CHAPTER VII

CULTURAL LIFE

The cultural life of a society manifests in the form of language and in its tradition, heritage and civilization. Music, dance, paintings, sculpture and fine arts are the creative vistas through which human life vibrates. The ethos of the people and their culture constitute the social fabric. A proper association of people brings out the best out of the cultural life and nurtures a mature and emancipated society. The concept of unity in diversity is observed in the variegated cultural life of any nation.

7.1 Language

Language is the basic medium of communication between human beings to express their feelings, needs, perceptions, aspirations and creative urges. It facilitates instant connectivity and is the foundation of any culture or civilisation.

Language enables humans to organize the world around them into labeled cognitive categories and use these labels to communicate with one another. Language, therefore, makes possible the teaching and sharing of the cognitive and nonmaterial cultures. It provides the principal means through which culture is transmitted and the foundation on which the complexity of human thought and experience rests.
Language allows humans to transcend the limitations imposed by their environment and biological evolution.\(^2^{74}\)

One may speak many languages.

\textit{Sa mene jāḥnavīṃ yānti arthamekamivāṃvatam}\(^2^{75}\)

7.1.1 Tamil

Tamil is one of the oldest and richest languages of the world. It is a classical language with a rich literary heritage. Many great compositions of social and cultural importance have been made in this wonderful language. This is also the language with the devotional compositions of many seers and saints.

\textit{Vedānta Deśika} eulogises the greatness of the Tamil language which has its origin from Sage \textit{Agastya} who drank the whole ocean through \textit{ācamana}. The Tamil language attained supremacy over the \textit{Vedas} through the divine composition \textit{“Tiruvāimozhi”} of \textit{Nammālvar}.

\textit{Vindhyastambhādavihatatervīṣvagacāntasindhoḥ}

\textit{Kumbhīśūnorasurakabalagrāsinaḥ svairabhāṣā!}

\textit{Nityam jātā śatharīputanornispatanti mukhatte}

\textit{Prācīnānāṃ śātiparīṣatāṃ pāduke! Pārvagāṇya !!}\(^2^{76}\)


\(^{275}\) Yadavabhudayam xxii-138

\(^{276}\) Paduka Sahasram 29

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7.1.2 Foreign language

Foreign languages are those which are spoken by aliens and not readily known to the natives.

In the works of *Vedânta Deśika* there is reference about foreign script and language not known to the locals.

*Asamskṛta yuṣmaddvipalipayo vayam!*
*Tat svayameva vācaya* 277

7.2 Culture

Culture represents the multifarious ways in which human beings express themselves in a creative and artistic manner. It is a vibrant mode of social life. It manifests in many pleasant forms like music, dance, painting, sculpture, sports and leisure activities. The culture portrays the social life of a community at any given point of time.

Culture is all that human beings learn to do, to use, to produce, to know, and to believe as they grow to maturity and live out their lives in the social groups to which they belong. 278

Culture is the primary means by which human beings adapt to the challenges of their environment. 279

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277 Sankalpa Suryodayam viii
7.2.1 Dance

Dance is a cultural aspect which facilitates perfect fusion of mind, body and intellect. It is a creative expression through dynamic bodily movements which is a feast for the eyes.

There is reference about dances in the works of *Vedānta Deśika*.

The Lord Himself demonstrates dancing and teaches it for others to follow.

*Abhinayamanurūpam śikṣayatvātmanā tvām*

*Prathamavihita lāsyāḥ pāduke! ranganāthaḥ.*  

Dancing eyebrows.

*Nṛtyat bhujanga bhruve vajrīne daṁstraya tubhyam.*  

Speech shall dance like a danuse.

*Vṛttibhirbahuvidhābhiraśritā venkatesvarakavessarasvati*

*Adhya raṅgapatiratnapāduke! Nartakiva bhavatim nisevatām.*  

Beat of the hands and courteous dance.

*Hasta tālaib lalita Vṛttim.*  

7.2.2 Music

Music is the mainstay of human life as it brings solace. It refreshes human beings and elevates them to a higher plane of experience altogether. When properly practiced it can bring ultimate peace, mental tranquility and supreme happiness.
7.2.2a Musical instruments

The following musical instruments find a place in Vedānta Deśika’s works:

- pañava
- madduka
- madala
- jajari
- murava
- diṇḍima
- dundubhi

Pañavamaddukamadala jajari murava diṇḍima dundubhi sambhavaḥ!

