



The Vibrant Tapestry Of Multicultural Identity In Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The present research paper explores the beauty of cultural, linguistic, and historical diversities in Himachal Pradesh which proved to be a milestone in the creation and adoption of Multiculturalism in the very core of the hilly state. Being a hilly patch of land with serene mountain ranges the state personifies its socio-cultural integration and cohesion in a new way to attract the attention of the populace from every nook and corner of the country to experience the holistic approach followed by the state. Topographical variations, geographical differences, and historical distinctiveness appeal to the general populace to explore the state, which has adopted diverse ethnicities, languages, and religious practices to deliver a sound message of coexistence and cohesiveness through the concept of Multiculturalism. This research paper also states how social and political upheavals proved to be the ethos of multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh, where diverse cultural groups have maintained the splendid beauty of coexistence in the form of mutual respect and cooperation. This research paper also seeks to explore the graceful balance between unity in diversity gained through Multiculturalism, socio-cultural integration, and amalgamation of ideas and perspectives accepted by various ethnic groups living in Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Himachal Pradesh; Multiculturalism; ethnicity, multilingualism, migration, identity.

1. Introduction

Himachal Pradesh, a beautiful hilly state of India, repeats the history of evolution from different angles. The influence of globalization and post-modernity have paved the way to multiculturalism which emerged as a significant academic and policy-related subject. The unique sources of its origin start from social, political, historical, and cultural dimensions and its diverse communities such as tribal groups, various caste identities, and migrants [1].

Being a Northern Indian state adjoining Punjab, Jammu–Kashmir, Haryana, and Tibet, Himachal Pradesh is a manifestation of ethnic and cultural diversity. Despite its geographical disparity and small population, the state possesses a complex social-cultural composition with indigenous tribes' migrants from neighboring states and a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. Apart from this, this research paper focuses attention on how multiculturalism paved the way for the historical movements of people, the spread of religion, and local governance systems [2].

The historical foundation of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh took place during the pre-colonial era when indigenous tribes and early settlers provided the space to understand the fabric of diversity, knitted on a single theme of coexistence, adaptability, and cohesion. Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh is embedded in its indigenous tribes such as Swangla, Khampa, Pangewal, Gaddis, Kinnaura, Lahaulas, Gujjars, Jads, and Bodh.

The historical foundation of Multiculturalism was laid down by these tribes who have different cultural identities, customs, belief systems, and dialects. The tribal regions of Himachal Pradesh such as Lahul Spiti and Kinnaur were significantly influenced by Tibetan culture and Buddhism, providing multicultural identities. The direct or indirect adoption of that culture by people living in these two districts of Himachal Pradesh by and large highlights the concept of coexistence. The Gaddi tribes of Himachal Pradesh, inhabited in Bharmour Tehsil of district Chamba and Kangra practiced Hinduism but the occupational migration of shepherds from one corner to another corner of Himachal Pradesh made them capable of understanding and respecting the concept of Multiculturalism. In addition to the migration of various sub-castes into tribes, the group is again an epitome of socio-culture integration, Brahmins, Rajputs, Khatri, Thakurs, and Rathi come under this tribe group (Gaddi) who have multiple cultural shifts in their day-to-day life. During the medieval period, religion and culture also played a vital role in the growth of

Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. With the emergence of newly princely states and the migration of different communities from one point to another point, Himachal Pradesh remarked on the proliferation of Hinduism, Buddhism, and later Islam in the lower Hills. This intermingling of various religions is again a live example of socio-cultural and religious integrity.

2. Migration: Intra, Inter-state, and Tibetan

Migration within the state played a very significant role in the development of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. People living in remote and tribal regions of Himachal Pradesh migrated to various districts of the state in search of employment, quality education, and exposure. Students from these difficult areas were admitted to universities, colleges, and other institutions of learning, where they got an opportunity to share and impart their culture among the common masses in the form of dance, folklore, folk song, and mythological interpretations. Thus, this collaboration of culture ignited the positive spirit of Multiculturalism in the brain of the people of Himachal Pradesh. In addition to students, other categories also promoted their traditions, conventions, customs, rituals, and mythologies among different sections of society. Himachal Pradesh University, Regional Centre Dharamshala, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, and almost every college of Himachal Pradesh preserve cultural diversity and intersections through various programs and activities. These centers of excellence in the field of education provided ample choices and adequate opportunities to students for the patronage and preserving of their respective cultural heritage.

Apart from intra-migration, Interstate migration can be assessed as a role model in the promotion of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. A large number of migrant workers from other parts of the nation, particularly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana added another fascinating colour to Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. These migrant communities also bring their own cultural practices, regional languages, and festivals to the state. This interchanging and adoration of cultural diversity again advocates the utility of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh [3].

