ANCIENT CULTURE

From ancient times Jammu and Kashmir has been the centre of Art, literature & scholarship. The Kashmir culture has a composite character, being an ingredient of Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist elements. It is noted for unique architectural and archaeological monuments, as is evident from 'The Ancient Monuments of Kashmir' by R.C. Kak. According to Walter Lawrence, "I have rarely been in any village which cannot show some relics of antiquity". Curious stone monuments of the old Kashmiri Temples (Kulr-Murli), have stone seats of Mahadev (Badri Nath), Phallic emblems, innumerable carved images heaped in grotesque confusion by some clear spring have met me at every turn. They were the works of the Buddhists or the Pandavas.

In order to study ancient society of Kashmir, one must depend on Kalhanas Rajatarangini & Neelmata Purana. The latter is very interesting study of economic life, including means of recreation such as music, dancing, theatrical performances & sports, arts and craft, dresses & ornaments, cosmetics, culture & trade, festivals & religious practices, philosophy & language. Sir George Grierson in his linguistic survey of India, Vol. II writes "For upwards of 2000 years, Kashmir has been the home of Sanskrit learning and this valley have issued master pieces of history, poetry, romance, fable and philosophy. For centuries, it was the home of greatest Sanskrit scholars and at least, one great Indian religion Shaivism, has found some of its most eloquent teachers on the banks of the river Vitasta. The knowledge of Sanskrit seems have reached high peaks. From early time scholars & students from India trecked all along to Kashmir to complete their Sanskrit studies. The great seats of Sanskrit learning in ancient Kashmir were at Sharda & at Vijeshwara.

Kashmir's contribution to the Buddhist ideology and culture stands first in chronological order. Ashoka sent Madyantika, a preacher to Kashmir to propagate the new faith. He founded twelve Viharas. According to Hieun Tsang, 500 monks had come to Kashmir during the time of Ashoka to propagate Buddhism.

#### ADVENT OF ISLAM

Islam came to Kashmir in the 14th century. Kashmir became the homeland of Sufism from the middle of the 14th century. The doctrine contributed to the native Kashmir philosophy many new values & the result was shaive-cum-sufi doctrine. This brought forth a rich heritage of humanism & universal brotherhood. The advent of Islam made such an impression especially in the north that conversion did not extinct the prevailing culture, but offered good opportunities of intimate relations. The Muslims adopted ancient Hindu culture & gave in return some of their own to Hindus to adopt. There was a blending of cultures which in no way destroyed the ancient culture. Sir J. Marshall has observed that the two civilizations so vast & so strongly developed, yet so radically dissimilar, as the Hindus & Muslims, meeting & mingling together are seldom in the history of mankind. Folk dances & folklore received special attention and the ancient works like Katha Sagar & Brahat Katha were translated into Persian. The Kashmiri Pandits made a name in Persian prose & poetry. Mohd. Azam Dedamari has given a full account of the Hindu and Muslim saints & philosophers who lived during the Muslim period & helped to create unity among all sections of people.

#### ETHNIC COMPOSITION

The history of peopling to Jammu & Kashmir state is a record of constant impulses of immigration from the north-west, west, south and south-eastern directions. The alien races, ethnic groups & various religions & cultures have influenced the cultural ethos & life style of people of this region. It is however,

generally accepted that upto the beginning of the fourteenth century, the state in general & valley of Kashmir in particular was inhabited by Hindus, and by the end of 14th century the mass of people embraced Islam.

The ethnic mosaic of the state is quite complex. The racial & ethnic structure cannot be explained without the understanding the pre-historic movements of the people. In the process of peopling of the region, the Dards in the north-west, the Ladakhis in the north east, the Gujjars and Rajputs in the south and the Paharis in the south-east have closely influenced the existing ethnicity of the people of the region. The racial composition of the state has also been influenced by the immigrants from the territories of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakistan, Syria, China, Tadzkistan, Tibet, Turkmenistan and Uzbaikistan.

The different races, ethnic groups & castes of the state, though intermingled, have their areas of high concentration. For example, the Kashmiris – an amalgamation of numerous cultural groups – are mainly concentrated in the valley, the Dards are in the valley of Gurez, the Hanjis are to the lakes, rivers & water bodies of Kashmir, the Gujjars & Bakerwals (Buffalo & Goat keepers) are occupying the Kandi areas and undulating slopes, the Dogras Hindus & Muslims have their dominance in Jammu region. Moreover, there are numerous small ethnic groups like Bhotias, Gaddis, Sikhs, Jains who in isolated pockets have significant concentration. Buddhists and Shia Muslims have dominance in Leh and Kargil areas of Ladakh.

Kashmiris  
The word Kashmiri has been loosely applied for several streams of immigrants, mainly from Afganistan, Iran, Turkey & central Asia. There is a close bearing of the Indo-Aryan culture on the ethnic composition of Kashmiris. The influence of Dards, Laddakhis, Punjabis, Sikhs, Gujjars has also moulded the cultural ethos of the Kashmir.

