

The British factor played an important role in influencing the nature of Indian culture in the modern period. There were many aspects of British rule that influenced the condition and direction of Indian culture. These aspects can be understood as follows:

■ **What was the impact of British rule on the demographic structure of India?**

During ancient and medieval times, population migration occurred due to economic and political factors. This trend continued under British rule, as migration was encouraged for various reasons. British rule negatively impacted indigenous industries and employment, compelling affected groups to seek opportunities elsewhere. Consequently, individuals migrated both out of the country as indentured labor and within the country. Tribal groups were sent to tea and coffee plantations as contract labor, while people from Uttar Pradesh migrated to cities like Bombay, Malegaon, and Bhiwandi due to the decline of cotton textile and handicraft industries.

Secondly, the introduction of a new transportation system played a significant role in driving population migration. Nomadic tribes from India, for example, migrated to Bombay and secured employment as dock workers. Thirdly, individuals relocated from one region to another in search of business opportunities and government services. The Parsis from Gujarat, for instance, settled in Bombay, while Gujarati businessmen moved to Calcutta. Marwaris from Rajasthan initially established themselves in Murshidabad in Bengal before ultimately relocating to Calcutta to take advantage of the cloth trade. Similarly, the Punjabi community dispersed to Delhi, Lucknow, and Allahabad in the eastern region.

This intermingling of diverse groups transformed each area into a microcosm of India,

highlighting the rich regional, ethnic, and communal diversity that emerged in the Indian subcontinent.

■ **What kind of impact did the British leave on Indian culture?**

The impact of British rule on Indian culture was profound and extended over a significant duration. It is crucial to acknowledge that Britain underwent internal transformations during this period, transitioning from a feudal system to a capitalist one. Unlike in other regions like Latin America and Africa, where Western powers often destroyed indigenous cultures, India's ancient culture had strong foundations that resisted complete eradication by the British. Rather than obliterating it, the British aimed to induce changes by intervening in Indian culture.

This intervention manifested in various ways. During the 18th century, British orientalists, such as William Jones and Colebrooke, extensively examined and investigated Indian culture, interpreting it through their own perspectives and interests. They emphasized the importance of religion as a fundamental aspect of Indian culture and presented ancient India as a land filled with revered saints and sages. In the 19th century, a new generation of British thinkers, influenced by liberal and utilitarian ideologies, emerged. They became vocal critics of Indian culture, advocating for reforms and transformations within the country.

During this time, the introduction of English education in India played a significant role. This educational system allowed a section of Indians to come into contact with Western ideologies and perspectives, influencing their thinking and outlook.

Western thought was heavily influenced by the European Enlightenment, which placed emphasis on several key aspects:

1. Rationalism
2. Humanism
3. Individualism
4. Secularism.

Indian intellectuals were exposed to these ideas and were greatly influenced by the intellectual achievements of Europe. They started scrutinizing the shortcomings within Indian culture and made efforts to address them. However, the persistent criticism of Indian culture by liberal and utilitarian thinkers deeply hurt the sentiments of Indian intellectuals, who perceived it as Western racist arrogance. This led to a reactionary response, prompting them to highlight the positive and superior aspects of their own culture. Consequently, in the 19th century, the process of cultural reform and modernization began in India.

Prominent figures such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Dadabhai Naoroji, and others played significant roles in advocating for social and cultural changes during that era in India.

■ **Did the reforms in 19th century Indian society and culture stem from the influence of Western ideas or were they a reaction against them?**

The reforms in 19th century Indian society and culture emerged as a result of both influence and reaction. Figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda demonstrated elements of both approaches. They recognized the value of Western ideas and aimed to incorporate them, while also seeking to find concepts like 'rationalism,' 'humanism,' 'individualism,' and 'secularism' within their own cultural framework. However, the degree of influence and reaction varied among different thinkers. Some embraced a stronger reactionary stance, leading to the emergence of revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj among Hindus and the Farazi and Wahabi movements among Muslims.

