

Unity in Diversity

Dr. (Smt.) Neeraj

*Assis. Prof., Deptt. of Political Science,
Veragna Awantibai Lodhi Govt. Girls Degree College,
Kurawali , Mainpuri (U.P.)
Email: 0205neeraj@gmail.com*

Abstract

The political and social climate that prevails in the world today emphasizes difference, disunity and destruction rather than the qualities of unity and productive and constructive energy that are required to sustain human societies.

Unity in diversity is the highest possible attainment of a civilization a testimony to the most noble possibilities of the human race. This attainment is made possible through passionate concern for choice in an atmosphere of social trust.

Bookchin makes a crucial point here that is the fear that many "minority" groups have of becoming subsumed within a dominant culture characterized by white, male values. It is this fear also within contemporary western society that has given rise to the notion of "Political Correctness", a phenomenon that threatens to increase the fragmentation in society despite its attempts to foster awareness of and sensitivity to difference.

The increase visibility and promotion of cultural diversity has been accompanied by stronger feelings of attachment to ethnic roots, often causing conflicts and within different groups. Such an analysis will reveal why cultural trails are so important to the members of the group and what makes culture such a powerful aspect of human existence.

Keywords: *Unity and Diversity, Civilization, Cultural Diversity, Contemporary, Universal*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 05.01.2020
Approved: 06.04.2020

Dr. (Smt.) Neeraj,

Unity in Diversity

Article No. 17
*RJPSS March 2020,
Vol. XLV No. 1,
pp. 135-143*

Online available at:

[https://anubooks.com/
?page_id=6389](https://anubooks.com/?page_id=6389)

DOI:[https://doi.org/
10.31995/
rjps.2020.v45i01.016](https://doi.org/10.31995/rjps.2020.v45i01.016)

Introduction

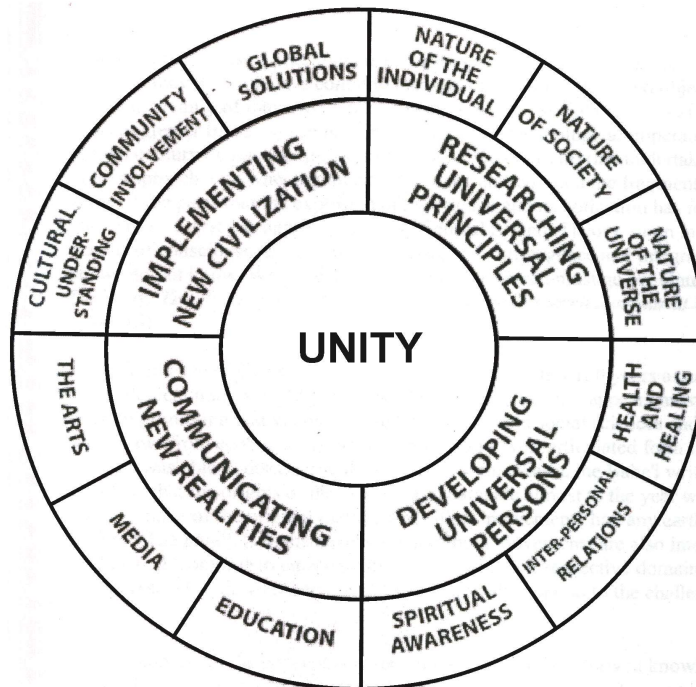
The political and social climate that prevails in the world today emphasizes difference, disunity, and destruction rather than the qualities of unity and productive and constructive energy that are required to sustain human societies. These negative processes and forces have perpetuated our alienation from the basic material roots of our existence, the natural world of which we are a part. This paper presents a way of looking at the world that enables us to foster the diversity inherent in the human species as it exists today without perpetuating our alienation from nature and from each other. By exploring the concept of *unity in diversity* as an expression of unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation, this paper offers a resolution to many of the concerns felt by those who are resistant to the spread of one particular cultural hegemony and those who fear that awareness of differences can lead to greater intolerance. It is one of the basic premises of this paper that fostering the ecological factors that are inherent in the human condition at the same time as we maintain a vision of humanity's unique place in creation will help to resolve not only our ongoing problems in living harmoniously with our natural environment but our ongoing difficulties with each other as well.