Trydiva gopura sandhi vibhedanaḥ prasabharmutpatati dhvaniradbhutah!!

7.2.3 Rasas

There are nine rasas which one can experience in one’s life. In a dance form, these can be beautifully expressed by the dancer following the prescribed techniques of the particular school of dance that he follows.

The following nava rasas are mentioned in Vedānta Deśika’s works:

- śṛngāra - Love
- Vīra - Heroism
- Karuṇa - Compassion

\[^{284}\text{Sankalpa Suryodayam viii-30}\]
7.2.4 Painting

Painting is a fine arts which are creative expressions in pictorial form.

One who has excelled in painting shall be honoured.

_Tadihakṛtam śilpadarśanena diyatām śilpādhikārīnaḥ samskārayāsmat
prasādocitam pāritosikam_  

7.2.5 Poetry

Poets are creators of poetry which transcend time. The poems are creative expressions of social life as perceived by the poet.

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285 Sankalpa Suryodayam x- 40
286 ibid vii
Vedānta Deśika holds the poets in high esteem.

A Sukavi (good poet) shall have flawless knowledge, good conduct and capacity to express the navarasas in his creations. He is the creator of kāvyā, which is spotless, beautiful and interesting. It is difficult to fully comprehend what the poet says as his words are like pearls having profound meanings. Critics without any basis cannot bring disrespect to the poet because he illumines through his work.

Viśuddhavarnalalithā gunālaṅkāraśālinī

Sarasābhāratī yasya sa satye kaḥ pratisthitaḥ

Apaṅkiladhiyaḥ suddhaḥ sādhūmānasavṛttayaḥ

Vamanti śrutijīvatum dhvanim navarasāspadam

Mahāpuruṣabaddhātmā sargādiprathitodayaḥ

Paśyāvadātaya vācā sevyate caturāṇanaḥ

Prabhūtoditamuktābhir bhūyate sūktīṣuktibhiḥ

Sudrām karṇapūrāya tadṛktvam phalabhedaḥ

Pratipamupamasyaṭāpi svāmabhikhyām na muṣcatic

Kālikeva satām sūktistādṛśadyutinandani

287 Subhasita Nivi xi-3
288 ibid xi-1
289 ibid xi-2
290 ibid xi-5
291 ibid xi-6
7.2.6 Urban life

Urban life constitutes the way of living of the urban people who are supposedly more educated, new fashioned and modern in comparison to their rural counterparts.

Louis Wirth defined a city as a “relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.” Following this lead, urban sociologists emphasized the anonymity, impersonality, and cultural heterogeneity of urban life. Georg Simmel noted that this impersonality derives from the fact that interaction in the city is typically restricted to one role at a time. However, Herbert Gans showed that many urban residents do participate in strong and vital community cultures. Gerald Suttles demonstrated that impoverished city dwellers participate in ethnic subcultures well adapted to their socioeconomic situation. In addition, the sheer volume and clash of diversity in the city provides fertile soil for the artistic imagination.

Many urban neighborhoods, though not identical in social integration to small, closely knit rural communities, nonetheless do exhibit a sense of community. Urban dwellers, in fact, carry around a mental map of what different parts of the city are like and who lives in them. Jane Jacobs argues that the social control of public behavior and the patterning of social interactions in terms of community life are found on the level of local blocks rather than entire neighborhoods. ²⁹²


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There is reference in *Vedānta Deśika's* works about market place where goods are sold for price.

_Eti pratyaham jalpantah purusāḥ punanti bhuvanam puṇyaugha panyāpanāḥ_.

7.3 Association

As human beings are interested in associating themselves with others, association plays a crucial role in shaping one’s conduct and character. Therefore, one has to be very choosy while associating himself with others. Associations shape up and sustain the interests of its members through interactions.

Associations are purposefully created special interest groups that have clearly defined goals and official ways of doing things. The work that an association must accomplish is broken down into manageable tasks that are assigned to specific individuals. The resulting system of planned and clearly defined statuses and role relationships is called formal organizational structure. Associations never operate entirely according to their stated rules and procedures, however; every association also has an informal structure consisting of networks of people who help one another by bending rules and taking procedural shortcuts.