■ **What are the advantages and disadvantages of the influence of Western ideas?**

Contact with Western ideas had the advantage of bridging the ideological divide between the Western world and India. This interaction enabled Indians to familiarize themselves with the principles of the Western Enlightenment, encompassing concepts like 'humanism,' 'liberalism,' 'individualism,' and 'secularism.' These ideas advocated for democratic values and contributed to a climate of reform in India.

However, there was a downside to this influence, as an excessive inclination towards westernization emerged. The appeal of individualism and liberalism naturally resulted in a growing attraction to capitalism, which, in turn, fueled the rise of consumerism.

■ **What were the advantages and disadvantages of the influence of the traditionalist ideas?**

The advantage lay in the appreciation and acknowledgment of Indian culture and its achievements, which instilled a sense of self-assurance among Indians. Eminent figures like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Aurobindo Ghosh recognized the limitations of Western ideology as a tool of colonialism. They promoted Indian nationalism by highlighting the strengths of Indian culture.

However, Hindu and Muslim thinkers tended to emphasize their respective cultural and religious traditions. Hindu thinkers emphasized the Hindu aspects of the culture, while Muslim reformers focused on revitalizing the fundamental elements of Islam. This fragmented the idea of a unified culture and inadvertently promoted communalism.

■ **How did the British's narrow interpretation of Indian culture encourage separatism?**

Due to a limited understanding of Indian culture, British thinkers and anthropologists, to some extent, supported the 'divide and rule' policy.

They presented a narrow interpretation of Indian traditions and culture, often viewing religion as the primary foundation of Indian society and interpreting culture solely through a religious lens. This perspective was reflected in various measures implemented by the British.

For instance, in 1817, James Mill authored the first history of India, dividing it into Hindu, Muslim, and British periods, with religion serving as the basis for this division. Additionally, British administrators conducted a census, categorizing non-Muslims, non-Christians, and non-Parsis as Hindu sects, thereby creating distinct religious communities.

■ **What was the reaction of the Muslim community to British policy?**

The British acquisition of power from Muslims in India left some elite Muslims feeling powerless and marginalized. Muslim farmers also experienced economic oppression under British rule, intensifying their dissatisfaction. Consequently, they sought means of resistance against the British, but lacked the ideological framework for effective opposition. They turned to reviving the original form of Islamic ideology as a form of resistance, envisioning the restoration of the caliphate, a time when Muslims had established a global state. This mindset influenced movements like the Farazi movement, Wahabi movement, and Tariqa-e-Muhammadiya.

However, another strand of Muslim resistance emerged under the influence of Western ideas, represented by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh group. They aimed to modernize Muslim society and believed that cooperation with the British was necessary for the progress of the Muslim community. Recognizing their minority status in India, they feared potential marginalization in the democratic process due to the numerical dominance of Hindus. They believed that by gaining favor from the British, they could counterbalance Hindu influence.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan advocated for community-based equality instead of numerical equality to balance the power dynamics with Hindus. He viewed Hinduism and Islam as two distinct sects, deserving equal voting rights in decision-making processes. Despite their modern education, the Aligarh movement emphasized religion as the basis of community identity and demanded equality with Hindus on that basis. Consequently, religion became the foundation for resistance for both the Hindu revivalist group and the modern educated Muslim group. This development had a negative impact on the concept of an integrated culture that had been evolving in India for centuries.

■ **What is the relationship between religion and culture?**

Culture is a comprehensive and expansive concept that encompasses various aspects including food, lifestyle, ethics, religion, worldview, art, and literature. While religion is an important component of culture, it is regrettable that some individuals often equated religion with culture, leading to a limited understanding of the broader concept of culture itself.

■ **Why did nationalism and communalism both grow together and like step brothers in the middle of the Indian National Movement?**

The concept of European nationalism clashes with the Indian situation due to fundamental contradictions. European nationalism emerged in the 19th century, emphasizing specific geographical units, centralized governance, and cultural-linguistic uniformity. However, this model faced challenges in Eastern Europe and did not align with conditions in Asian and African countries, including India.

