CHAPTER - VI

CULTURAL IMAGE OF INDIA
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In the previous chapters the social, political and communal images of India are discussed in detail. In this chapter the cultural image of India is discussed. The cultural aspect of India is probably the most important. It's mainly because of the culture and traditions that this land is so popularly known in the western world. India is mostly known to the westerners as a land of culture and tradition. Every minute event that takes place in human life is traditional right from the birth to death of an individual and is celebrated traditionally and culturally.

The customs and traditions of India are the oldest and strange. The customs which were practiced thousands of years ago are still very much in practice. Though many of the westerners thought Indians to be uncivilized and barbaric, India is known for its culture and civilization.

Tharoor in India From Midnight to the Millennium argues that the Aryans were the first to migrate to India somewhere around 1500
B.C. He explains “then came the great wave of Aryan migration from the central Asian Steppes. The Aryans were pale-skinned and light-eyed nomads whose search for a new homeland branched into three waves, one stopping in Persia, one sweep continuing into Europe as far as Germany, and the other descending into India”.¹

These Aryans, who settled on the banks of the River Sindhu after coming to India, were later known as Hindus. Their land of habitation was called “Aryavarta” and their civilization and culture is supposed to be known as ancient Indian culture and civilization. Since then India had to pass through many ages like Pre Vedic, Vedic, post Vedic, medieval and modern age. In all the ages many outsiders invaded India and settled down here. But the culture of this country never lost its identity and integrity though it had to make some adjustments.

Since time immemorable many scholars both from India and outside India have tried to analyse the cultural image of India. But the two outstanding epics of India namely — Ramayana and Mahabharata written thousands of years back are the true pictures of
Indian culture. Without understanding these epics it is next to impossible to understand the cultural heritage of India.

In this chapter emphasis is laid on the two important works of Shashi Tharoor – The Great Indian Novel and Riot to understand the cultural Image of India as depicted by Shashi Tharoor.

Tharoor finds Mahabharata to be a reflection of India’s pluralism and diversity. He points out “In my view the Mahabharata is an ideal vehicle for my own modest efforts to affirm and enhance an Indian cultural identity, not as a closed or self limiting construct but as a reflection of pluralisms, diversity and openness of India’s kaleidoscopic culture. In the process it aims to broader understanding of the Indian cultural and historical heritage while reclaiming for Indians the story of India’s experience with foreign rule and its nationalist reassertion, including the triumphs and disappointments of freedom”.²

Shakuntala Bhavani concurs to what Shashi Tharoor says as she says “It is little difficult to understand the traditional Indian psyche without understanding our great epic. The Kauravas and
Pandavas are archetypal figures, and their experiences are possible patterns of a universal nature. They are relevant today, and refresh our memory of each stage. This is exactly what *The great Indian Novel* succeeds in doing.\(^3\)

Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* proved to be an award winning novel because it relives the characters of thousands of years old *Mahabharata*. Shashi Tharoor has succeeded in infusing flesh and blood in those epic characters and comparing them with the present day heroes and villains of India. Tharoor succeeds in proving that nothing has culturally or traditionally changed in India for ages. In support of Tharoor, Sudhendu Shekar says that “even as man evolves, he retains the features of identity reflected in the cultural moorings of the past”.\(^4\) This is what Tharoor has tried to project in his Novel *The Great Indian Novel*, which is a parody of the epic *Mahabharata*. Even after thousands of year of civilization and hundreds of invasions by the other civilizations and religions, Indian culture has survived assimilating all these outside elements.

Harish Narang feels, while pondering into the cultural identity it is important to know “the histories of individuals, communities and
nations not only significant and insightful but also closely inter-related". This opinion of Harish Narang holds good when one tries to know about the cultural identity of India which has a history of about three thousand years old civilization. In these three thousand years India has witnessed many changes. There are many invaders who have permanently settled here and have become the inseparable part of India. Tharoor aptly puts “That Indian mind has been shaped by remarkable diverse forces: ancient Hindu tradition, myth and scriptures; the impact of Islam and Christianity; and two centuries of British colonial rule. The result is unique, not just because of the variety of contemporary influences available in India, but because of the diversity of its heritage”. So, Tharoor feels that when a country has so much of history it is really difficult to find a single culture. Things in India have never settled down. The invasion took place in India at particular intervals and thing had to change accordingly. That is why Tharoor says that India is always in the process of rebuilding.