Additionally, the most significant contributor to Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh is the Tibetan Refugee Community. This community took shelter in Himachal Pradesh in 1959 (Kangra, McLeodganj Dharamshala) under the leadership of 'His Holiness' The Dalai Lama 14th, in an attempt to save themselves and their identity after a failed revolt against Chinese dictatorship. They also brought their deep-rooted

culture, religion, and economic landscape to the state. Dharamshala, the place where the majority of people are Himachali, came under the influence of Tibetan cultural traditions, and conventions. The exploration of Tibetan culture and religion in Himachal Pradesh again throws shining rays of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. Workers from our neighbouring country Nepal also captivate the beauty of Multiculturalism through intersectionality [4].

3. Cultural Diversity in Himachal Pradesh an Epitome of Multiculturalism and Socio-Cultural Integration:

Himachal Pradesh knitted with the fabric of cultural diversity, has a valuable impact on Multiculturalism. The state comprising twelve districts is symbolically diversified in the inceptions of cultural heritages. Five districts of the state, Chamba, Kangra, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, and Mandi have some cultural similarities. In their culinary habits, most regions have similar tastes and techniques, the way to serve food in a sitting queue is still in practice but somehow one can experience culinary diversity also. The dresses costumes, and jewellery are somehow similar (Except Gaddi, Gujjar Tribes). The distinctiveness in marriage, rituals, customs, folksong, folk literature, art and painting, social fraternity, and religious and cultural harmony paves the way to Multiculturalism.

Districts such as Shimla and Sirmour, practice the same cultural affinities. In district Sirmour, there are intersections of cultural identities and an impact of the cultural integration with adjoining states Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Punjab navigates the growth of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. Shimla, a place of historical importance from the time of British Colonialism, preserves a unique culture with the parallel culture of Sirmour. There are several religious, culinary, social, and conventional similarities between both districts. The rest of the districts such as Una and Solan, represent Punjabi culture with their own traditional culture and value system. This exposure was gained from the multicultural perspective of people who used to live heterogeneously. District Kullu of Himachal Pradesh enriched in the form of art, sculpture carving, and religious places further states Multiculturalism [5].

4. Ethnic Diversity: a milestone in the growth of Multiculturalism.

Ethnic diversity is defined as cultural diversity found within a single entity, in terms of beliefs, nationality, language, or ancestry within a particular tribe. In Himachal Pradesh, the tempting aesthetic feature of tribes' ethnicity and diversity plays a vital role in providing us with a concrete picture of socio-cultural, religious, and historical integration. The root cause of the evolution and growth of these tribe's ethnicities laid down new parameters of life. Tribal groups such as Gaddis, inhabitants of Bharmour tehsil of district Chamba, present ethnic diversity through their culture. The occupation of shepherds (grazing cattle, especially Sheep and Goats) narrates the complete story of their internal migration from one district to another as per the need of the hours. The exploration of new mountainous routes to reach their destination and to share their culture as well as to pay respect to the cultures of other people indicates cultural and ethnic coexistence. They move from Bharmour to Lahaul Spiti, Kangra, Hamirpur, Una, and Bilaspur with their cattle. This movement and temporary migration strengthen healthy relations and belonging with the people of another district. The rich ethnic identity is reflected through their traditional, dresses, folksongs, folk dance, folk literature (Oral stories and mythologies) costumes, jewellery, and ancestry.

Gujjars, another tribal group living in regions of Chamba, Kangra, and Mandi again show ethnic diversity. Their religious diversity and unique identity are reflected in their hard lifestyle and dressing sense. Their association with other ethnic groups denotes cultural coexistence. Other ethnic groups like Kinnaura, Lahaula, Pangwala, Khampa, Jads, etc. recognize the component of Multiculturalism and social coexistence in Himachal Pradesh [6].

5. Tourism: a paramount feature of Multiculturalism and Socio-cultural Integration in Himachal Pradesh

As the economy of any state highly depends upon the tourism industry, it also enhances cultural affinity and brotherhood in addition to generating revenue for the state. Himachal Pradesh is an aspiring threshold for tourists from different parts of the country and the globe. The Department of Tourism, (Govt. of Himachal Pradesh) has maintained the balance between tourists and business of the state. Himachal tourism invites people to understand Himachali culture, its pace with natural beauty, and behavioral studies of people living in this peaceful state. Places such as Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Rohtang, Dalhousie, Khajiyaar, Renuka Ji, Naldehra, Kasouli, Mandi (Riwalsar Lake) Nahan, etc. open doors to tourists with

the warmth of their hearts. During their stay in Himachal Pradesh, they get well accustomed to the culture of Himachal Pradesh. In return, the exchange and learning of linguistic, cultural, religious, educational, political, and social diversity, correct this statement that Himachal Pradesh is a multicultural, multilingual, and multifaceted state [7].