India, with its immense cultural diversity, possesses a unique identity based on unity amid diversity. However, the arrival of British colonial rule led to cracks in India's social structure. Two key factors contributed to this:

1. Flawed British understanding: The British had an inadequate understanding of Indian tradition and society, which harmed India's integrated culture. They promoted separatism by recognizing religion as the primary identity of India, dividing the country along religious lines. This fostered a sense of division among communities that historically coexisted and exchanged ideas, such as Brahmin, Buddhist, Jain, Aryans, and non-Aryan sects. Furthermore, the British incorrectly labeled all non-Muslim and non-Christian groups as Hindu, despite the diverse nature of Hinduism itself.

The British deepened communal divisions through initiatives like the census, which placed greater significance on communal identity. Despite Hindus and Muslims having a long history of coexistence and a harmonious "Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb" (composite culture), the census reinforced a sense of division between these communities. Paradoxically, while the census strengthened national consciousness, it also fueled communal divisions.

Additionally, James Mill's interpretation of Indian history further exacerbated communal divisions by dividing it into Hindu and Muslim periods, perpetuating the notion that religion is the foundation of Indian life.

2. The 19th century social and religious reform movements, known as the Indian Renaissance, paved the way for the emergence of modern nationalism in India. These movements aimed to weaken regional, caste, and gender divisions and foster a sense of unity among Indians. However, due to the emphasis on ancient Hindu or Islamic traditions by Hindu and Muslim reformers respectively, separatist tendencies were also encouraged.

3. Muslim reformers, in response to British rule, developed a consciousness of resistance. However, this resistance took a communal turn as they excessively emphasized religious identity to achieve equality with Hindus,

abandoning India's syncretic culture. This trend began with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and culminated in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's politics. While Jinnah had Western education and secular personal beliefs, political opportunism led him to publicly embrace communalism. He declared Hindus and Muslims as two separate nations in need of separate territories, identities, and national entities, further fueling separatism.

4. Hindu communalism emerged in response to Muslim communalism, disguising itself as Hindu nationalism. VD Savarkar, once a prominent freedom fighter, turned to Hindutva politics in the 1930s and rejected the idea of 'cultural nationalism.' According to him, the state is a political unit, while the nation is a cultural unit. Savarkar believed that a distinct 'identity' derived from 'Hinduism' was necessary for nation-building. He excluded Muslims and Christians from this concept since their holy sites were located outside India.

Both Jinnah and Savarkar disregarded the rich legacy of Indian history. Interestingly, the concept of cultural nationalism inadvertently strengthened the demands of Muslim communalists for a separate nation, benefiting their cause.

5. Until the mid-19th century, British policies inadvertently fostered separatism in India due to their limited understanding of Indian culture. However, they later strategically promoted Muslim separatism to undermine the Indian national movement. The introduction of separate electorates in 1909 exemplifies this policy, which persisted until 1945. Throughout this period, the British granted communal concessions to Muslims alongside constitutional concessions to India.

6. As nationalism gained traction among the general populace, communalism unfortunately grew alongside it. The Muslim League issued the 'Delhi Manifesto', while the Congress rallied behind the slogan 'Quit India' in 1942, and the League's slogan was 'Ladke Lenge Pakistan' (We

will take Pakistan by force). In 1937, when native governments were established, the League organized the Lahore Declaration in 1940, advocating for a separate province. In 1946, during the formation of the interim government through collaboration between various parties, the League incited riots in Calcutta. Eventually, the country achieved independence, but the tragic partition ensued.

7. In the 20th century, communal frenzy overshadowed India's integrated culture. Despite the professed commitment to secularism by political parties like the Congress, they were unable to curb this religious fervor. As a result, both nationalism and communalism coexisted in India, profoundly influencing its political landscape.

- **How did the Constituent Assembly redefine India's cultural policy in order to build a new nation state after Indian independence? Was there a choice before us to adopt the western model of nationalism?**

The Western model of nationalism, designed for culturally homogeneous states, presented challenges for diverse and vast India. British administrators like John Strachey, thinkers like Rudyard Kipling, and statesmen like Winston Churchill doubted India's potential to become a nation due to its regional differences. However, India, as the first Asian-African colony moving towards nationhood and democracy, attracted global attention.