Homi K. Bhabha also feels that “the very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, on ‘organic’ ethnic communities
R.S. Singh aptly says "India as a cultural entity is amorphous diverse and undefined". This opinion of R.S. Singh is undoubtedly true because India unlike any European country does not have single religion and almost same geographical conditions. India is extremely diverse from Kashmir to Kanyakumari both in terms of geography and culture of the people.

Iyer, Pico in his Video Night in Kathmandu has tried to explain the diversification of India. He says "India, I had always thought, was humanity itself an inflation of humanity, or intensification of humanity. The very scale of the place was fantastic. 16 major languages and 1,652 dialects and more than 2000 castes and at least five main religions and 500 former kingdoms and thousand upon thousands of Gods many of them like humans, only more so".

This inflation and intensification of humanity compels Tharoor to think "if the phrase "ethnic melting pot" had been coined two thousand years ago, India would have had a fair claim to the title".
Tharoor thinks so because no other country in the world has such a huge population which has so many religions, languages, colours and creeds.

Homi K Bhaba in his famous book *The Location of culture* says "If India is a reproduction of common Aryan origin, in Maine's discourse it also a perpetual repetition of that origin as a remnant of the past; if that remnant of India is the symbol of an archaic past, it is also the signifier of the production of a discursive past in the present; if India is the imminent object of classical, theoretical knowledge, India is also the sign of its dispersal in the exercise of power; if India is the metaphoric equivalence, authorizing the appropriation and naturalization of other culture, then India is also the repetitive process of metonymy recognized only in its remnants that are, at once, the signs of disturbance and supports of colonial authority. If India is the originary symbol of colonial authority, it is the sign of dispersal in the articulation of authoritative knowledge; if India is a runic reality. India is also the ruin of time; if India is the seed of life, India is a monument of death. India is the perpetual general of a past present which is the disturbing, uncertain time of the colonial intervention and the ambivalent truth of its enunciation".11
Bhabha has made a critical analysis of India. He is right when he says India is both a runic reality and also the ruin of time. Shashi Tharoor is also of the same opinion and he has tried to project that picture in his Novel *The Great Indian Novel*. In this novel he highlights that India is an over developed country which is in decaying stage. He has a feeling that everything in India has reached a decaying stage like – culture, politics, society etc.

The Ved Vyasa of *The Great Indian Novel* introduces the ancient culture of India. In those times the Brahmins enjoyed the status of God. They were the “traveling salesmen of salvation”. The Brahmin, in the ancient times had the liberty of sleeping with any woman he liked and ironically it was a privilege which no woman refused. The example of this is found in *The Great Indian Novel* where the fisherman's daughter willingly sleeps with the Brahmin who was attracted by her beauty.

Tharoor further in the novel explains how the Brahmins fooled the society. He says that they seduced the beautiful girls just because they had succeeded in projecting themselves as the agents of Gods.
Tharoor throws light on how the dynasties which were heirless, invited the Brahmins to bed with the queens so that the queens be blessed with children. Tharoor says it was a religion and tradition then. He says “Dvaipayana” bedded with Ambika and Ambalika and as a result three important characters of Mahabharata were born. They were – Dhritreshtra, Pandu and Vidur.

It is not only that the Brahmins were invited by the royal families to bless their kingdom with heirs but it was a common practice that girls were even gifted away to the Brahmins to assist them. These traveling sages in turn gifted them with the bastards who later went on to become great sages or rulers of this land of traditions and culture.

According to Tharoor, it is not that only Brahmins were privileged. The kings and royal families also followed strange practices. It was a tradition that girls were forcibly taken away from a royal assembly and married. Even the number was not limited as “Hindus were not wedded to monogamy in those days, indeed that barbarism would come only after independence, so the idea of nuptial variety was not in itself outrageous”.

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People, in ancient times, were free to practice bigamy. It was not bigamy alone which the people of ancient India enjoyed, Tharoor points out in his *The Great Indian Novel* that “If you read our scriptures you will realize that there was a time when Indian women were free to make love with whom ever they wished, without being considered immoral. There were even rules about it, the sages decreed that a married woman must sleep with her husband during her fertile period, but was free to take her pleasure elsewhere the rest of the time. In Kerala, the men of the Nair community only learn that their wives are free to receive them by seeing if another man’s slippers aren’t outside her door”.

