Cultural Sustainability of India: A Survival Story

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Abstract
This paper explores the Cultural Sustainability of India by protecting, preserving and conserving the transparent, ethical and responsible model of ancient India with reference to Vedic literature, Upanishad and Kautilya's Arthashastra. Stories of sustainability and survival deal with land, justice, foreign policy, war and environment through the ages. The Constitution of India upholds the cultural identity of India intact and is largely responsible for cultural and social sustainability of India at present. Besides, India must not – in the rat race for surviving and thriving after the "Brundtland Report" of 1987 – forget the ancient knowledge of sustainability, values and principles, the middle path of Lord Buddha and treatise like Chanakaya Neeti. Hinduism, a way of life also acts as the pillar for social, economic and environmental development. The paper emphasises on events, policies and pacts where it went wrong in history and the cultural sustainability of India that acted for its survival. The paper through different examples concludes that inclusive and tolerant culture of India revamp the sustainability in general and cultural sustainability in particular, helping India survive and thrive in the world carving a niche for her.

Keywords: Sustainability, The Constitution of India, Brundtland Report, Hinduism, tolerant culture.

Introduction

India, a land of diversity occupies 3.2 million sq.km of land area i.e. 2.4% of the world's land area and is seventh largest in size but supports 1.3 billion i.e. 17% of the world's population in 2018. She is 2nd most populous country in the world after China and is likely to be the most populous by 2024. India is diverse by the ways she thinks of herself, and various identities she has accumulated over time due to her beliefs, values, actions and aspirations. She is multilingual and has 22 Scheduled languages recognized officially. India is famous for its tradition on the world's platform as Mark Twain rightly puts it in his words, "India is the cradle of human race also the birthplace of human speech. The mother of history, the grandmother of legend also the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most constructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only". Resultant of action of human race is collaboration of people, environment and habits of people engaged.

From time immemorial, Dharma (moral behavior), artha (wealth), kama (worldly pleasures) are highly recommended to be practiced, is practiced and studied for obtaining moksha (salvation). India with her quest to attain salvation stands at 131th position in Human Development Index (HDI) in year 2017 ranked by United Nations Development Programme amongst 188 countries, with value of 0.64 falling in medium category. HDI is measured by taking into consideration three basic human development indicators namely life expectancy at birth, education and per capita income. If we look at the second factor for the resultant of action of human race, environment; India hasn't performed well on the Global Platform. She ranks 177th out of 180 countries surveyed by World Economic Forum on Environmental Performance Index (EPI) in 2017. EPI is measured on 24 performance indicators across 10 issues covering environment, health and ecosystem. India is at the bottom five countries and is not even slightly promising and inviting for food of thought about Sustainability. The third factor, habits of people or way of life appears optimistic with reference to HDI and EPI. India stands first in the World Economic Forum's Greendex among 18 countries surveyed and study compiled annually by National Geographic and GlobalScan Consumer index in 2017, Greendex being an international report on sustainable living. The score is based on habits of participants in area of energy conservation, consumption pattern in food, transportation, purchase habits, and attitude in other aspects as well. Countries included in survey were mostly developed countries. One may argue that India is home to the largest number of people below international poverty line hence sustainable attitude comes in habit out of necessity and not willingness. However, one must not forget that India is the third largest economy in the world as per World Bank. Less wasteful attitude is embedded in the philosophy of Indians.

Symbiosis among people, environment and people's reaction for environment is extremely important to bring all the factors of development of human race at the zenith of progress and survival, leading civilisation to thrive. Methodologies adopted are qualitative research and conceptual discussion.

Sustainability and Cultural Sustainability

India aspires to be on path of Sustainability and had voluntarily presented her National Review on Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) in July 2017 to UN's High Level Political Forum. SDGs aims to make this world a better

place by enacting on its seventeen set goals by 2030, which is popularly referred as Agenda 2030. The slogan of "Sabka Saath,Sabka Vikas" by Honourable Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi is in line with the universal principle of Agenda 2030 to 'Leave No one Behind'.

Goal no.11 of SDGs is about sustainable cities and communities. Presently, India and the world alike face problems of urban sprawl, injustice, environmental degradation, hunger, war etc. Four pillars of Sustainable Community Development are economic prosperity, cultural vitality, social equity and environmental sustainability representing financial stability and higher standard of living; creative diversity and innovation; justice and welfare; and ecological balance respectively. Development is recognised best by the first pillar i.e. economic prosperity or growth leading to enlargement of choices and ability to acquire different types of insurances. The word sustainable development being debatable gave way to sustainability and even three spheres of sustainability- environment, economic, and social were declared to be part of culture; culture being an overarching envelope for three spheres of sustainability. Cultural indicators are value (Content), processes and medium (Practice) and manifestations (Results). Culture had been defined as identities, values, way of life, medium and message etc. by different authors. Judy Spokes, Executive Officer of the Cultural Development Network says, "Culture is both 'overarching and underpinning'. Hence, Cultural Sustainability is crucial for surviving and thriving of any human race.

