Social Unity: A Unique Framework for a Diverse Society

- Dr. Swadesh Singh[1]

Abstract

This article explores the evolving ecosystem of social unity in contemporary India grounded on two interlinked pillars: social justice and fraternity. Moving beyond the narrow view of social justice as only reservation, which often entrenches cleavages of caste, gender, or religion, the current governance approach emphasizes improving lives across identities, treating citizens as equal rather than segmented groups. This reorientation reframes social justice as a path of upliftment, where progress for one does not threaten another. Complementing this is the renewed centrality of fraternity, the moral and emotional glue of society emphasized by the Constitution and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar but long neglected in governance practice. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the idea of social justice and fraternity has been actively invoked through symbols, gestures, and policies, encouraging reciprocal participation from citizens. This article argues that these two forces, social justice beyond divisions and fraternity as a lived experience, interact to produce a larger, exponential outcome i.e., a framework of social unity that binds diversity into a consolidated national identity.

Keywords: Social Justice, Fraternity, Social Unity, Governance, Policy, Diversity, Upliftment, Narendra Modi

Introduction

In a remarkable shift, India has lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty, an achievement highlighted in the World Bank's Spring 2025 *Poverty and Equity Brief*, which praised the nation's "decisive policy measures" in reducing poverty even amid global challenges. [2, 3] The gap between rural and urban poverty is also shrinking.[4] NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index shows that 13.5 crore Indians came out of poverty. The share of people living in multidimensional poverty dropped sharply from about 25% in 2015–16 to 15% in 2019–21, a 40% fall in half a decade.[5] As the official statement emphasizes, this success "signifies the power of a multi-sectoral approach that covers

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[2] According to the report, the proportion of people living on less than 2.15 US dollars a day, which is the international benchmark for extreme poverty, fell sharply from 16.2 percent in 2011-12 to just 2.3 percent in 2022-23.

[3] Press Information Bureau. (2025, April 26). *India's Triumph in Combating Poverty.* Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2124545

[4] In Rural areas, extreme poverty fell from 18.4 percent in 2011-12 to 2.8 percent in 2022-23, and in Urban centres, extreme poverty reduced from 10.7 percent to 1.1 percent over the same period.

[5] Press Information Bureau. (2023, July 17). *13.5 crore Indians escape multidimensional poverty in 5 years.* Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1940125

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nutrition, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, education and bank accounts, among others," enabling citizens to "move from deprivation to dignity."[6]

These shifts are emerging from a distinctive style of governance under Prime Minister Modi, a governance philosophy that consciously cuts across traditional fault lines of caste, religion, region, or partisan loyalty. It is animated by a conviction that social justice must not fracture society into identity camps, but must uplift the most deprived in ways that simultaneously forge bonds of fraternity and shared national belonging.
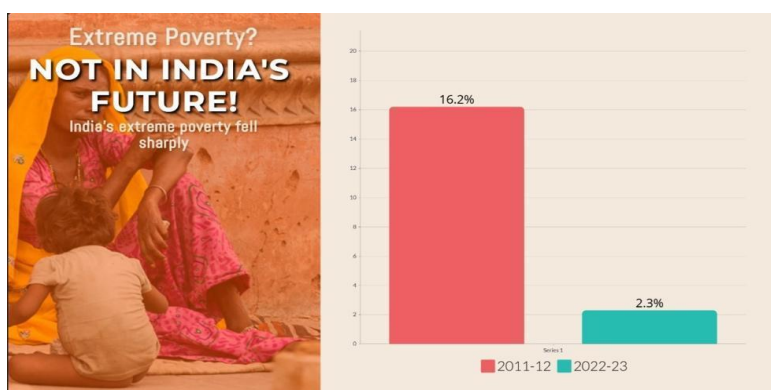

