Individualistic Or Collectivistic Approach Of Culture? Understanding Cultural Juxtaposition In India

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand the Cultural juxtaposition in India characterized by the coexistence of multiple languages, religions, and traditions within a shared social landscape is one of the defining features of India. This diversity results from centuries of migration, invasions, trade exchanges, and regional development, creating an environment where contrasting cultural elements interact daily. Traditionally India has collectivistic approach of culture but now a days there is transition in this setup. Although traditionally India was classified as a collectivist society, contemporary. Indian researchers proposed that currently India is the amalgamation of collectivism and individualism. Indians tend be collectivists in matter pertaining to the family and individualists in matters pertaining to work. Cultural juxtaposition in India where diverse traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles coexist side by side creates a fertile ground for unique opportunities across sectors and it also gives birth to different challenges as well.

Key Words: Culture, Juxtaposition, Diversity, Individualistic Culture, Collectivistic Culture.

Introduction

Culture refers to the patterns of thought and behavior of people. It includes values, beliefs, rules of conduct, and patterns of social, political and economic organization. Culture consists of the ways in which we think and act as members of a society.

Culture refers to values, customs, traditions, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a particular group of people, society, or community. It encompasses various aspects of human life, including language, religion, art, music, cuisine, social norms, rituals, and material objects. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through socialization processes, education, and interaction within the community. It shapes individuals' identities, perceptions, and worldviews, influencing how they think, behave, and communicate.

Culture is dynamic and constantly evolving, influenced by historical events, technological advancements, globalization, migration, and interactions between different cultures. It provides a framework for understanding and interpreting the world, fostering social cohesion, and providing a sense of belonging and identity for its members.

Culture is an information-based social system, involving both shared understandings and praxis that enables groups of people to live together in an organized fashion and to get what they need.

There are two major approaches to Culture, Individualistic approach and Collectivistic approach.

Co-existence of Collectivistic and Individualistic Approach:

In a collectivist culture, the self is interdependent on members of the group, and collectivists place group concerns (e.g., group harmony and cohesion) above personal concerns (e.g., self-enhancement); in contrast, the self in an individualist culture is autonomous and independent of the group, and individualists place individual concerns above those of the group (Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

In collectivist cultures, such as many East Asian, African, and Latin American societies, the emphasis is on the collective well-being and harmony of the group over individual interests. Key characteristics include strong family ties, loyalty to one's community or group, interdependence, and a focus on cooperation and consensus. Decisions are often made collectively, and individuals are expected to conform to societal norms and roles.

Individualistic cultures, prevalent in Western societies like the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, prioritize the autonomy, rights, and freedoms of the individual. Traits include personal achievement, self-expression, independence, and the pursuit of individual goals and aspirations. Decision-making tends to be more individualized, with a greater emphasis on personal choice and autonomy.

Individualism–collectivism constructs (Lukes, 1973) have been discussed in many contexts within social science discourse. For example, in the areas of values (Hofstede, 1981; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), Social systems (e.g. Parsons & Shils, 1951), Morality (Shweder, 1982), Religion (Bakan, 1966), cognitive differentiation (Witkin & Berry, 1975), economic development (Adelman & Morris, 1967), Modernity (Inkeles & Smith, 1974), the Structure of constitutions (Massimini & Calegari, 1979), and Cultural patterns (Hsu, 1983).

The distinction between collectivist and individualistic cultures influences various aspects of social interaction, such as communication styles, conflict resolution, decision-making processes, and perceptions of self and others. It's important to note that while these cultural orientations provide a useful framework for understanding societal dynamics, individual variation and cultural hybridity exist within and across cultures.

India's unique cultural landscape represents a blend of collectivist and individualistic values. While traditionally characterized by collectivist ideals, such as strong family bonds and community orientation, India has also adopted individualistic tendencies due to globalization, urbanization, and economic growth. This coexistence creates a dynamic cultural balance where traditional communal values are preserved alongside modern aspirations for personal autonomy.

Cultural co-existence in India is a multifaceted process influenced by various factors such as globalization, urbanization, technological advancements, socioeconomic changes, and generational shifts.

Globalization and Urbanization: Increased connectivity and exposure to global cultures through media, travel, and the internet have led to the adoption of new ideas, lifestyles, and consumption patterns. Urban centers, characterized by greater diversity and cosmopolitanism, often serve as hubs of cultural innovation and change.

Economic liberalization and growth: It has transformed India's socio economic landscape, leading to rising incomes, expansion of the middle class, and changes in consumption habits. As more people move from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities, there's a blending of rural and urban cultures, resulting in hybrid identities and cultural expressions.