Cultural Sustainability is root cause of civilisation. If civilisation is the flesh, culture is bone to flesh. Failure of culture automatically fails civilisation. "In French tradition, civilisation was conceived of as a complex whole encompassing political, economic, religious, technical, moral and social facts. German philosophers on culture separate intellectual, artistic and religious facts from the political, economic and social phenomenon". Indians would take culture for bone of civilisation and would separate or amalgamate various factors accordingly. John Howard says, "Nothing is more important to a country than the way it thinks of itself and national character is an important factor in achieving prosperity". Culture gives character to any country.

Vedic Philosophy of India

Indian philosophy presently is constant reactions between orthodox Hindu Philosophy, non-orthodox Hindu Philosophy, other religious philosophy, literatures like Panchatantra, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Chankya Neeti and modern literature on various subjects including the Constitution of India. Hindu Philosophy comprises of six schools of Orthodox (astik) Hindu Philosophy and three non-orthodox (nastika) Hindu Philosophy. Orthodox school of philosophy includes Yoga, the school of Patanjali; Nyaya, the school of logic; Vaisheshika, the atomist school; Purva Mimamsa, the tradition of Vedic exegesis whereas non-orthodox school of thoughts include Buddhism, Jainism and Carvaka. Former accepts the testimony of Vedas whereas later doesn't.

Vedic Philosophy believes in reality of cosmic unity, eternity of human spirit, reverence for the past and principles of 'Sarva Dharma Sambhao' and metaphysics i.e. Nature of reality. Vedas are collections of thoughts. Vedic thoughts differ in early Vedic period and later Vedic period. Isopanishad says, "This universe is creation of the Supreme Power meant for all the benefit of all his creation. Each individual life-form

must, therefore learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not anyone, species encroach upon the other's right."

Buddhism and Jainism became popular among lower strata of society who were victims of caste system made by brahminical society. Lord Buddha preached about the eight-fold middle path which were Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. He didn't advocate the extremities of later Vedic period. Besides, Lord Buddha accepted that it's impossible to get rid of 'moh' which is advocated by Bhagwat Geeta. Thus, he asked commoners to choose middle path for salvation. Buddhist Philosophy was easier for common man to relate to. Jainism on other hand advocated 'Ahimsha', i.e. Non-violence. 'Meghadutta' by Kalidasa, one of the greatest poet of Sanskrit whose writings were inspired from Vedas, and Puranas; talks about animal sacrifice. Jainism is strictly against butchering animals in sacrifice and is credited by many eminent personalities like Vivekananda and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in influencing thoughts against animal's sacrifice. Indeed, both schools of thought have influenced the other immensely.

Besides, religious philosophy; Kautilya's Arthasastra deals with the well-being of individuals and nation with respect to wealth, law and justice, foreign policy, defence and war. Kautilya says in concluding section of his book: 'The source of the livelihood of men is wealth'. Arthasastra means 'Science of Economics'. According to Kautilya, 'The State or Government has a crucial role to play in maintaining the material well-being of nation and its people.'. Besides, the State is also responsible for upholding law and justice in all walks of lives and amongst various groups of society. Hence, 'dandaniti' or enforcement of laws is an integral part of Arthasastra. Arthasastra is contemporary and relevant even today in the sense that it's economic system and allied sciences was designed for the state approximately as large in size as present day India. He says, 'The wealth of the state was the totality of the surplus stored in king's treasury, the commodity warehouse, the granary, the store for forest produce and the ordnance depots (2.5.1). Of these, the treasury was the most important; the king is advised to devote his best attention to it, because all the activities of the state depended on it (2.8.1, 2). He also emphasizes, 'The value of land is what man makes of it' (7.11.9). Kautilya establishes the relation of land use, quality of land as per rainfall, its terrain, physiology etc. and types of settlement coming up. In other words, he talked about land management. If one analyses the foreign policies by Kautilya; he finds that Kautilya propounded the theory of immediate neighbouring state being the enemy; and a neighbour's neighbour separated from oneself by the intervening enemy to be a friend. He advocated states to take into consideration both short-term and long-term advantages; and adopt policies which would let one to survive show his valour for another day instead of sacrificing oneself foolishly. He says, "Any human action which increases one's welfare is a good policy; otherwise it is a bad policy' (6.2.6-12). The six methods of foreign policies are 'samdhi', making peace; 'Vigraha', hostilities; 'Asana', staying quietly and 'Yana', preparing for war; 'samsraya', seeking protection and 'Dvaidhibhava', is the policy of making peace with a neighbouring king and seek his help. He also made detailed manual on law and justice dealing validity of contracts, sale, purchase, gifts, women, and impartial punishment. "It's the power of punishment alone, when exercised impartially in proportion to the guilt, and irrespective of whether the person punished is the King's son or an enemy, that protects this world and the next." (Kautilya, p.77). The essence and importance of