Initially, India looked towards the Western model of nationalism, emphasizing a single language and unified nation during the national movement. However, after independence, non-Hindi speaking states opposed the imposition of Hindi as the sole official language. As a compromise, the Constituent Assembly approved Hindi alongside English as the official language for an indefinite period.

Challenges also arose in the formation of linguistic-based states. The Congress initially considered it but abandoned the idea due to

fears of separatism following the partition. However, the acceptance of linguistic-based states occurred later, prompted by movements like the Andhra Pradesh movement. The States Reorganization Commission recommended the formation of provinces based on language, leading to their establishment in 1956.

Certain matters, such as the Uniform Civil Code, were deferred by the Constituent Assembly for future consideration, incorporated into the Directive Principles of State Policy.

India's nation-building process embraced its pluralistic and multicultural nature, deviating from the Western model. This unique approach could serve as a precedent for non-European states, disproving the doubts raised by British officials and politicians regarding India's ability to exist as a nation.

Question: Has the formation of linguistic States strengthened the cause of Indian Unity? [UPSC 2016]

The separation of Telangana from Coastal Andhra Pradesh, despite being a linguistically united region, raised doubts about the effectiveness of linguistic provinces. Naturally, questions arose about whether the formation of linguistic provinces was a wise decision.

However, to fully understand the matter, we must consider the broader context. India, after gaining independence was in the process of building a nation with a vast territory and diverse cultural landscape. The partition had a significant impact, leading to a strong central government and a federal system. In such a scenario, the provinces became concerned about preserving their linguistic and cultural identities. Under British rule, these diverse groups had been suppressed, so independence also meant the recognition of their linguistic and cultural identity. If the central government had rejected these demands, it would have further deepened mutual mistrust and potentially led to tensions.

We can observe similar examples in the cases of Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Muhammad Ali

Jinnah's message to the people of East Pakistan, urging them to abandon Bengali and adopt Urdu, resulted in the emergence of independent Bangladesh in 1971. Similarly, in 1956, when India approved the formation of linguistic provinces, Sri Lanka was attempting to impose the Sinhala language on the Tamil people, which eventually led to a civil war.

On the other hand, the Government of India demonstrated practical wisdom by establishing linguistic provinces. This decision strengthened the trust between the central and state governments, disproving the fear that linguistic identities (sons of the soils) would overshadow the national identity. As a result, the vibrant regional cultures became integrated with the national culture, fostering a harmonious coexistence.

Question: In the context of the diversity of India, can it be said that the regions form cultural units rather than the States? Give reasons with examples for your viewpoint.

[UPSC-2017]

The significance of forming provinces based on linguistic considerations in India is underscored by its remarkable cultural diversity. While 22 languages are recognized as national languages, in reality numerous dialects and variations exist within them. Historical and geographical factors have led to mixed populations in almost all provinces. (*This is evident from a related question asked in the first paper of 2019: "Are there cultural regions of India everywhere in our state?"*)

Migration throughout Indian history has resulted in diverse communities residing in various regions. Telugu-speaking communities can be found in Bengal, Marathi-speaking communities in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and Odia communities in Gujarat. Gujaratis reside in Mumbai and southern states, while Hindi-speaking populations have settled in Maharashtra. Marathi communities have popularized the Ganesh festival across India, and

Bihari communities in Delhi are known for the Kanwariya pilgrimage during Shravan. The Bengali community in Delhi's Chittaranjan Park creates a mini-Calcutta during Dussehra.

This cultural diversity highlights the need to go beyond linguistic factors in forming provinces, as almost every province has a significant population belonging to other linguistic groups. Sensitivity towards diverse linguistic identities is crucial for both the central and state governments. For instance, Maithili and Bhojpuri speakers in Bihar and Nepali speakers in the Gorkhaland region of West Bengal deserve recognition. Therefore, while linguistic considerations play a significant role, the acceptance of diversity should encompass the sensitivity of regional cultures by both state and central governments.

Ques : Discuss the significance of the lion and bull figures in Indian mythology, art and architecture.