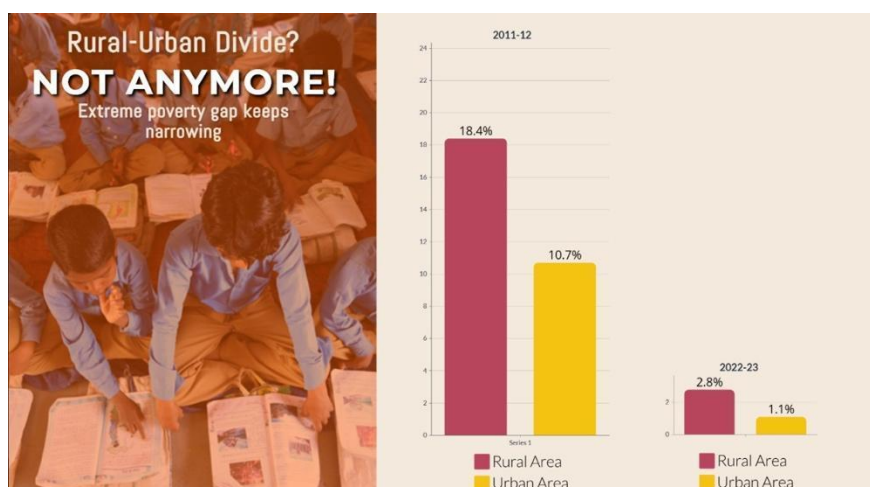Image 1: Sharp decline in India's extreme poverty from 16.2% to 2.3%

Image 2: The shrinking gap between rural and urban poverty since 2011-12

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[6] Ibid.

Over the last decade, a distinct framework of social unity has been consciously nurtured under the Modi government, blending practical governance with a broader social philosophy. Policies have aimed at social justice in a dignity-focused way, while also promoting fraternity among citizens. The result is a model where individual advancement strengthens shared purpose rather than sparking rivalry, and growth is no longer seen as a zero-sum game. Instead, prosperity, peace, and development are pursued together, gradually reducing contradictions of thought, opportunity, and social location.

What makes this Indian experience unique is that poverty alleviation has not been treated as a narrow technocratic exercise. It has unfolded within an environment that restores dignity, nurtures respect, and softens traditional social divides, giving rise to what can be termed *social unity*. Unlike earlier models, where social justice was largely distributive and fraternity only rhetorical, today's approach shows how both can reinforce each other—turning individual progress into a bridge for collective advancement.

While political and national unity have long been studied and celebrated, the idea of *social unity* remains under-theorized. Yet it is precisely this everyday sense of cohesion across caste, religion, language, and region that sustains belonging and reduces conflict. True social unity is more than social justice plus fraternity. It emerges when the two interact, amplifying one another, so that personal journeys and the nation's progress are intertwined rather than parallel. Social unity thus represents a civic ecosystem in which justice and fraternity combine to produce something greater than either could alone. Justice without fraternity is mechanical, and fraternity without justice is cosmetic. But together they generate a more enduring harmony—not sameness, not assimilation, but coexistence where caste, gender, religion, and region are embraced as part of a democratic ethic.

Seen this way, social unity is not a simple sum of rights and goodwill, but an emergent condition where justice is both ensured and felt, and fraternity is both sentiment and social ethic. It is a continuous process, lived daily among communities, and it is only such unity that can carry India into a future that is not only strong in state capacity but also cohesive in its social imagination.

Social Unity: A Novel Indian Experience

While political and national unity concern structures and symbols, social unity is about the lived, moral, and affective bonds between citizens. It is cultivated through fraternity, everyday coexistence, and the assurance of equal dignity across caste, religion, gender, region, and language.

In a society like India, steeped in centuries of stratification and deeply embedded inequalities, social unity cannot be presumed; it must be consciously built and continually nurtured. As Amartya Sen reminds us that Justice is ultimately connected with the way people's lives go.[7] Even robust welfare and affirmative action policies may fail to promote unity if they do not simultaneously build a culture of mutual recognition and ethical equality, which are critical societal underpinnings.

Ancient Roots of Social Unity

The Indian intellectual tradition offers a rich and nuanced legacy on the idea of social unity both as a normative value and as a practical principle of governance and coexistence. From the Rigveda to the Mahabharata and the Buddhist Sangha, we see repeated invocations of unity as solidarity amidst difference, premised on ethical conduct, mutual respect, and collective well-being.