Association is generally defined as a teleological group, i.e., a group which is organized to realize some purpose or purposes. And there is a clear distinction between community and association. A community is far wider than an association,
in the sense that an association falls within or is organized in a community. Community is indeed the presupposition of association.\textsuperscript{295}

\textit{Vedanta Deśika glorifies satsaṅgāḥ} (people worthy of association) and denounces those who are unworthy of association.

One who associates with another gets the qualities of his associate.

\textit{Labdham yena praguna gatinā tat priyāyāḥ sakāśat} 
\textit{Tatsāvrayam śravana rasana svāda yogyā sudhā ca !} \textsuperscript{296}

\textit{Santab} are victorious.

\textit{Santab śrīrangapṛthviśacaranatrāṇaśekharāḥ}

\textit{Jayanti bhuvanatrāṇapadapaṅkajareṇavāḥ.} \textsuperscript{297}

\subsection{7.3.1 Satsaṅgāḥ}

One should associate with righteous people, worthy of association. Such fruitful association triggers social transformation and well-being of different constituents of society.

The following are the advantages of \textit{satsaṅgāḥ}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item association with good people sanctifies even one who is swayed by sensual pleasures.
  \item one who gets proper knowledge
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{295} A.C. Das, “An introduction to the study of society” Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi: 1972 p.31
\textsuperscript{296} Hamsa Sandesam i-6
\textsuperscript{297} Paduka Sahasram 1

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➢ one’s *ahamkāra* is destroyed.

➢ Darkness disappears and one becomes *sātvik*.

*Svataścaitanyahinasya viṣamacchidrabhāginah!
Kaśyacitprgñamūlab syuh puruṣārthapravṛttayaḥ!!* ²⁹⁸

*Pratipatprāptitah prāgapyāpadā satpadāḥṛtab!
Rājā taditāro vāpi noparaṁena grhyate !!* ²⁹⁹

*Viṣamo guṇabhededα vikārān janayan kramāt!*

*Samaye mahatā yogādahaṅkārab pratīyate !!* ³⁰⁰

*Kalāṅkini jale kvāpi sauram pratiphalanmabh !
Tamopahatvam tanute samyddhim ca dine dine !!* ³⁰¹

*Santab* are victorious.

*Jayanti Bhuvana trāṇa pada pankaja renavaḥ* ³⁰²

Their mind is broad like the vastness of a mountain.

*Nib samāṇena māṇena suomanomānasaiḥ samaḥ*

*Somasīmāsamāsannasānumānān sānumānasau* ³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Subhāṣita Nivi viii-7
²⁹⁹ Subhāṣita Nivi viii-2
³⁰⁰ *Ibid* viii-3
³⁰¹ *Ibid* viii-6
³⁰² Paduca Saahasram 1
³⁰³ Yadavabhudayam vi-92
7.3.1a Eight flowers

One who worships with the following eight flowers is worshipped even by the Gods:

➢ Non-violence
➢ Sense control
➢ Kindness to all beings
➢ Forbearance
➢ Wisdom
➢ Penance
➢ Contemplation
➢ Truthfulness

Arcanti ye murabhido mani pādarakṣe

Bhāvātmakairapi param Bhavatīm Prasānaḥ 304

One’s speech shall be inspiring so as to sustain the interest of one who desires to sleep.

Niṣamayati yathāsau nidrayā dūramuktah 305

7.3.2 Sujanāḥ

Good people (Sujanāḥ) forget all the thousands of misdeeds of others. They remember even a single act of goodness on the part of others.

Paśyati paresu doṣānasatopi jananḥ satopi naiva guṇān !

304 Paduka Sahasram 330
305 ibid 19

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Viparitamidam svasminmahimā mohājjanasyaisah!  

Good people (Sujanāḥ) correct the durjanāḥ and lead them on righteous path.

Bahu vidadhatupakārān guptvā duritam prakaśayati tejāḥ!

Suhridi vihitāhitatirvyaṇa pratypakarotī na tat!!

7.3.3 People unworthy of association

One shall not associate with those who are not worthy of any association with him. Bad association pollutes the weak minds resulting in social disharmony. Many a crime are the direct result of association with undesirable elements of the society.