Generational Shifts: Younger generations often have different values, attitudes, and preferences compared to previous generations. They are more open to change, technology-savvy, and inclined towards individualism, challenging traditional norms and customs.

Technological Advancements: The proliferation of smartphones, social media, and digital platforms has revolutionized communication, entertainment, and commerce, shaping new forms of cultural expression and interaction. Technology has enabled the spread of ideas and values at unprecedented pace, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Cultural Fusion and Innovation: Cultural transition in India is characterized by a fusion of traditional and modern elements, resulting in creative expressions in art, music, fashion, cuisine, and literature. Cultural innovation thrives as artists, designers, entrepreneurs, and creators reinterpret heritage and tradition in contemporary contexts.

Challenges and Opportunities:
Cultural transition in India is a dynamic and ongoing process shaped by diverse influences and interactions. It reflects the country's rich heritage, complex identity, and aspirations for the future as it navigates the complexities of globalization and modernization.
Globalization has a wide role to play worldwide. It has left back its footprints in every sphere of life. Not only in India, but the interchange of world views and ideas has resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people globally. Indian culture is no bar to this transformation process. Our deep-rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold with the emergence of globalization. India has a rich cultural background and pride in its culture is famous throughout the world. Globalization has not only inculcated the westernization in India, but conversely, the Indian culture has also spread its impact globally.

Industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and globalization have contributed to significant changes in the culture of the world. Some of the major changes include weakening of extended family, nuclearization of family, two parents working family, changing roles of women and men, increased immigration, Westernization of arts, music, day-to-day living, changing child-rearing practices, globalization of language, and influence of multimedia. As a result of many of these changes, social psychology, family psychology, and family relationships drastically transformed the family and individual psychology. Before these mega changes, family and individual psychology were shaped by extended family, traditional Indian value system, and child-rearing practices. Traditional Indian developmental stages may be yielding to more Western individualistic social structures. In additon, we are too forced give up some of the traditional, cherished values and relational patterns.

Scholars and researchers proposed three possible consequences of Globalisation: cultural homogenisation, cultural polarisation or cultural hybridisation (Conrad & Poole, 2012).
The cultural homogenisation perspective was that cultures would eventually lose their rich diversity and form a standardised culture largely based on the American culture (Conrad & Poole 2012; Pieterse 1996).
The cultural polarisation proposition was that people in non-Western societies would increasingly become alienated by and hostile towards the changes brought about by globalisation (Conrad & Pool 2012; Pieterse 1996).
Finally, the cultural hybridisation thesis was that people would find a balance between their cultural traditions and the changes brought about by living in a global economy (Conrad & Poole 2012; Pieterse 1996). India it seems has adopted the cultural hybridisation model in response to globalisation, but with an unbalanced mix of tradition and modern between the genders.

India as a Pluralistic Society: Cultural Juxtaposition
Indian scholars (Panda & Gupta 2004; Sinha et al. 2004; Sinha et al. 2009) argued that since India is a pluralistic society with several sub-cultures it cannot be classified as a homogenous culture. However, the studies of Sinha et al. (2004; 2009) conducted across several locations in India revealed the following pan cultural Indian values: duality in thinking, coexistence of collectivist and individualist tendencies, hierarchical relationships, prevalence of familism and personalised relationship.

Juxtaposition of Modern and Traditional Values
Cultural juxtaposition in India is incredibly rich and diverse due to its long history, varied geography, and numerous ethnic groups. We can see it in the coexistence of ancient traditions alongside modern influences, such as traditional festivals celebrated alongside high-tech industries in cities like Bangalore. Additionally, India's cultural mosaic includes a

blend of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and other religious practices, all contributing to the colorful tapestry of Indian society. This juxtaposition often fosters both tension and harmony, creating a unique and vibrant cultural landscape.

India exemplifies the coexistence of collectivist and individualistic cultures. While collectivist values emphasize group harmony, social cohesion, and family ties, individualistic values prioritize personal autonomy, achievement, and self-expression. In Indian society, we can observe collectivist values in strong family bonds, interdependence among relatives, and community-oriented traditions like joint family living arrangements and group celebrations of festivals. On the other hand, individualistic values manifest in pursuits of personal success, career advancement, and entrepreneurship, particularly in urban centers where globalization and modernization have flourished. This dual nature contributes to the complexity and dynamism of Indian culture, where both collective well-being and individual aspirations play significant roles in shaping societal norms and behaviors.