The Kashmiri Muslims by and large, are the decendants of original Hindus. The Saiydes, Mughals & Pathans are the other major ethnic groups. It is supposed by many that Muslims of the Pandit, Koul, Bhat, Aitu, Rishi, Mattu & Ghanai Krams are the descendants, Brahmins. The Pathans have retained all the old Pathan customs and still speak Pashtu language. Kashmiri Pandits, though migrated from valley but have maintained their culture.

#### HANJIS

Hanjis are essentially the dwellers of water and are mainly confined to the Dal, Wular, Anchar, Manasbal lakes & the Jhelum river. They are an important ethnic group in the valley of Kashmir. The major sub-groups of Hanjis are –

- i)Demb – Hanz (Vegetable Grower)
- ii)Gari – Hanz (Waternut gatherer)
- iii)Gad – Hanz (Fisherman)
- iv)Mate – Hanz (who deals in wood)
- v)Dung – Hanz (owner of passenger boats)
- vi)Haka-Hanz (gatherer of wood from water)
- vii)Bahatchi-Hanz (who live in Bahatch boat)
- viii)Shikara-Hanz (who ply sikara boat)
- xi)House-boat Hanz.

The type of boat which a Hanji used denotes his caste, social status and occupation.

#### DARDS

Dards constitute a peculiar ethnic group. Their major concentration is in Dardistan, the land lying to the north of Kashmir valley especially in the catchment of Krishnganga north of Sardi, Gurez and Tilel. Ptolemy in his book Almagest has used the word Dardari for Dards of the western Himalayas. In the opinion of Leitner, Dards belong to the Aryan stock. Dardic Aryans colonized the Pamir region from where they spread to Chitral & Gilgit. Before embracing Islam, they were the followers of Buddhism & Hinduism.

Gujjar – Bakarwals  
The Gujjars is a uniuqal & significant ethnic group of Jammu and Kashmir state. They are dependent largely on cattle, goat, sheep & horse keeping. The Gujjars are divisible into two groups. One group moves with their cattles between the alpine pastures & low altitude of Shivalik hills & the other group who settled in most of the villages situated along the annual routes of migration. The Gujjars are simple, less educated & inoffensive people. Their good faith is proverbial and they are generous people. They have their

own language known as Gojri. They have their own culture & migrate with the change of season in the form of Dera (household). The geo-ecological environment of their habitat has exerted a determining influence in shaping their mode of life, their cultural ethos, values, customs & traditions.

#### **DOGRAS**

The Jammu region of the state has major Dogra population. They belong to Aryan tribe who came to India in ancient times. They later branched out into higher castes of Brahmins, Rajput, Mahajans & others. Some followed Sikhism and Islam when these religions influenced this region of India. They speak Dogri language, which is one of the India's national languages. Dogras are brave people and Dogra Regiment in the Indian Army is proof of this fact. Heran & Kud are local styles of dance and performed during festivals. Festivals are celebrated with fancy dresses and merriment. Lohri, Diwali, Baisakhi & Shivratri are important festivals. Dogras have very simple but very tasty food preparations particularly for celebrations. Other religions sections of society living in Jammu are Sikhs, Buddhists & Muslims. Kishtwari, Bhaderwahi, Paharis, Gaddi's are other ethnic groups in Jammu region.

#### **LADDAKH**

It is an important region of the state & lies between Himalayas & Kumlung mountains and between Baltistan and Tibet. It is one of the most elevated regions of the earth. It has two districts namely Leh and Kargil. These two districts stand in contrast with each other in terms of geography & culture. The various races living in Laddakh are Moon, Sharan and Tibetan Mongols. Ladakhis are known for their cheerful disposition. Weddings in Laddakh are full of music, dance, merriment and feasting. Lamas play an important role in the social structure of Buddhists. Traditionally there are three classes in the society – Rigzang, Mangriks and Ringun. Buddhists Gompas are sacred religious places. Their customs traditions and dresses are very typical. Ladakh has a very rich cultural heritage.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Jammu and Kashmir is a melting pot of varied cultures. Since the time, various religions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism have added value to its cultural heritage. Consequently different tribes following different religions, live in harmony in the state of Jammu and Kashmir comprises of a diverse population including Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits, Dogras, Gujjar and Bakkerwals, Paharis etc. having certain common characteristics, values and traditions. The pluralism and multicultural social set up of Jammu and Kashmir has been an example of unity in diversity. Therefore like the other parts of the country, Jammu and Kashmir sports a multifaceted, multicoloured and unique cultural blend. The state can again shine like its past traditions of peaceful co-existence if the external forces of vested interests do not disturb its emotional bonding of the people and social fabric.

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