The following people are unworthy of association:

➢ One who is not compassionate
➢ One who is not broad-minded
➢ One who is a nicaḥ
➢ One who is filled with rajo guṇaḥ
➢ One who is a hardened criminal who cannot be corrected even by punishment.
➢ One who blames and disrespects the gods of his forefathers.
➢ One who is a kala

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306 Subhasita Nivi i-3
307 Subhasita Nivi i-9
Katinaḥ kṛśamūlaśca durlabhō daksinetaṁ
Kaścitkalyāṇagātropi manusyaṁnopajivyate Ṛ
dṛṣṭapaṅka pratipadam syādaṁpasarasaṁ sthiṁ
Kāle ghanarasaiṛyogasyeyā jīvitārthibhiṁ
Sataḥ satvaviṁśānāṁ sattayaivaśparādhyaṁ
Kathamkāram pratikāraṁ kalpakoṁ śataṁpia Ṛ
Mitre bhavati vaimukhyam maitri doṣakarena ca
Api tirthaprasūtānāṁ kairavānāṁ rajabhṛtāṁ
Anākalitamānyasyāḥ kṣamāsamsparśavarjitaṁ
Pratibuddhairna sevyante pūrva-deva-virodhinaṁ

7.3.4 Durjanāḥ

Durjanāḥ (bad people) forget thousands of good deeds of others but remember a solitary bad deed of others. They consider others to be full of defects and consider themselves as flawless (nirdoṣabha). They steal the wealth of others. They have myopic vision to consider even the pure white pāncajanya as yellow. They think themselves to be learned though they have only alpa-buddhi.

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308 ibid v-1
309 Subhasita Nivi v-2
310 ibid v-3
311 ibid v-6
312 ibid v-10
7.3.5 Kalāḥ

Kalāḥ are selfish in nature. They do not hesitate even to attack their own friends. They do not respect the world. They cheat others by disguising their real qualities. They go down in their conduct as they give up their svadharma.

Kalāḥ injure those who do good to them and are friendly with those who harm them. They find fault with good people. They do not follow the tradition. They commit a lot of sins. They deceive others. It is sinful to have any connection with them. They are two-tongued and cruel. They spoil the society. One shall denounce any association with them.

_Utpatha durnadāḥ kecidbahu bhaṅghabhrāmāvilāb__
_Tatasthānapi nighnanti tarasa bhinnasetavāb_.

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7.3.6 Durvṛttāḥ

_Durvṛttāḥ_ swerve from the dharmic path of the elders. Even bith in the so-called high caste is of no use unless one’s conduct is blemishless.

Even one who is born in a high caste and is performing all the rituals properly, earns a bad name if his conduct is bad.

_Avakrastārakādhīśāḥ paripūrṇapriyodayaḥ!_

_Prācīn diśamatikramya patanam pratipadyate!_.

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313 Subhasita Nivi iii-5
314 ibid iv-3

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A Brāhmaṇa with a bad conduct is to be condemned.

Saptāh khalu mayā kati kati bhasmasāt samapadyante!

Avidita pūrva!

Durācāra dūram gaccha gaccha!

Mā te bhūn mama dṛṣṭi tejasā bhasmī bhāvah! 315

A bad Brāhmaṇa woman who insults the guest is to be condemned.

Durbrāhmaṇiṇa kimiti nāma abhyāgatam

atithim adhikṣipasi 316

7.3.7 Fault finding
One shall look at the positive aspects of a person which may be predominant in him, and not on the negative side representing his minor weaknesses and shortcomings. Fault-finding on trivial grounds should be totally avoided.

One shall not find fault with a person who has many virtues but has some minor defects.

Niravadhiguṇagrāme rāme nirāgasi vāgasi

Sphuraṇamuṣitā lokā vadanti sadantike!

Varatanuhatim vālidroham manāgaparasparanam

Parimitagūṇe spaṭāvadye mudhā kimudāmate!! 317

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315 Sankalpa Suryodayam v
316 ibid v
317 Subhasita Nivi i-12
Those who find fault with the seers are to be condemned.

_Yeṣa durbrāhmaṇo mahaśi parivādena_
_Vināśam pratipadyate_ 318

_Vedānta Deśika believes in the concept of hell and heaven_
Those who denounce good people reach hell.

_Nānadhikajana parivādana sahasaiva_
_nirayam gamiṣya_

7.4 Summary

This Chapter has presented the variegated forms of cultural life. It has stressed upon the need to have proper association with good people.

The political life which has tremendous impact on social life is presented in the following Chapter.

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318 Sankalpa Suryodayam
319 ibid