6. Role of education in the promotion of Multiculturalism and socio-cultural integration in Himachal Pradesh.

Education, a weapon to change the world, is the backbone of the growth and progress of any country. In Himachal Pradesh education system is knotting the tie of togetherness through its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. The subjects of history, political science, geography, literature and art, fine art, visual art, comparative studies on emerging national and international issues, and linguistics are keeping a special place for the young generation of the state. The transformation undertaken in the field of education, and initiatives taken by the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh to impart quality education among the students, the right to education, and the choice-based subject adopting system automatically brought a massive change in the lives of students and research scholars. Higher Educational institutions organize various national/ international conferences, seminars, faculty development programs, faculty induction programs, workshops, and short-term courses to bring all intellectuals under one roof. These programs harness a strong feeling of globalization and multiculturalism in the polished brains of students, research scholars, and faculty members. The design of the syllabus for primary, elementary, and secondary level students is also neck filled source of Multiculturalism and socio-cultural integration in peace loving state of Himachal Pradesh [8].

7. Multilingual approaches in Himachal Pradesh: a Role Model in the development of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh

The multilingual identity of the state navigates the roots of Multiculturalism and social integration in Himachal Pradesh. From every nook and corner of the state, a strong linguistic variation presents a picaresque of collectiveness and interconnectivity.

In addition to the use of Hindi and English, people from their respective districts use their local dialects and vernacular languages as the medium of expression. Although there is no script of these languages available in the literary field the utility of these local dialects from historical periods promotes historical Multiculturalism. Different ethnic groups within Himachal Pradesh and outside try to represent their literary and cultural heritage through these languages. Gaddi tribes of Himachal Pradesh communicate in the Gaddiyali dialect, and Pangwal, use Pangwali dialects [9]. The comparative study of both of these tribes, living in the same district (Chamba) exhibits linguistic diversity. People from these two tribal regions of the state share and practice their dialects simultaneously. In the same way, the collaboration of the Tibetan language and the Bhoti language of Kinnaur and Lahaul Spiti is again an example of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. Cultural integration on the basis of Multilingualism in Trans Giri and Sis Giri regions of district Sirmour states the same patterns of Multiculturalism, Furthermore, the influences of Haryanvi, Punjabi, and Utrakhand (Pahari dialect) in districts such as Sirmour, Una, Kangra, Chamba, and Solan depict the aesthetic beauty of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh [10].

8. Conclusion:

In nut shell, the present research paper is an attempt to bring new vistas of coexistence and harmonious synergies among the general populace of the state through multiculturalism and socio-cultural integration. The research paper put notes on the fundamental components of multiculturalism in the form of social, cultural, religious educational, and ethnic diversities. An attempt is also made to describe the influence of the Department of Tourism on the promotion of Multiculturalism and socio-cultural integration in Himachal Pradesh. The fundamental features responsible for the promotion of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh such as the influence of Migration (Intra, Inter-state, Tibetan) cultural diversity, ethnic diversity, and the role of universal education programs bring forward some practical aspects in the progress of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh. Apart from these features, the political landscape of Himachal Pradesh strengthens the notion of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh through its diversified political representation, inclusiveness of regional parties in the political system of the state, and affirmative action and reservations in politics. The national political parties often strive hard to choose a candidate to contest the election from different ethnic backgrounds so that specific communities may bring good fortune to the winning party. In addition, the emergence of regional political parties in Himachal Pradesh, such as

Himachal Vikas Congress, and Himachal Janta Party, immensely contributed to enhance cultural diversity and Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh through their involvement in regional politics. The division of legislative seats on the basis of reservations again manifests the beauty of Multiculturalism. Three seats in the state are reserved for representation of Scheduled Tribal areas inhabitants (Bharmour, Pangi, Kinnaur, and Lahaul Spiti), whereas seventeen seats are reserved for the representation of Scheduled Castes of Himachal Pradesh. The Other Backward Classes also make a direct or indirect impact on the politics of Himachal Pradesh. Apart from its reservation in PRIs also represents multiculturalism. All the elected candidates, under one roof, make policies for their respective regions. Thus, ethnic plurality, gender equality, and political fraternity in the politics of Himachal Pradesh may be assessed as a live example. The formation and implementation of various policies for the betterment of Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes, and Other Backward Classes is a strong personification of Multiculturalism in Himachal Pradesh.

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