*The Great Indian Novel* of Tharoor reveals that the ancient Indian society was enjoying more freedom. Both men and women had equal status in the society. Especially, sex was not at all a taboo in those days. People had their own rules of having sex. Tharoor towards the end of the novel tells that *Kama Sutra* written by Vatsayana in the fourth century is the only Indian book read by more foreigners than Indians.
Tharoor also points out that "we are a land of traditions, traditions with which even the British have not dared to tamper. In our heritage there are many ways in which a girl can be given away. Our ancient texts tell us that a daughter may be presented, finely adorned and laden with dowry, to an invited guest; or exchanged for an appropriate number of cows; or allowed to choose her own mate in a "Swayamvara" ceremony". Tharoor throws light on the facts that girls were free to choose their own life partners. Even the exchange of cows or any other materials was just a gesture or token of love. Though, in the present scenario of India the exchange of cows or any other material goods has been replaced by a monster called dowry. Dowry is the primary requirement for the marriage of a girl in modern India.

Tharoor, after discussing in length about the freedom enjoyed by both men and women of ancient India, says that "our present concept of morality isn't really Hindu at all; it is a legacy both of Muslim Invasion and of the superimposition of Victorian prudery on a people already puritanized by purdah. One man married to one
woman, both remaining faithful to each other, is a relatively new idea, which doesn’t enjoy the traditional sanction of custom”.

After discussing about man – woman relation and sex, Tharoor throws light upon other aspects of culture and traditions of India. He thinks that religion is one of the most important factors in the life of Indians. For Indians, religion is a way of life. ‘Hinduism’, is the largest religion in India. There are about eighty one percent of people who follow this religion.

Tharoor says there are many paradoxes related to this religion. Though this is the only religion which truly practices secularism and absolute freedom, it has its own weaknesses. In his novel Riot Tharoor explains that in Hinduism, praying a God does not necessarily mean faith but it is a culture which is imbibed in every one's blood since time immemorable.

Hinduism is a culture of belonging to the faith that expresses the ancient genius of its own people. Hindus are free to reject all rituals and customs and yet be a Hindu, which is unimaginable in other religions. Hindus neither have any specific time, place or day
for worship. But still Tharoor says, that there are people in the same family where – father prays a particular God on one particular day and the mother seeks blessing from some other God on some other day. Sister prays in the morning and brother fasts in the evening.

Tharoor says that people of India are so proud to be Hindus that they are ready to undergo any extent of sacrifice or test.

Tharoor says people have tried all the means to keep the faith of Hinduism alive. This is the reason why Hinduism has survived even after so many invasions and rules by foreigners. He gives an example of Eighth century priest Shankaracharya, who was one such proud Hindu. He says “Shankaracharya was a Malayali who traveled throughout the length and breadth of India on foot in the eight century A.D. laying the foundations for a reformed and revived Hinduism. To this day there is a temple in the Himalayas whose priests are Nambodiris from Kerala”.17

Tharoor is in dual state of mind when he talks about the largest religion of India, the Hinduism. Though he himself is very proud to be a Hindu, there is an element of worry that haunts him.
Shankaracharya and his likes have always tried to keep this religion intact and they have succeeded also. But the problem that haunts Tharoor is that this is the religion which divides Indians from Indians. It is not that Hindus are divided from Muslims and Christians alone. Hindus are more divided amongst themselves. This is the reason which worries Tharoor a lot.

‘Hinduism’ which is a synonym of Indian culture has its own drawbacks. The major draw back is that it practices caste discrimination since ages and is prevalent even to this day. Barucha Rustam points that “another way of marking cultural identity would be through the specific caste affiliations of jati”. Even Tharoor in his The Great Indian Novel and India From Midnight to the Millennium talk of caste discriminations done to Karna and Charlis, respectively. Tharoor in India From Midnight to the Millennium talks in length about his childhood friend Charlis who was abused and not allowed to mingle and play with Shashi Tharoor.

Tharoor as hopeful as always says “while in the villages caste may still dictate where you live, whom you eat with and who you marry, it is more difficult in the cities to pick the shoulders you might
rub with on the bus, and this is leading to a major decrease in urban caste – consciousness”.