Among the earliest articulations of unity in the Indic tradition is found in the Rigveda (10.191), which talks about Unity through harmony of thought and action:

"Sangachchhadhvam samvadadhvam sam vo manāṁsi jānatām

devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve sañjānānā upāsate."[8]

("Walk together; speak together; let your minds be in harmony. As the gods of old, being of one mind, accepted their share of sacrifice.")

The idea that social unity must rest on mutual support, shared endeavor, and the rejection of hostility is woven into the very texture of India's civilizational wisdom. One finds this value

[7] Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. [PDF]. p.x. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. https://www.jsscacs.edu.in/sites/default/files/Files/The_idea_of_justice_Amartya_Sen.pdf

[8] The Rig Veda. X. 191. (2016, July 16). संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं *Rig Veda*. https://abillionstories.wordpress.com/2016/07/16/

captured in the ancient Vedic hymn from the Taitreya Upanishad, which remains foundational to India's conceptions of collective harmony:

"Om Saha Nau-Avatu, Saha Nau Bhunaktu, Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai, Tejasvi Nau-Adhiitam-Astu Maa Vidvissaavahai, Om Shanti Shanti Shanti."[9]

("May we be protected together. May we be nourished together.
May we work together with great energy. May our study be brilliant and effective.
May we not hate or dispute with each other. Om, peace, peace, peace.")

It suggests that true social unity arises from the cultivation of dispositions that actively guard against envy and conflict. Such ancient invocations demonstrate that the Indian philosophical imagination long recognized social unity as a moral and spiritual practice, requiring a daily renewal of attitudes that uphold both common purpose and mutual respect. In reclaiming these ideas today within a modern constitutional and developmental framework, India is drawing upon deep civilizational reserves to navigate the complexities of forging social unity amidst differences.

One of the earliest and most enduring examples of institutionalized unity is the Buddhist Sangha, established in the 6th–5th century BCE. The Sangha functioned as a kind of moral republic, grounded in voluntary association, equality, ethical discipline, and consensus. Its membership was open and non-hierarchical, regulated by the *vinaya*, codes that promoted mutual correction, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making. Crucially, the Sangha did not erase differences; it included monks and nuns from all *varnas* and regions, standing out as a rare model of egalitarian pluralism in the ancient world. The Sangha reflected the idea that social unity requires moral cultivation, which the Buddha termed "samma-sankappa" or right intention.[10] It was built on ethical universality (instead of identity). The Dhammapada, a collection of sayings of the Buddha in verse form, offers a timeless insight into the moral foundations of social unity. In one of its most evocative verses, it declares:

[9] Temple Purohit. (n.d.). *Om Sahana Vavatu*. https://www.templepurohit.com/mantras-slokas-stotras/shanti-mantra/om-sahana-vavatu/
[10] Vipassana Support Foundation. (n.d.). *Finding peace amidst the chaos*. https://vipassana.com/resources/8fp3.html

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''न हि वेरेन वेरानि, सम्मन्तीध कुदाचनं। अवेरेन च सम्मन्ति, एस धम्मो सनन्तनो॥[11]

"Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world;

Through non-hatred alone they cease.

This is an eternal law."

The early Buddhist tradition recognized that societal cohesion depends on cultivating shared dispositions that cut across narrow self-interest.[12]

So, from Vedic hymns to Buddhist monasteries, unity was imagined as a daily practice of listening, dialogue, restraint, and mutual upliftment. We recognize that India's civilizational vocabulary has always valued social unity through diversity, which remains a necessary principle in the constitutional journey passing through justice and fraternity.
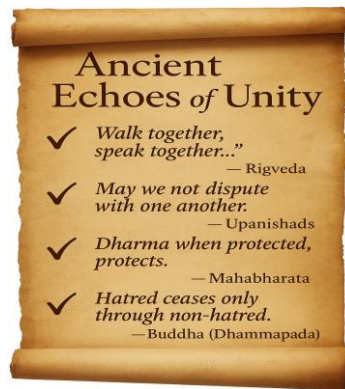

Image 3: Ancient Echoes of Social Unity

Insights from Western Thought

In order to understand social unity in modern democracies, especially those marked by deep linguistic, religious, and caste diversities, it is essential to turn to Western political thought, where questions of justice, legitimacy, and pluralism have long been debated. These thinkers provide multiple frameworks that help conceptualize unity as a condition of structured fairness, ethical inclusion, and mutual recognition.