The use of the phrase *unity in diversity* and similar concepts is not a new phenomenon. Its roots reach back hundreds of years in non-Western cultures such as indigenous peoples in North America and Taoist societies in 400-500 B.C. In premodern Western culture it has been implicit in the organic conceptions of the universe that have been manifest since the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations through medieval Europe and into the Romantic era. In contemporary times, the phrase has been used in a variety of areas including a bibliography of libertarian publications and an interdisciplinary academic symposium, in which the following articulations of the concept appeared.¹

Unity in diversity is the highest possible attainment of a civilization, a testimony to the most noble possibilities of the human race. This attainment is made possible through passionate concern for choice, in an atmosphere of social trust.

The disparate experiences of practitioners of various disciplines studying man as a social being, even when they do not have a common measure or a commonly stated objective, nevertheless share a unity of intent in understanding man in his social context—a unity that over time will lead to greater integrative approaches. Indeed, the technological imperatives of the end of the twentieth century demand an integrative approach to man's myriad undertakings, demand a Renaissance approach, one whereby the human mind can transcend the fragmented understanding of the

parts that the explosion of knowledge and its collection has fostered. Whether this will be a systems approach, such as General System Theory, or an integration of different modes of consciousness, or something else, or a convergence and integration of some or all of these, we do not know. What we do know is that the search must go on.²



The most profound use of the concept has developed over the last 150 years as an integral aspect of an ecological understanding of the world and, to that end; it appears most frequently now in literature promoting that vision. Outside the natural and social sciences and humanities literature that draws from ecology, the concept appears in a well-articulated form in only one other place that I was able to discover in the research for this thesis, the Bahá'í writings. It is interesting to note that the origins of the Bahá'í Faith coincide almost to the year with the roots of ecology although none of the original members of either "movement" had any earthly connection with each other. The parallels in the development of both movements are also interesting to note in that they both continue to emerge from obscurity in their respective domains, gaining recognition and respect as they effectively and constructively respond to the challenges that face them.³

Bookchin makes a crucial point here, that is, the fear that many “minority” groups have of becoming subsumed within a dominant culture characterized by white, male values. It is this fear also within contemporary Western society that has given rise to the notion of “political correctness,” a phenomenon that threatens to increase the fragmentation in society despite its attempts to foster awareness of and sensitivity to difference. A healthy and constructive articulation of the concept of unity is needed to erase those fears and mend the rifts that have developed. The concept must incorporate a set of principles that is universally applicable to all human beings simply because they are human at the same time that it provides protection for the diversity of characteristics that maintains the vibrancy of the human species.⁴

Unity without Uniformity

To establish a universally recognized concept of unity, there is need for an acceptance that universal principles exist. These principles are reflected in values that apply to each and every human being. These principles lie at the core of all the major religions and our most noble cultural traditions. The values of universal brotherhood, love for one’s neighbour, and the golden rule of treating others as we ourselves would wish to be treated are just some of the ideals that are common to all cultures. They have fostered social union and amity between people for countless generations, inspired great works of art, and continue to underscore our highest aspirations. Today’s world would indeed benefit from a profound affirmation of these essential spiritual truths.⁵

To Laszlo, the application of these values requires rising above the religious dogmas, political ideologies and national allegiances which bitterly divide the world. It entails restating the fundamental truths that lie behind all religions, philosophies and traditions. Consideration of these values leads us to recognize the oneness of the entire human species, an ideal that extends former loyalties and does not abrogate them.

If we accept this philosophical foundation for the application of unity, traditional rivalries and vendettas must be forgotten, divisive theories and ideologies submerged, and national borders transcended. The interdependence implied by the notion of the oneness of humanity requires a relinquishing of any idea or activity that allows for the suffering of even one person. If we are interdependent, then the suffering of one affects us all. When a person receives an injury to one part of the body, the entire system of that person is affected as the body attempts to heal itself. If the injury is severe, the whole body, not just the affected part, becomes debilitated. The treatment in that situation is multifaceted. Not only is the injured area treated

with specific remedies but the whole body also receives the benefit of nutrients that are provided to assist in the healing. Human beings have not yet learned how to apply this concept of healing to the planet or to the human species itself.⁶