Tharoor mentions that things are changing in Modern India. In his India From Midnight to the Millennium Charlis under reservation quota, goes on to become an I.A.S. Officer. Not only that but even the land reforms are also taking place and landless labourers have become land owners.

The other important cultural aspect discussed in The Great Indian Novel by Tharoor is the role of woman in the society. Though, in the earlier part it is discussed that she enjoyed absolute freedom in having sex with anybody that was not all in all. At the same time she was supposed to be a mere shadow of her husband. She was supposed to sacrifice all her pleasures for the sake of her husband and family. The greatest example of this is found in The Great Indian Novel.

Dhritarashtra, a blind king marries Gandhari who is not blind. Gandhari, in turn decides to remain blind for whole of her life just because her husband is blind. Tharoor says, this kind of sacrifices are the examples of Indian culture alone. In The Great Indian Novel. She
saying “no my lord, a dharmapatni is not expected to be useful. Her duty is, to share the life of her husband, its joy and triumphs and sorrows, to be by his side at all times, and to give him sons”\textsuperscript{20}

Tharoor feels proud explaining the culture of Indian woman and says only Indian woman can “judge a sari by its feel rather than its colour, a space by its sound rather than its size, a man by his words rather than his looks”\textsuperscript{21}

Tharoor, who is so proud about the Indian culture, somewhere in his heart he is aware of the other side of the coin also. There are some major drawbacks within this culture. After carefully analysing to what Gandhari says it can be easily guessed that people love having male children than female children. It is a sorry state that the mentality of preferring a male child has remained in Indian culture since times immemorable to present times. If the woman fails to bear a male child, than hell falls upon her. She has to undergo all possible and impossible tortures.

Acharya Indranil finds this discrimination towards female by the male dominating society in \textit{God of Small Things}, a novel by
Arundati Roy, also. He elaborates “it ruthlessly unmasks the dual standards of morality in society in respect of men and women, the passive, submissive role of a wife in a man-woman relationship, and prolonging the suffering and ignominy of another woman by a male”.

One need not be always proud of Indian culture because in this culture there are some heinous acts of crime which exist in no other cultures of the world. The one such act of crime discussed in The Great Indian Novel is Sati Pratha which gained momentum after the invasions of Muslims on India.

Even after undergoing all the troubles, tortures and traumas by the submissive dharmapatni of the Indian husband as long as he is alive, her woes to not come to an end after his death. The Indian husband’s death brought more miseries to his wife than in his life. The widow of the dead man had to sit on the Pyre along with her dead husband and burn alive. For centuries the Indian woman has borne the burnt without any protest. But, Tharoor says, when the British came to India some two centuries back “they have put an end to our practice of burning widows on their husband’s funeral pyres” but
then he quickly adds “but they have not interfered very much with our other customs”.  

Vincent B. Leitch in The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism tells that Gayatri Spivak also talks about ‘Sati’ but has a different opinion about the British. Vincent says “Spivak points to the British outlawing of Sati, the Hindu practice of burning a widow on her husbands’ funeral pyre. While this intervention saved some lives and may have given women a modicum of free choice, it also served to secure British power in India and to underscore the asserted difference between British “civilization” and Indian “barbarism”. Hindu culture was driven underground, written out of law, denied any legitimacy”.  

After discussing about ancient Indian culture in his The Great Indian Novel, Tharoor shifts to the present cultural identity of India which is at stake. In his novel Riot and Non-fiction India from Midnight to the Millennium he talks about how the cultural identity of India is degraded and disgraced because of some vested interests of the politicians.
Tharoor in his novel *Riot* has tried to find out the answers to this problem of cultural Identity. He has successfully highlighted the problems Indian are facing in contemporary times. He believes that people of India after a few years of departure of British from India have developed a feeling of identity crisis. They have suddenly started feeling that they are like aliens in their own country. This insecure feeling, says Tharoor, has given birth to a monster called Hindu-Chauvinism. People who, for centuries lived together have suddenly become enemies of the Muslim communities. Ram Charan Gupta a character in the novel *Riot* argues that these Muslims have ‘wronged’ the history of India so he and his people want to “right” it.

