

CULTURAL EROSION OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing cultural and moral challenges within contemporary Indian society through the lens of imbalance in social priorities, particularly the persistent neglect of the humanities in education. It argues that sustainable societal development requires equilibrium between scientific advancement and humanistic understanding. Drawing upon historical illustrations such as the rise and decline of the Vijayanagara Empire and key legal and social milestones including Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan and Laxmi v. Union of India, the paper demonstrates how misinterpretation of culture, historical ignorance, and declining ethical awareness contribute to social fragmentation and moral erosion.

The discussion further highlights how misconceptions about tradition—such as child marriage and gender discrimination—persist due to inadequate engagement with authentic historical and cultural knowledge. By revisiting India's civilizational achievements, including the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization and the legacy of the Mauryan Empire, the paper underscores the role of historical consciousness in fostering national confidence and unity.

The study contends that humanities education—encompassing history, sociology, political science, psychology, and philosophy—is essential not only for preserving cultural identity but also for nurturing empathy, ethical reasoning, and responsible citizenship. It concludes that restoring balance between technological progress and humanistic inquiry is crucial to reversing cultural erosion and rebuilding a compassionate, informed, and resilient society.

Keywords: Cultural Erosion; Humanities Education; Social Imbalance; Indian Society; Historical Consciousness; Moral Decay; Gender Justice; Educational Reform; Civilizational Identity; Ethical Awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

My parents always say- balance is something that should be maintained in something as small as a person's daily routine and something in as big as society, as a kid I was not really able to comprehend the meaning of this sentence, at first glance it seems like a really simple statement, but don't let the simplicity of the statement fool you; we are all aware of what balance is, but from time to time we fail to understand its gravity and its

consequences when not complied by this principle- Especially in the terms of society, yes, like every other sphere of life existing on this planet, balance is necessary in human made social structures as well, and necessary to the point where it's neglect can cause a cultural erosion and moral decay in any society and sadly that is exactly what is happening currently in our society- let's take a look at few instances to understand concept and meaning of imbalance both in nature and society.

The past is filled with examples of many events which started out due to a simple imbalance in society or a social structure or even in administration of an empire and it later affected the whole course of the society and empires and led to societal degradation. For instance, in terms of empire and it's administration let us take a look at the example of the Vijaynagra empire, it existed from the 14th to 17th century, (1336-Founded by HariHara and Bukka), four different ruling lineages ruled during this time period. Present day Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and even parts of Kerala and Maharashtra came under this empire, Hampi (Karnataka) was it's capital. The empire reached it's peak under Krishnadeva Raya (Tuluva ruling lineage)- his administration, diplomacy skills and consolidation approach helped the empire prosper, he had maintained good and balanced relations with the Deccan sultanates which played a major role in the stability of the empire during his rule, the empire is said to be at it's peak during his ruling era (1509-1529). After his death in 1529, strain began to show in the imperial structure and the power was shifted to last ruling lineage of the empire (Aravidu) , but the clash between the military ambitions of the Aravidus and the Deccan sultanates led to strain and eventually this led to an alliance of sultanates against the empire. Finally, in 1565- Rama Raya, the chief minister of Vijaynagra made a policy which resulted in the battle of Rakshasi-Tangadi also know as the battle of Talikota where his forces were routed by the combined armies of the Deccan sultanates (Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda) which resulted in the sacking of the city of Vijaynagra- the city was totally abandoned within few years and the empire shifted to the east (Penukonda, later Chandragiri).¹ It was the imbalance between the kings and the sultanates, plus the adventurous policy of Rama Raya which eventually led to the sacking of the city.

As for an instance of imbalance in nature, there was a time, not too long ago when poaching, smuggling, and illegal wildlife trade was quite prevalent in the country, which resulted in the endangering of different wildlife species and the **Wildlife (protection) Act, 1972** ² had to be introduced.

The imbalance that is currently affecting the Indian society, as I mentioned earlier is leading our society towards cultural erosion. It is directly related to our education system and it first caught my attention when I was scrolling through social media. Let me elaborate and explain it more efficiently - Ever since our nation gained independence, 78 years, we have been degrading and demeaning the field of Humanities, not giving it any attention and discouraging students who wish to take up this field, -now how can disregard of a few subjects affect the whole of society? That is because people have been too busy painting this field as an unimportant, and a non-technical field that we forgot to look at the downside. Humanities as a field contain subjects such as- Political science, Sociology, History, Geography, Anthropology, Psychology, Economics, etc. Let's take a moment and think the common link between these subjects? HUMANS.

They all deal with society, relations between humans, affect that humans have on surroundings and things that affect humans, development of the society with time. This single factor in itself makes it a very important field in itself, these subjects teach us about the very roots of the society which we live in today. I have heard people argue with points such as- “what good it is to learn about the past?” or “how will learning about the society help us in any way?”, “We need science and technology for the development of our country”, which is indeed **true** , but the problem arises when people start saying and believing that we **only** need science and technology for development. If these subjects or the field was useless it would not have existed in the first place, in fact, if we take a look at

major philosophers and thinkers all of them gave importance to fields of both philosophy, political science and scientific subjects, be it Plato, Aristotle or Kautilya.