Kautilya's Arthasastra can even be compared to the Constitution of independent India presently.

The Constitution of India is core structure or basic structure of Soul of India. Though many features of Indian Constitution are borrowed from Constitutions of other countries, it is special and distinguished in its own ways. Keeping in mind the diversity of India, the founding Fathers didn't want to miss on details and hence it's the lengthiest written Constitution. Words, 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic, Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution of India; describe the true spirit of the country and is like 'identity card of the Constitution'. Besides, there are other gems of literature like 'Vidur Neeti', book of Wisdom; and fables like Panchatantra written by Pandit Vishu Sharma. Panchatantra meaning 'five books' is the oldest collection of Fables is book of Nitishastra or wise conduct having moral or philosophical theme and had stood the test of time of technology, modern madness and atomic fear. All the above treatises and many more have shaped the country in its present form.

Culture and Way of life in Ancient, Medieval and present India

Social and Educational System

Culture and way of life of people in ancient, medieval and present India is largely the work of thoughts of individuals and nation as a whole and Vedic philosophy and timeless treatises. India, socially is a nation of joint family system. C. Hui and H. Triandis defined collectivism, which is the opposite of individualism as, "a sense of harmony, interdependence and concern for others". In case of disagreements, final decision is taken by head of the family. Vedic philosophy demands elders and head of the family in particular to not only listen to the pleas of Youngers but lend an understanding heart analysing deeply as to what is the mental trail of his family members. Decisions in case of disagreements were given keeping in mind the mental trails of family members and collective benefits of all in family. Gradually, thoughts of collective benefits, decision of head of family and understanding mental trails were replaced by individual benefits, supremacy of head of family and egoist traits of knowhow took place. Youngers were expected to listen to elders and obey their orders. Hence, in present context, "Generally, adolescents do not share their personal concerns with their parents because they believe their parents will not listen and will not understand their problems".

Present trend of family structure is shifting from joint family to nuclear family. Urbanisation, modernisation and lack of tolerance are few of the reasons. 10% civil cases filed are of family disputes (Daksh Study, 2016). Individuals have greater freedom of speech and action but household size is decreasing with every census survey conducted. Social structure is immensely work of intellect. Gurukul was the only system of education in early Vedic period with no partiality between king's son and tiler's son and focused on teaching life skills by letting scholars have hands on experience. Skills defined occupation; and caste system came into existence only in Later Vedic Period, when birth started to define Caste system. Education and occupation were withheld from lower castes. Apparently in higher castes too, one was not free to choose his occupation. A king's son by dint of birth was to be a king. This led to social, intellectual and cultural decline and caste system is to be blamed for this. Oral

learning was replaced by books and thousands of books of Nalanda University were burnt by invaders. Amadon Hampate Ba says, "In Africa, when an old man dies, a library disappears." A similar situation happened with Nalanda University on ablaze. The spread of Indian Culture abroad was largely the work of Nalanda University and it attracted students from China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, Mongolia and Bokhara. Nothing equals today as pioneer of cultural exchange. Political parties and technology can't replace genuine human interface. 'Sapiens, A Brief History of Humankind', a book by Yuval Noah Harari explains how the size of brain has deteriorated. People have reduced analytical skills though higher technological skills than their ancestors. Books and artificial intelligence is making society progressive but to depend on them in absolute is detrimental to human civilisation and culture. Mathematician Leelawati could calculate faster than computers today and painter Raja Ravi Verma was revolutionary to bring Gods to masses, breaking ceiling of caste system. Economist John Heliban, for happiness level of nation says that income is of little significance and relationship is of larger significance; and one should focus on things that kids have in common with each other. In order to save social and educational system of nation, one should not force them to do things differently nor compare them with others. Both are being fatal.