Tharoor says that this attitude of the people like Ram Charan Gupta is not going to solve the problem. Instead it will aggravate the problem because it is not the mistake of Muslims of present day India but of somebody who lived some hundred years back. *Riot* “is a mature, thought provoking novel about contemporary Indian, and the basic human emotions of love and hate”. The novel presents a picture of India which is burning under communal violence and hatredness. The people who have lived peacefully for centuries have suddenly become thirsty for each other’s blood. The demolition of
Babri Masjid and the bomb blasts in Bombay are all the inhuman acts of hatredness. These heinous acts, feels Tharoor, tarnish the image of India. Tharoor in, India From Midnight to the Millennium, also tells it is not only the culture of India that is at stake but even the economic growth of the country gets hampered.

In Riot, Tharoor explains that there are five major sources of division in India – language, region, caste, class and religion. All these sources have contributed immensely on the cultural identities of Indians. Rustam Barucha adds “Consciously or unconsciously, with or without a defined ideology, most of us would define our cultural identities as Indians by affiliating ourselves to specific regional geographies, cultures and languages, which are assumed to be coterminous. These regional identifications (Bengali, Marathi, Tamil etc) which are predominant in Indian cultural discourse today, have been hegemonised since independence by elite constituencies”.27

According to Tharoor this is the main problem of Indians. Though the people and the country are known for its rich culture to the world, Indians among themselves are not at all culturally united. There are thousands of things which culturally divide them. Tharoor
says "A Karnataka Brahmin shares his Hindu faith with a Bihari Kurmi, but feels little identity with him in respect to appearance, dress, customs, tastes, language, or political objectives. There would similarly be little in common between a Jharkhand tribesman in north India and a Bodo tribesman of Assam despite aboriginal identities; between a Kashmiri Muslim and a Moplah of Malabar, who both owe allegiance to the Islamic faith; between a Naga Pentecostalist and a Syrian Orthodox keralite, both Christians separated by thousands of miles and nearly as many shades of complexion. At the same time a Tamil Hindu would feel that he has far more in common with a Tamil Christian or Muslim than with, say, a Haryanvi Jat with whom he formally shares a religion".28

Bharucha Rustum defines culture in a sensible manner which is more apt for the Indians to understand and act likewise. He says "if we could acknowledge that 'culture' is not an atavistic inheritance of primordial blood ties, bonds and loyalties, but a spectrum of dialogic relationships; if we could recognize more concretely that 'culture' is not just what exists in me and what exists in you, but what could grasp the legitimacy of these principles, we would be compelled to acknowledge our profound ignorance of the cultural diversities
surrounding us”. Bharucha’s this definition of ‘culture’ holds good to Indians who have become more violent and are not ready to acknowledge the cultures of each other.

Tharoor highlights that the Hindu Muslim clashes are the major problems in contemporary India. Tharoor has although advocated for the co-existence of both the cultures. He strongly feels that the only ‘Singular’ option India has is that it should think in ‘pluralism’. Both cultures have traveled together for centuries and lived together and have earlier exchanged and acknowledged each others culture. In India from Midnight to the Millennium Tharoor even explains that in India everyone is a minority. He quotes “so we are, as I have already observed, all minorities in India. A Hindi- speaking Hindu male from the Gangetic plain state of Uttar Pradesh might cherish the illusion that he represents the “majority community”, to use an expression much favoured by the less industrious of our journalists. But he does not. As a Hindu he belongs to the faith adhered to by some 82 per cent of the population, but a majority of the country does not speak Hindi; a majority does not hail from Uttar Pradesh; and if he were visiting, say, Kerala, he would discover that a majority is not even male. Worse, our archetypal UP Hindu has only to step off a train
and mingle with the polyglot, polychrome crowds thronging any of India's five major metropolises to realize how much of a minority he really is. Even his Hinduism is no guarantee of majorityhood, because his caste automatically places him in a minority as well; if he is a Brahmin, 90 per cent of his fellow Indians are not; if he is a Yadav, 85 per cent of Indians are not, and so on.  

The only solution, Tharoor finds, is that all Indians should accept each other as a part of themselves. He is worried that the politicians are pouncing upon to grab the political power by playing with the sentiments of innocent people. The corrupt politicians always instigate the common people by projecting them as the minorities in India. But Tharoor points that it's the time for every Indian to think above these lines of minority, community and cultural differences as all Indians are a minorities within themselves. 