(UPSC-2022, 150 word)

Answer : Throughout ancient Indian art, the depiction of combined forms of gods, humans, and animals offers a glimpse of the society of that era. Specifically, the lion and bull hold significant importance and can be understood in the following ways:

Importance of the Lion:

- In ancient times, the lion became associated with Lord Mahavira, symbolising notions of victory and courage.
- During Ashoka's reign, the lion came to represent the king's authority, his courage and the vastness of his empire. The Sarnath pillar serves as a prime example of this symbolism.
- Additionally, the lion, serving as the divine vehicle of Durga, embodies strength, serenity, and stability. These characteristics are reflected in various sculptures and paintings.

- Acknowledging these qualities, a lion sculpture has been prominently placed in our newly constructed Parliament House.

Importance of the Bull:

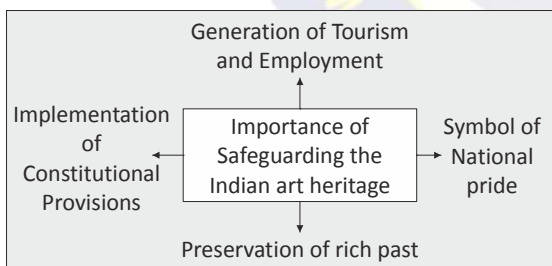
- In ancient times, the bull symbolises fertility and the power of reproduction.
- The depiction of the 'Humped bull' on Harappan seals signifies the advancement of agriculture during that period.
- The bull statue on the Ashokan Rampurva pillar is regarded as a representation of the youthful form of Buddha.
- In the context of bhakti, the bull assumes significance as Lord Shiva's vehicle, known as Nandi.

In conclusion, although these myths may hold varying meanings across different time periods, they provide valuable insights into the contemporary society of their respective eras.

Ques : Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss.

(UPSC-2018, 150 word)

Answer : Preserving our art heritage is a testament to our primitive human development. It is our duty, stated in the constitution, to protect and safeguard our heritage.



Preserving the rich Indian art and heritage holds immense significance for several reasons:

- 1. Promotion of tourism industry:** By safeguarding our ancient cultural heritage, we can stimulate the growth of the tourism sector. These heritage sites serve as captivating attractions that allow visitors from across the globe to delve into our vibrant past. The infusion of heritage tourism generates substantial economic benefits, propelling the local communities forward

and fostering employment opportunities.

2. Cultural and economic contributions:

Heritage sites are intrinsic to our cultural fabric, illuminating the essence of our collective identity. They provide valuable insights into our ancient customs, traditions, and way of life. Preserving these sites is not only crucial for safeguarding our cultural heritage but also for offering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our rich legacy to international audiences. Moreover, the conservation of our heritage sites bolsters national pride and reinforces our sense of belonging.

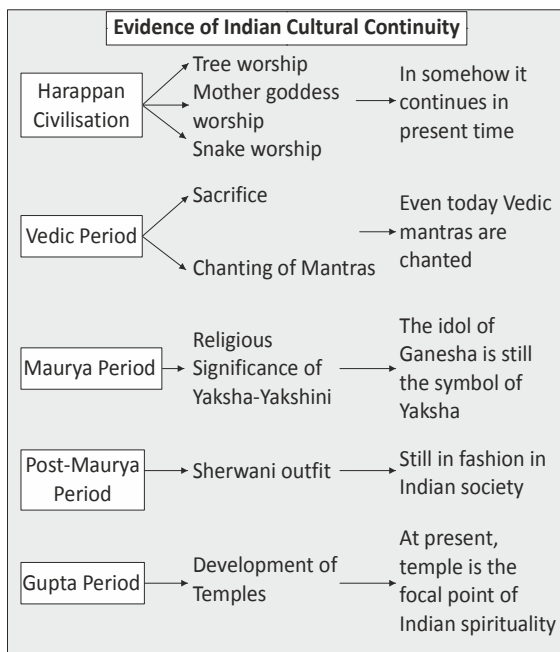
3. Constitutional provisions:

Our constitution upholds the protection of our heritage through provisions such as Articles 29, 49, and 51(A). These provisions recognize the significance of safeguarding our cultural heritage, not only for fostering national integration but also for harnessing their immense economic potential.

Ques : The ancient civilization in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt , Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment.