To carry the organic analogy one step further, each component of the body performs an essential and specific function, without which the entire body is handicapped. Each human being possesses talents and the capacity, when given the opportunity, to acquire skills that contribute to the ongoing progress and development of the species. Those talents and capacities ideally contribute to the richness of the human community as each individual expresses herself or himself freely and harmoniously with others. However, humanity has developed institutions and systems that inhibit the optimal function of each individual in the collectivity. Because we possess ingenuity and creativity, humans have developed coping mechanisms that have obscured not only the hidden damage caused by ignoring certain fundamental characteristics of the human species but also the direct causal connections between our efforts to “improve” human existence and the devastation wreaked by such “improvements.”

As long as human beings in any part of the planet are inhibited from developing their individual potential the entire species will remain handicapped. True unity will be achieved when each individual becomes an active and functioning participant in the whole, performing the skills they possess as constructive and productive contributors to their local, regional, and global community. This goal can be accomplished if a balance between the physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence is achieved, enabling productive contributions to human society to be offered as service to the ongoing progress and development of the world without fear of exploitation and oppression.⁷

The light that we all reflect is the spiritual foundation for the concept of unity that is expressed in this paper. It manifests the source of all creation, the qualities latent within each creature, including humans, that reflect those of the Creator. This aspect of creation is beginning to be perceived and expressed by participants in the deep ecology, ecofeminist, and bioregional movements. This passage from the Bahá’í writings also alludes to the differences within the human community, emphasizing that this diversity should be a reason for unity rather than discord, a vision that in the contemporary post-modern ideological environment requires further elaboration.

Diversity without Fragmentation

The growing interdependence of the communities of the world over the last century or two has resulted in an increasingly interwoven and complex system of

relations. The growth of the Western hegemony that has coincided with the development of that interdependence threatens to impose a uniform set of ideals and values directly and indirectly on all the peoples of the world. Notions of “the good life” are increasingly viewed as synonymous with the possession of consumer “goods” from the West rather than the Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment morals and values that in varying degrees shape Western society.

As a result of the increasing dominance of the trappings of Western civilization throughout the world, endeavours to promote cultural diversity have become more vociferous in the last half of this century. As the traditional lifestyles of indigenous communities across the globe become disrupted, efforts have been made to preserve those cultures in various ways. In contrast to the “melting pot” approach of the United States, some Western countries like Canada express their commitment to the preservation of multiculturalism through open immigration policies and the fostering of community-based events and organizations that enable participants to continue many of the practices that are unique to their culture. One scholar has expressed the ethic in this way:

The presence of cultural diversity, with the constant exchanging, through travel, trade, intermarriage and so on, of cultural traits, offers humankind a rich source of new adaptive possibilities for cultural evolution to meet changing conditions in the future. Preservation of cultural diversity, far from being perceived as a threat to human survival owing to rivalries and differences, needs rather to be respected and fostered by all cultures. Our global goal must not be simply tolerance of diversity, but its positive nurturing. Each culture represents an important, perhaps crucial, experiment in the unfolding drama of human life on Earth.

Multicultural events provide opportunities for members of different communities to learn more about each other, thus fostering increased awareness and understanding of the diversity within the human community.

The increased visibility and promotion of cultural diversity has been accompanied by stronger feelings of attachment to ethnic roots, often causing conflicts among and within different groups. When the open acceptance of diversity is perceived as a threat to the preservation of one’s own traditions, tension can develop and conflicts arise. When disharmony among individuals arises as a result of adherence to traditional expressions of culture (including religion), perhaps it is time to examine those traditions in light of a changing world. Perhaps a re-examination of a certain cultural practice will reveal the reason it was developed in the first place many decades if not centuries ago and offer a resolution to contemporary conflicts. Such

an analysis will reveal why cultural traits are so important to the members of that group and what makes culture such a powerful aspect of human existence:

Each person, in order to retain those attributes we recognise as human, must live in relation to others, within a social context, a culture which gives meaning to individual existence. This need for cultural meaning is at once the sine qua non of human existence and the source of our greatest danger.