The problem of cultural identity has become so grave in India that none of the Indians are living peacefully. It is not that only the Muslims are targeted. If the Muslims of Gujarat are tortured, the Brahmins of Kashmir also are dancing to the same tune. Shyamala Narayan says "there is nowhere that the Kashmiri Pandit can re-settle."
'If they are not helped to return to their homes in the valley, they will lose their language, customs and traditions.... As a community they will become extinct". Shyamala Narayan, points that the Brahmins of the valley may become extinct and at the same time, Tharoor thinks that the whole country, which is burning, may be destroyed. The fabrication of the country has become fragile and susceptible to communal violence. A small incidence is enough, today, to trigger-off into a larger communal violence.

Tharoor laments "communal violence: is tragically, a sad reality and an avoidable stain on the Indian societal map. Every Indian carries with him the shame of periodic bouts of blood letting that hit the world’s headlines. Hindu-Muslim, Thakur-Harijan, Asamese-Bengali, Sikh-Hindu, Shia-Sunni. One of the costs of being a composite national proud of its storied “unity in diversity” is that diversity sometimes asserts itself at the expense of unity. When the madness passes, as it always does, what is left amidst the wreckage is the belated recognition of intertwined destinies”. Tharoor knows this madness has once already caused irreparable wreckage to the country and the Indians still have not been able to come out of it. He
desperately wants Indians to understand that India is "composite culture" and Indians have to live accordingly.

It's the right time that the Indians should understand what Homi K. Bhabha says. "The people are neither the beginning nor the end of the national narrative; they represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the 'social' as homogenous, consensual community, and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population."

He further explains "the civil state is the ultimate expression of the innate ethical and rational bent of the human mind, the social instinct is the progressive destiny of human nature, the necessary transition from nature to culture."  

Next, Tharoor, in his novel *Show Business* which is mainly a satire of Indian society, talks of culture. Indian cinemas are the true representative of Indian culture. Tharoor aptly says "Bollywood. It's Indian cultures' secret weapon, producing five times as many films as Hollywood – and taking India to the world, by bringing its brand of glitzy entertainment not just to the Indian diaspora in the US or UK but to the screens of Syrians and Senegalese." Its true that Indian
cinemas' have reached overseas audience and are the greatest vehicles of depicting Indian culture. But all is not true in Indian cinemas. “In films caste and class distinctions are generally ignored”\(^36\) and they are for away from reality. There is a huge gap between real India and the one depicted on the reel. In reel India a poor man of any community falls in love with a rich girl of another community and succeeds in marrying happily. But in real India the cultural police hang both the lovers to death and the whole of society burns for days together.

To conclude, Tharoor says “Indian cultural identity is really to subsume a number of identities, varying depending upon class, caste, region and language. But this variety is in itself integral to my idea of Indianness. The singular thing about India is that you can only speak of it in the plural. Given the extra ordinary mixture of ethnic groups, the profusion of mutually incomprehensible languages, the varieties of topography and climate, the diversity of religions and cultural practices and the range of levels of economic development that India embraces, India is fundamentally a pluralist state; its pluralism emerges from its geography, is reflected in its history and is confirmed by its ethnography. Indian culture is therefore, by definition a culture of multiplicities, a culture of differences”\(^37\).
Tharoor who is very proud of Indian culture is aware of the diversities and differences existing in India. For him these diversities are the things of pride because, these diversities make singular and a ‘composite culture’. But Tharoor thinks that “the twentieth-century politics of deprivation has eroded the cultures confidence. Hindu Chauvinism has emerged from the competition for resources in a contentious democracy. Politicians of all faiths across India seek to mobilize voters by appealing to narrow identities”. This politics of cultural identity is growing like a Frankenstein Monster in the country. The root cause of all the disturbances in the country is politics and the politicians.

What ever number of communal, political and cultural differences and disturbances India may be facing, Tharoor always finds a ray of hope for the secularity and singularity of India. He says “Our democracy, our thriving free media, our contentious NGO’s our energetic human rights groups, and the repeated spectacle of our remarkable general elections, have all made India a rare example of the successful management of diversity in the developing world”.
At the end Tharoor quotes an example of highest kind of culture that Indian people and Indian democracy practices—“In May 2004 a leader of Roman Catholic background (Sonia Gandhi) making way for a Sikh (Man Mohan Singh) to be sworn in as Prime Minister by a Muslim (President Abdul Kalam) in a country with 51% Hindus—Caught the world’s imagination and won its admiration”.

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