Land

"Karl Marx, at the initial stage accepted Bernier's theory regarding royal proprietorship of all land in India. Later he came to have realised communal ownership of land. It has been ably shown that Marx recognised three forms of land tenure in India.i) Communal property the original form of tenure which had survived in certain Indian villages; ii) Private property in the region south of the Krishna river which had not come under British rule; iii) Feudal property in areas such as Oudh where tax collectors had developed into feudal land holders on account of weakness in the central government. Of these, first two relates to ancient India". Ancient times has weak evidence of royal ownership of land but early medieval times have strong evidence of royal ownership of land as well as some kind of feudal property in land ownership. The Constitution of India made Property Right as one its Fundamental Rights and it stayed thus till 1978. However, after much debates in court rooms; with 44th Amendment Act, 1978, Property Rights was made a legal right. For Fundamental Rights are core values for human development and stands unaltered in test of time.

Excess land parcels from zamindars were taken under Land Ceiling Act. Land Acquisition Act 1894 didn't give fair compensation and lacked transparency in process. Hence, in 2013; it was replaced by Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 is a new feather added to deal with land development. All regulations put together haven't lessened the number of litigations. As per Daksh Study conducted in 2016, Property disputes account for 66% of litigations. Where is India heading to is a big question. Number of homelessness and housing shortage is increasing with every census conducted. Land regulations have made life easier but for rich and educated strata of society. The story of survival of poor is at stake.

Justice and Governance

Justice and Governance in land of India; where stories of just kings like Raja Shivi, of ancient times who gave away equal pound of his flesh to a pigeon in name of justice; is being tested on Global platform ever with increasing rapes cases. Justice and governance in ancient India was characterised by high level of accountability. Best practices of governance then were Ram Rajya, Vidur Neeti and Chanakya Neeti. Chanakya says, "A debt should be paid till the last penny and an enemy should be destroyed without a trace." Sense of civic responsibility was high at individual level and in joint family,each members were accountable for well-being of others. Women during Vedic period had say in judicial affairs and governance. During medieval period, with every new dynasty and changing political system, people were less accountable for well-being of each other. British Era in India was an era of resistance where individuals looked for affirmation from others. Thinkers, philosophers and reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidya Chandra Sagar initiated reforms at social, cultural and intellectual levels.

Today in free India, the Constitution of India is magna carta of Justice and Governance, though non comprehensive to common man and with loopholes for lawyers to play arounds with sentiments of people. The Constitution of India till 2017, guaranteed reservation to lower caste, while promotion was purely based on eligibility. However, in April 2018; bill for promotion based on caste system was passed by the Indian Parliament and reservation in promotion policy is established until next required amendment which is unlikely to take place in near future. The brighter side of such Governance System is that people are given chance but sensibility to use power rightly should be inculcated in people being promoted based on caste system. Quality of life in free India is no doubt better than slave culture of medieval India. 'No detention policy', abolition of Triple Talaq are golden feathers added to the Judicial history of India.

However, India must work harder to climb up the ladder of World Governance Index (WGI) and needs to perform outstanding in all six indicators of WGI i.e. voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government's effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

Foreign Policies

Tracing through the Foreign Policies of India in different time frames, Kautilyan Foreign Policies are timeless in many ways. Be it in bilateral relations where both present(short) advantages and future(long term) advantages are taken into account or of warfare which have to be good counsel or diplomacy. India being the dominant rule under British Government, didn't have any foreign policies of its own. In 1921, All India National Committee passed a resolution saying that 'present government of India in no ways represent Indian opinion.' Indian Congress made external relations for struggle of Independence. Congress by resolution of 1930, disassociated itself from British policy of involvement of World War II. India even before Independence, adopted the policies of anti-power and anti imperialism.

Pt. Nehru, in his speech talked of policy of non-alignment and non-involvement as basic principles of foreign policy. Different Governments formulated foreign policies

based on spirit of time, keeping policy of non-alignment and non-involvement as core. Present Government has adopted some promising policies like 'Neighbourhood First Policy'. However, present Government keep mixing International Relations and Public Relations. India tried to establish good relations with Nepal and Pakistan overlooking Kautilya Foreign Policy where it says neighbours are enemies. Indeed, as per Kautilya Foreign Policy; India shall focus more on China and Afganishtan. Indian Government shouldn't have spoken for Madhesis in Nepal or expressed displeasure on the Constitution of Nepal, publicly. Besides, India tried to play a role in toppling the K.P. Oil Regime in Kathmandu. All the above, gave wings to China to make inroads into Nepal. Bhutan too felt offended and used by India, on the Doklan issue.