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[11] Wisdom Library. (n.d.). *Dhammapada* (Illustrated translation).
https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/dhammapada-illustrated/d/doc1084244.html
[12] Sangharakshita. (1944, May). *The Unity of Buddhism*. In *Early Writings 1944–1954*. Urgyen Sangharakshita Trust.
https://www.sangharakshita.org/articles/the-unity-of-buddhism

Plato's vision, for instance, is fundamentally about a hierarchy of classes and a belief in preordained natures where unity emerges from each part knowing and accepting its place.[13] His framework is unable to grapple with the moral demand for equal regard across caste, class, gender, or ethnicity that today's democracies must uphold. However, his insistence that the health of the city mirrors the health of its individual souls remains a profound reminder that a society's unity is fragile if citizens themselves are governed by disorder, envy, or narrow self-interest.

In *A Theory of Justice* (1971) John Rawls argued that unity in democracies comes not from cultural sameness but from fair institutions. His model of social cooperation rests on two principles: equal basic liberties for everyone, and inequalities arranged to benefit the least advantaged. Such a system of justice, he suggested, creates a "well-ordered society" where people accept—and know others accept—the same principles, providing a lasting foundation for stability and unity. Rawls does not rest his theory on cultural homogeneity. In *Political Liberalism* (1993),[14] he contends that reasonable pluralism is the inevitable outcome of free institutions. In such societies, unity must be achieved through what he calls "overlapping consensus", a shared commitment to political principles even if individuals subscribe to different comprehensive doctrines.

Building on and diverging from Rawls, Amartya Sen challenges the sufficiency of purely institutional models of justice. In *The Idea of Justice* (2009), Sen mentions the importance of realized outcomes and the capabilities people have to lead lives they have reason to value.[15] Amartya Sen critiqued Rawls' abstract model, arguing it falls short in societies burdened by deep historical inequalities. What matters, he said, are people's real freedoms—their ability to be nourished, educated, secure, and respected. Unity, in this view, comes from ethically recognizing differences and expanding human capabilities through policy. This

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[13] Fiveable. *7.1 The structure and classes of Plato's ideal state. Fiveable.* https://library.fiveable.me/ancient-greek-political-thought/unit-7/structure-classes-platos-ideal-state/study-guide/K3mixcHyXjDKsRPu

[14] Lóia, L. (2021). *John Rawls on overlapping consensus. Philosophy Study, 11*(8), 637–641. https://www.davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/61319e340fb7e.pdf

[15] Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. https://www.jsscacs.edu.in/sites/default/files/Files/The_idea_of_justice_Amartya_Sen.pdf

perspective is especially relevant to postcolonial India, where deprivation is intertwined with caste discrimination, gender exclusion, and regional imbalance.

Charles Taylor brings the language of identity into the center of debates on social unity, as for him, recognition is not a courtesy; it is a vital human need, and misrecognition can cause real harm by restricting people's ability to flourish.[16] This idea closely intersects with Robert Putnam's theory of social capital, which emphasizes the value of networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity in fostering social cohesion.[17] Putnam distinguishes between *bonding* social capital, which ties people within a homogenous group, and *bridging* social capital, which connects across divides.

Social Unity in Modern Indian Thought

From Gandhi's Gram Swaraj to Ambedkar's structural justice, each thinker envisioned a society where human dignity and mutual regard triumphed over entrenched cleavages. The challenges of today, marked by rapid economic change, resurging local identities, and anxieties over relative advancement, underscore how a new synthesis has become imperative.

Mahatma Gandhi's conception of unity was tied to his moral philosophy of Sarvodaya, i.e., the upliftment of all.[18] Gandhi did not see unity as uniformity but as ethical mutuality, a brotherhood that actively cuts across caste, religion, and wealth. In Hind Swaraj, he wrote, "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty… It requires that we subordinate our interests to moral obligations."[19] For Gandhi, true unity thrived in the village economy, shielded from the divisive pull of industrial greed.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru saw unity as rooted in constitutional democracy and secularism, enabling India's vast diversity to coexist within common national institutions. His push for large-scale planning and industrialization aimed to link regional economies and create shared

[16] Taylor, C. (1994). *The politics of recognition*. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (pp. 25–73). Princeton University Press.