(UPSC-2015, 200 Word)

Answer: This question has been based on A. L. Basham's book "The Wonder That Was India". This question is taken from the introductory section of the book. A. L. Basham was an important Indologist of the modern period and he provided a very insightful perspective on Indian culture.



Indian civilization is unique from its contemporary civilization in various aspects. Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece civilizations have perished or have been replaced by other cultures. However Indian ancient culture has an enduring character. Despite major changes and upheavals significant threads of continuity can be traced throughout the course of Indian history right up to the present day. The earliest civilizations of Asia had developed in Egypt and Mesopotamia, but Islam conquered those areas and rapidly Islamized them. Ancient civilizations got suppressed and people could get acquainted with those civilizations only after coming to modern times. Similarly, the classical civilization of Greece and Rome was suppressed with the spread of Christianity in Europe. Then, after the European Renaissance in the 16th century, people could understand the heritage of that classical civilization. On the contrary, the ancient culture of India never expanded. In the beginning, whosoever foreign invaders came, they assimilated with Indian culture. Then after 1000 AD, Islam brought an aggressive religious policy, but it could not convert India on a large scale. That's why Muslims remained a minority in India and the ancient culture of India could not be Islamised. The temple co-existed with the mosque and 5000 years old Vedic mantras continued to be recited in the homes of Hindus.

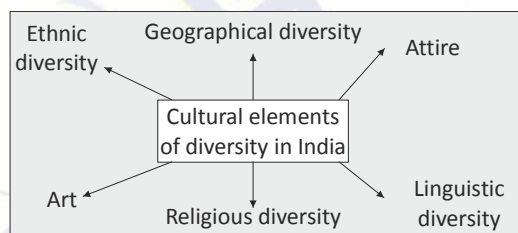
Thus, we find that the ancient culture of India remained unique and distinct.

Ques: Describe any four cultural elements of diversity in India and rate their relative significance in building a national identity.

(UPSC-2015, 200 Word)

Meaning-Exploration of the question:- The question at hand has a vast scope, encompassing multiple dimensions as it seeks to trace the thread of unity throughout India's history, from ancient times to the present day. Additionally, it references a unique form of Indian nationalism known as 'unity in diversity'.

Answer: Culture not only plays a significant role in nation-building, but also shapes the character of a nation. Therefore, India's rich multiculturalism has bestowed a distinct character to the Indian nation.



Four major elements that showcase diversity in India are religion, philosophy, linguistic-literature, and art. Religious diversity has been a prominent aspect of Indian culture. Hinduism, for instance, emerged from a blend of Aryan and non-Aryan religious sects. Bhakti, Avatarism, and idol worship are all products of non-Aryan sects. An intriguing example of religious diversity is the worship of both Goddess Durga and Mahishasura in different parts of India. Kamban's Tamil Ramayana leans towards Ravana, further highlighting this diversity. The process of integration and harmony continued even during the medieval period, exemplified by the Bhakti and Sufi movements, which epitomize the syncretic culture of that time. Similar diversity exists in the field of philosophy as well. Ancient India has a long tradition of free debates, as emphasized by Amartya Sen in his book 'Argumentative Indian.' Various ancient thinkers

held different beliefs, with some embracing the concept of the soul and others rejecting it. Similarly, views on karma and reincarnation also varied among thinkers. Furthermore, India exhibits remarkable linguistic and literary diversity. Many languages have thrived in India, including Hindi, Bengali, Odia, Maithili, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and more. The realm of art is no exception to diversity. Ancient India witnessed the development of two major architectural styles, Nagara and Dravida, which later merged into the Vesara style. The spirit of coordination continued during the medieval period, exemplified by the harmonious blend of arch and lintel under Muslim rule. Sculpture and

painting also reflected a fusion of elite and popular artistic expressions. What makes India's diversity even more intriguing is how, after independence, it was embraced as a strength rather than a weakness. Our constitution makers respected this diversity and included 14 languages in the eighth schedule of the constitution (currently 22 languages). Unlike Western nations that championed one language for one nation, India became a nation based on multiple national languages. This unique model of nationalism, known as 'unity in diversity,' has served as a paradigm for alternative nationalism in India.