It is apparent that people everywhere, as they struggle to adjust their traditional worldviews to meet changing circumstances, must take care that they do not throw out the “baby” of cultural meaning and bondedness with the “bath water” of maladaptive institutions, lest they end up with new institutions that are destructive of the human psyche itself.⁸

Religion, as the most powerful of cultural expressions, is also the greatest source of conflict. If it continues to be a source of disharmony among human beings, the planet would certainly be better off without it. However, religion continues to be a powerful force in human existence; it is destined to endure in one form or another. Therefore, an even more intensive examination of religion might be necessary to reveal the sources of the tensions between different religious groups. It is just possible that the evidence will offer not only a resolution to the problems that continue to perpetuate the fragmentation within and between national communities but also a source of inspiration to unite the global family through guidance for each individual at the interpersonal and community levels. This release of guidance and inspiration has the potential to have a massive impact on every aspect of human activity, a possibility that brings the discussion back to the basic focus of this thesis, the environmental crisis.

Unity in Diversity: Environmental and Human Applications

The message is clear when we examine the geographic scale of human awareness of and action to deal with the environmental crisis. Not only must we learn how to think globally and act locally (the ubiquitous slogan coined by René Dubos) but we must also learn how to think globally and locally and act globally and locally.

This ethic of thinking and acting has profound geographical, ecological, social, philosophical, and spiritual implications. During most of recent human history, the primary way in which regions have been perceived has been derived from the political boundaries that have been established. However, as ecological awareness has developed, there is an increasing perception of the difficulties posed by such often arbitrary determinations of territory. Research in both the action-oriented and

Dr. (Smt.) Neeraj

philosophical streams of environmental studies is resulting in increased knowledge relating to the physical foundations of human existence and the impacts of human attitudes and activities on the planet. The heightened awareness of and sensitivity to the ecological factors of the human-environment relationship reveal the need to broaden our concept of territory beyond the politically created boundaries that currently denote the international social and economic climate. By adopting scales of attention that reflect the bio- and geophysical factors that shape the earth, human beings will recapture their connection with their natural roots. By learning more about their local environment and how it connects with the biosphere, human beings will not only increase their sensitivity to and understanding of the immediate factors that influence their lives but also heighten their sense of interdependence with the global community of which we are all an integral part. The diversity of ecosystems across the planet is the physical foundation for the diversity of cultural groups that have evolved in those regions throughout human history. Increased knowledge of those groups will also heighten our awareness of the interconnections between human and nonhuman nature.

However, focusing on the natural environment as the source of unity for the human family is not sufficient. There are many other factors that need to be considered. Human beings are complex creatures whose psyche is profoundly affected by more than just our connections with nature. Attention must be paid to how the knowledge gained from studying human interactions with nature affects human interactions with each other. If humanity is ever to find peace with itself, it will come from a massive transformation in the way humans relate to one another both individually at the family and local community level and in terms of the national and international institutions that are developed to organize broader scales of human interaction. The moral foundations for such relations are deeply rooted in human history in the inspirations for the religious and cultural traditions that provide meaning for the billions of people who share the planet. Unity will be found in the development of broader understanding and acceptance of the diversity in the human family and in the fostering of the basic principles that sustain healthy interpersonal relations.

References

1. Effendi, Shoghi, *Unity in Diversity*, World Order of Bahauilan, Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Banai Publishing Trust, pp. 41-42, retrieved 10 January, 2014.
2. Godbout, Adelard (April 1943), *Unity in Diversity*, *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (3): **452-461**.

3. Gcoichin Tribal Council Annual Report 2012-2013: Unity through Diversity, retrieved 05 September 2014.
4. Roxanne, Zalonde (April 1994), Edited Extract from M.D. Thesis, Unity in Diversity: Acceptance and Integration in an Era of Intolerance and Fragmentation, Ottawa, Ontario: Department of Geography, Carleton University, Retrieved 09 January, 2014.
5. John Kincad, Unity in Diversity (Vol. 4) Paper back-viva, pp. **15-16**.
6. Ronald L. Watts, Unity in Diversity (Vol. 1) Paper back-viva, 2012, pp. **2-3**.
7. McCosh James, Unity with Diversity in the Works and Word of God, Hard Cover – Palala Press: pp.**51**.
8. Melanie Loffali, Unity in Diversity, Lulu.com, 05 September 2012, pp. **15-16**.