[17] Institute for Social Capital. (2015, April 24). *Putnam on social capital: Democratic or civic perspective?* https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/putnam-on-social-capital-democratic-or-civic-perspective/

[18] Rathi, S. *Role of Mahatma Gandhi in women's political participation*. Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal & Gandhi Research Foundation. https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/women1.php

[19] Gandhi, M.K. (n.d.). *Civilization is that mode of conduct…* [Quote]. Goodreads. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10416346-civilization-is-that-mode-of-conduct-which-points-out-to

developmental futures. But in the 21st century, identity-based assertions—often fueled by regional disparities or local politics—have strained these foundations. Sustaining unity now demands constant renewal through equitable growth and a secular civic space, so that diversity strengthens rather than divides.

For Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, unity without deep structural justice was hollow. In his Constituent Assembly speech, he cautioned that political democracy must be supported by social and economic democracy.[20] He declared fraternity as essential for achieving equality and liberty, describing it as a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians. And in many areas after decades of independence, caste and community-based competition over state resources continue to spark local tensions, highlighting that ensuring equity must go hand-in-hand with promoting a cultural ethic of shared destiny.

The ambit of unity through Ram Manohar Lohia's call for "Sapta Kranti",[21] seven simultaneous revolutions attacking caste, gender bias, economic exploitation, and psychological inferiority. His stress was on dismantling multiple hierarchies simultaneously to achieve a society where differences existed without domination. But in contemporary India older social discriminations and new status anxieties frequently persist. Unity requires active social engineering to prevent structural asymmetries from calcifying.

Another lens is Ekatma Manav Darshan (Integral Humanism), offered by Deen Dayal Upadhyay.[22] He argued that Western models—capitalist or communist—reduce people to mere economic units, fostering either unchecked greed or state domination. *Integral Humanism* offered an alternative: aligning personal interests with collective welfare so that unity arises naturally, not by erasing diversity but by honouring each person's role within a shared cultural fabric. At its core, Integral Humanism embodies "universal brotherhood,"

[20] Ambedkar, B. R. (1949, November 25). *Dr. Ambedkar's last speech in the Constituent Assembly on adoption of the Constitution*. Government of India.
https://csja.gov.in/images/p1195/s_1_constitution_vision_of_Justice/Dr_Ambedkars%20speech.pdf

[21] Kannan, K. (2025, March 23). *How Lohia's new socialism shaped his social justice politics*. The Indian Express.
https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/how-lohias-new-socialism-shaped-his-social-justice-politics-9898754/

[22] It posits that a human being is not just an economic entity, or a mere individual atom, but a composite of body, mind, intellect and soul, all intrinsically connected to society and nature. This means that economic systems, political structures, and social policies should not treat people as isolated consumers or producers but as holistic beings embedded in families, communities and cultural traditions.

seeking balance between society's material, intellectual, and spiritual needs in line with India's civilizational ethos.

Why Post-Independence India Struggled with Social Unity?

After Independence, India's institutional push for national integration and social unity was often fragmented and limited. The Constitution, along with the visions of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, laid a strong foundation for a just and united society. Yet the Nehruvian state's practical efforts to realize this vision were mostly reactive and lacked depth. Over time, divisions of caste, religion, region, and language not only persisted but, in many cases, grew sharper. The state made little sustained effort to build the emotional and civic unity essential for a country of such diversity. Part of the challenge was that many post-independence leaders saw the state as the main actor, without fully recognizing that while it can facilitate unity, the deeper work of nurturing it must take root within society itself.

Social unity is a collective consciousness that must be awakened through a blend of policy, leadership, and participation. For a layered and complex society like India, three essential components are necessary:

- First, the design and implementation of *inclusive and targeted welfare schemes* that touch people's lives in a meaningful way,

- Second, *leaders* who possess moral authority and the ability to make an emotive appeal that resonates across social divides,

- Third, genuine *people's participation* that transforms beneficiaries into stakeholders.