However, present Government led by Mr. Narendra Modi has put India on a Global Platform to a greater extent than all other previous Governments by his constant business ties, foreign visits, invitations to delegates, and agreements between neighbouring states. Kashmir problem is a long standing problem of India since Independence. But India can't declare war on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) nor can it give it away to Pakistan for sovereignty of nation. India will have to adopt a policy of good faith like Chandragupta, guided by Kautilya adopted to acquire good faith of people of Nanda Dynasty; and establish Magdha dynasty. Indian Government have to be critical about foreign policies of different eras, learning from the mistakes of the past; and tackle delegates and use speech diplomatically on Global Platform.

Environment

Stories of survival of environment will be fruitful, if rich people of India stick to the practice of Greendex and sustainability while using resources; and Government focus more on sensitising people and doing things for environment instead of only forming policies and making Acts for Environment. Besides, stories of Chipko Movement, protest by local (Bishnois), Santhal Andolan of pre-independence era and concept of holy land, river and animals; nature worship and symbolisation of nature of ancient literature are made into everyday lore of common people. Way of life and culture of India is largely responsible for sustainability.

India in Rat Race of Sustainability

'Our Common Future' of Brundtland Report made words, 'Sustainable Development and Sustainability' into commonly used words. Though way of life of Indians since then, had only resulted in depletion of forest cover. Forest Survey of India, 2015; reported of increase in forest cover due to afforestation. However, plantation and afforestation can't replace diverse nature of forests. Similar is the case of mangrove, water table, climate change and human progress. All the above resultants are in name of development.

However, there are visionaries, activists, educationists whose lifestyles and attitudes govern the sustainable approach for resource management. Stories of Silent Valley-Social Movement started in 1973 which later in 1984 gave valley, the status of National Park. Narmada Bachao Andolan, River Rally, candle march and protest for social injustice happening in an around are rays of hope with the Constitution of India as fulcrum.

Besides, India in rat race of sustainability and race for quick transfer of information and wisdom; often wrongly inform and educate young generations through text books and social media. Maslow's theory of Motivation is a common subject in text book of school kids in India today. It's represented in a triangle where one climbs the upper layer after fulfilment of lower needs in the hierarchy. However, Maslow never used a triangle to represent his theory. Steven writes, "In summary, from our review of Maslow's theory, we gleaned five key ideas that guided our content analysis: (a) human beings are motivated by a hierarchy of needs; (b) preconditions and cognitive needs exist that affect human motivation; (c) needs are organised in a hierarchy of prepotency in which more basic needs must be *more or less* met (rather than all or none) prior to higher needs; (d) the order of needs is not rigid but instead may be flexible based on external circumstances or individual differences; and (e) most behaviour is multi motivated, that is, simultaneously determined by more than one basic need."

Conclusions and Cultural Sustainability: Way Ahead

Cultural Sustainability of India comes from great men and great thoughts. A well-dressed person may be called a gentleman but well dressed soul is a prophet or great man; the originator of great thoughts like Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Raja Shivi. Great Thoughts, and Vedas being collection of great thoughts; Indian Philosophy and activities are responsible for cultural sustainability of India.

People added or intermingled with verses, contaminating it. India needs to look at and analyse; subjects she is teaching to her Young generation. Philosophy of Vedas was not of caste system but was based on karma. Brahmins made caste system based on birth for their own benefits and ill thoughts crept into the society, and this is the main story. Greatness is the transformation of man by dint of thoughts. So the world should be aware of thoughts, and ways it prevail in social system. If Physics is the material science, metaphysics starts the science of thoughts. Photon is the finest particle in material science and if photon is divided tending to infinity, it will turn into thoughts. Hence, the impact of thought is grave. Indian Culture survived and is thriving only due to metaphysics of thoughts. Hence, India can start to thrive with Indian Philosophy as the base of development.

Secondly, social inclusion and family bond should act as gateway to journey of development. Human Development Index, World Governance Index and Environmental Performance Index should all include social inclusion and mass participation as one of the indicators. Education alliance, establishment of great Universities like Nalanda University of Global importance for cultural and intellectual exchange shall be given *more* importance than military alliance.

Thirdly, hierarchy of needs; for Cultural Sustainability can better be defined by horizontal layers of needs with few or all overlapping in different or same quantum. Hierarchy of needs, can be with respect to mood, circumstance, time, person, social interaction, economy, knowledge, wisdom, theory of relativity and other factors. The students instead of learning by heart Maslow's theory, can derive conceptual theory for testing it scientifically at later stage. East is famous for thoughts and West for science. Which is better off, still remains a matter of discussion after centuries. Thought is mother of science. Science originated from thoughts. Nowadays, thought is demising,

leading to downfall of literature. Its time to save our great literature. We shouldn't forget mother the literature, and our motherland India.

For Sustainability, we need to make our mind finer, then only we can realise physics or metaphysics.

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