This preconceived notion and the bias that people had, and even have today that Humanities is a useless field has heavily and negatively affected our society- “An empire that is crumbled from within will never rise again” a society, which is not aware of their own history and heritage is destined to collapse, which is exactly what has happened in the past few years, for instance, **Vishakha and Ors. Vs. State of Rajasthan, 1997** ³ the landmark case in which guidelines for protection of the women against sexual harassment in workplace were laid down. If we take a brief look at the facts of the case- A social worker-Bhanwari devi was Brutally raped because she tried to stop a child marriage, the people who committed this heinous act and the people who aided and supported this act, believed that she was interfering with their culture by stopping a child marriage. Putting their culture in danger. Ironically, child marriage was not originally practiced in the Vedic era and even the Rigveda's hymns and commentaries suggest that marriage takes place after the attainment of youth and completion of studies, not in childhood- reflecting the idea of a mature union.⁴ Further the Rigveda also encourages widow remarriage by telling them to move forward in life and there is no mention of the practice of sati.⁵ The practice of child marriage, like a lot of traditions (covering the head with a pallu, infact a lot of traditions which are relatively new but people are unaware) were traditions born out of circumstances and needed to end when circumstances changed, but it did not, because people were not aware of their actual culture and instead of willing to learn they decided to follow out the circumstantial tradition and call it culture. History in fact, Indian history is filled with such examples were people misunderstood circumstantial traditions for culture, just because people were not aware of the real culture, because they paid no attention to history. Almost all the major problems that Indian society faces- casteism, female infanticide, child marriage, dowry deaths, suppression of women, prejudice against homosexuality and transgender, widow remarriage exists because people are not aware of the real culture.

This is how major and negative of an impact this imbalance has left on our society. Learning history and culture is not only necessary to eradicate evil from our society, but plays a much bigger roles as well such as maintaining the nation's dignity and sovereignty. For instace- final struggle for Indian independence is divided into three phases ⁶, but before that there was the Revolt of 1857- also called as the first war of independence by V.D Savarkar ⁷, this revolt despite having potential did not succeed. There were many reasons behind its failure- but one of the major reasons was that there was no unity, no sense of oneness and because people were not aware of their great past they had no pride in their culture and heritage which led to lack of confidence among the rebels themselves, they only knew the fabricated past that the British had fed them- that they were uncivilized barbarians who were not capable of ruling and governing themselves independently, and thus the people could not muster confidence that they are capable enough to survive on their own and build and govern an independent country, -to summarize people had motivation but lacked conviction and a concrete plan and most importantly knowledge. Later, when the final struggle for independence started and the movements were successful which helped us finally gaining independence on 15th August 1947, one of the major reason of success was the discovery of the Indus valley civilization ⁸- This discovery made the people aware that India was one of the oldest existing civilizations, and the further discovery of the Mauryan empire ⁹ gave freedom fighters a sense of confidence- that we are well capable of organizing ourselves and building a country independently. This taught us how prime role a country's past civilization plays in forming of a country.

This also taught us that- **“when a civilization forgets its past, its history, they become slaves, either to foreign power or a dictator.”**

The other side of this imbalance is-people losing compassion and empathy, I recently while scrolling through social media came across a post which was a news headline about a man who brutally killed his pregnant wife in a fit of rage, and the absolute callousness of the comments put me in shock- people legit wrote-“ she must have been at fault” , “she should have listened to her husband, she must have been having an affair”, this truly made me feel that we have lost all our compassion and empathy, in fact these are quite big words, we have lost basic decency. If we are to take a moment and ask ourselves- is this the correct and an appropriate response to the news of murder of a pregnant woman? No, definitely not, instead it shows mentality and thought process of the masses these days.

Today people on social media have a trend of masking everything as dark humor- but they can't distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate situations, why? Because they do not bother to pay attention to the humanitarian aspect of living in a society, because social skills, how to be presentable in a society, how to handle loss or rejection, how to communicate, how to be an asset to a society were not taught, still are not, I have read ample of headlines, where people killed, murdered, just because they were rejected, and people defend them, for instance- acid attack on a girl because she rejected a boy- the landmark case of Laxmi Agarwal- the acid attack survivor- **Laxmi vs. Union of India, 2015**¹⁰ -, the news of murder of Nikki Bhati, her husband set her on fire while she was alive in front of her son all because of dowry, recently Hon'ble Delhi High Court denied bail to a man who is accused of shooting his wife, sadly the list could go on and on. We as a society should never forget that ultimately, we are human beings and let's remain humane.

Now how is all of this related to the field of humanities? As this field not only deals with past and the theories of formation of society, but also how a human should live in a society, how should they behave, basically actions and behavior that distinguishes us from animals, further people argue that these topics are not part of humanistic subjects- YES, they are. The scope of this field is not limited to few subjects-those few subjects form one part of it, humanities as a field has a very wide range of topics, which goes from past civilizations, statecraft, formation of societies to human handling, mental health, maintenance of a society- basically every aspect relating to humans or, affected by humans or, affects humans. These points in itself tell us the importance of the field of Humanities and by, not paying attention, demeaning it, disregarding it, underestimating its importance has caused, the cultural erosion, social decay and moral decay of the Indian society, and it may take twice the years then it took to cause damage to recover from this societal destruction.

However, the recovery can take place only if this issue is viewed as an issue first- as, currently this issue has not even occurred as a thought to the majority of the Indian population- the majority of the population is still busy brawling over issues such as-caste, language, etc. Which further strengthens my point that it is the result of this imbalance, to end these social ills and effectively address these social concerns, the study of these humanistic subjects are required, encouraging students who wish to take up this field, and make students and scholars from other fields aware about the significance and necessity of humanities as a field, and secondly- regrettably, this is a long and arduous path as even if we start encouraging students to take up this field and people start becoming aware, the damage is too profound and has deep roots in the thought process of the society as a whole to be undone in a few years, but I also believe that change is the norm of society and if we start now, maybe after a few decades we may start seeing a difference.

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