The brief review on core Indian values and work revealed that while globalisation has produced some changes such as the breakdown of the joint family system, some attitudes and roles have remained traditional. For example, while families in urban areas were increasingly becoming nuclear in nature, they still exerted considerable influence on the people, even at work (Sinha et al. 2001); hierarchical relationships continued to exist, paternalistic behaviour by superiors was a major source of motivation for Indian employees (Saini & Budhwar 2008); a bureaucratic style of management was still prevalent (Poster & Prasad 2005); and finally the endorsement of seemingly contradictory values such as competition and cooperation was prevalent in the Indian culture (Jain et al. 2006). However, other modern Indian values such entrepreneurship, innovation, a sense of passion in what they do coupled with Indian virtues such as resilience and patience has the potential to make India a formidable power in the future (Jain et al., 2006).

Prominent in psychological research in youth and migration is Berry's acculturation strategies model (Berry, 1980). This model refers to four distinct strategies that immigrants may use in a new cultural context.

Integration is said to happen when an individual seeks to maintain contact with both native and host culture.

Assimilation describes individuals who adapt to the dominant group whilst not maintaining their own cultural identity.

Separation relates to those who preserve their cultural identity without seeking to make contact with the host group.

Marginalisation relates to those who appear to be confused and lose ties with home culture but do not develop a clear orientation towards the host culture.

In a study of immigrant young people in 13 countries, Berry et al. (2006) found that a third of youth demonstrated an integration profile, which predicts consistently more positive outcomes than alternative strategies, and the remainder were more or less equally divided among the other profiles.

In another study, South Asian adolescents aged 13–18 years in Britain found that the majority of Indian youth adopted integration strategies whereas Pakistani Muslim youth fitted an ethnic or separation profile (Robinson, 2009).

Recently, Berry's acculturation framework has come under sustained critical reflection. His model promotes an illusion of stable psychological identifications among migrants and fails to capture how macro-level processes such as changing economic and political circumstances in the lives of migrants who are experiencing change, may be inextricably intertwined in immigrant identity (Lichtsinn and Veale, 2007; Hermans, 2001a). Bhatia (2008) has argued that the model fails to address the psychological impact of migration for identity as it does not account for the dynamic, 'culturally distinct and politically entrenched experiences' of transnational migrants. It also does not capture the impact for migrant adolescents of growing up outside their homeland as part of transnational diasporas.

'Transnational diasporas' are communities that 'forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995, p. 48). Kleist (2008) argues that in academic writing, a 'diaspora' is often characterised as a marginalized community which experiences social and cultural problems in adapting to life in Western countries.

Negotiation is the de facto method for managing conflicts of identity as well as conflicts of value. Anyone who abandons his or her country on the path of emigration already knows that he or she will also have to abandon some expressions of cultural identity to attain the approval of the host country. Desire for survival seems to induce people to accept limitations upon their identities or to negotiate forms of cohabitation with other identities. Similarly, in the case of a conflict between values and rights, the method of balancing and weighing legitimate but conflicting demands can lead to the compromising of individual demands in the service of achieving a coexistence within the context of larger exigencies.

Naidoo (2007) notes that among the Indian diaspora in Australia, parents' greatest fear is that their children will become too "Australianised" and begin to relinquish the core cultural values and practices of their family. Indian parents also tend to establish strict rules for their children's behaviour in order to exert some control in the face of cultural change and foreign influence. Naidoo (2007) also argues that religion and religious affiliations in the host country are used by parents in order to instil core cultural and religious values in the second generation.

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Similarly, Das Gupta (1998) notes that during the process of negotiation, Indian migrants to the USA make a considerable effort to maintain their Indian identity in their host countries and to resist cultural change. They familiarize the next generation with their Indian heritage and traditions through their participation in cultural celebrations and communal festivals in the host country. Physical links with the homeland are maintained through frequent trips to India, while psychological ties are fostered through a process of reinventing "Indian culture" in the host country (Bhattacharjee, 1992).

Despite its myriad cultural dimensions, India remains united by a shared sense of identity and belonging. Whether it's celebrating festivals, enjoying a shared meal, or coming together in times of adversity, Indians embrace their differences while celebrating their common heritage.

In conclusion, India's cultural juxtaposition is not just a coexistence of contrasts; it's a celebration of diversity. From the bustling streets of its cities to the serene villages of its countryside, India embodies the essence of unity in diversity. It's a reminder that despite our differences, we are all threads in the rich tapestry of humanity.

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