Image 4: Three Essential Components of Social Unity in India

This triadic blend can activate the latent potential for unity in the Indian society. Prime Minister Modi appears to have understood this limitation of the post-independence approach. Drawing on his experiences as Chief Minister of Gujarat, he recognized that India requires a society-centric, and not just state-centric framework for unity. This realization shapes his governance model at the national level. At the center of this approach lie the two foundation stones of social unity: social justice and fraternity.

Two Foundation Stones of Social Unity

Social unity is often dissected into abstract models, formulas, or elaborate frameworks that promise ideal cohesion. But translating these designs into practice has proven difficult; in diverse and unequal societies, lofty theories often crumble when confronted with lived realities.

Against this backdrop, Narendra Modi's approach stands out as the most ambitious recent effort to weave social unity through speeches, policies, schemes, and symbolic gestures. His emphasis has been on making unity a lived experience, where individual progress strengthens rather than threatens others.

India, in this sense, is moving from practice to theory. Over the past decade, governance experiments under Prime Minister Modi have shown that social justice can be pursued

without deepening divides, and that fraternity can be actively cultivated alongside distributive justice to create a more durable social unity. This model has reframed national development—not as a zero-sum contest of competing groups, but as a mutually reinforcing process where the upliftment of one strengthens the whole.

The outcome is an emerging ecosystem of social unity that is pragmatic. It is a civic space where individual advancement no longer threatens the other; where jealousy, fear, and social mistrust find little soil to grow, because the broader political and moral landscape has been so carefully tilled by policy design and symbolic leadership. In this, Modi's model offers a rare empirical proof: that social unity is not merely an abstract aspiration or theoretical construct, but a tangible state of collective being, built through the deliberate intertwining of justice, fraternity, and a developmental ethos that regards each citizen's success as a stepping stone for the nation, not a wedge against it.

This article deals with such a scenario of social unity: a novel civic condition where social justice and fraternity interact exponentially (not linearly), producing a new moral order, an ecosystem where the flourishing of one becomes a shared societal achievement.

Prime Minister Modi's model shows that social unity begins not with abstract moral agreement, but with creating material and social conditions where people can thrive. Welfare schemes, dignity-restoring programs, and civic initiatives give citizens both security and belonging. As inequalities shrink, people gradually learn to cooperate as moral equals, rediscovering fraternity and justice in practice. In this way, a shared sense of the good grows naturally, uniting diverse groups without erasing their differences. Society ensures equal rights and fair opportunities, while individuals freely pursue their goals within this common framework.

From PM Modi's tenure, two defining features of this social unity stand out:

- It is sustained by *social justice* that ensures people feel seen, recognized, and part of a civic experience where one's progress becomes a pathway for another's; not a zero-sum contest, but a collective advancement.

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- It does not seek to erase difference, but to build trust across it, thriving not through rigid centralisation, but through shared moral and civic experiences born of and sustained by *fraternity*.

Thus, social unity is a "broader product", an ecosystem emerging from just and fraternal arrangements.

Social Justice: Ensuring Recognition, Dignity, and Collective Advancement

Addressing a public meeting in Hyderabad, PM Modi said only the BJP has given place of pride to the weaker sections by giving them representation and prominent positions. He said:

"We have 27 OBC ministers in the Center for the first time after Independence. There are 85 OBC MPs, 365 OBC MLAs, and 65 OBC MLCs…Social justice is BJP's firm commitment…"[23]

This shift is reflected in a wide array of programs that move beyond traditional identity politics toward need-based, dignity-centered inclusion. Like, the Aspirational Districts Program targets underdeveloped districts not based on caste or region alone, but on measurable deficits in health, education, and basic infrastructure. Kanker, Chhattisgarh, long suffering from underdevelopment and Left-Wing Extremism, exemplifies this data-driven transformation. During our field research, a well-coordinated Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan workshop was observed in a local school involving over 300 residents, conducted after its launch in the district.[24] This strong initial response highlights government capability in rapid roll-out and also active community participation, confirming that ADP's success in Kanker is rooted in combining top-down monitoring with grassroots engagement. Kanker serves as a "live laboratory" for how targeted governance can promote tangible progress in previously marginalized areas.[25] ADP, thus, encourages a competitive model of cooperative federalism, where upliftment is viewed as national investment.

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[23] The Hindu. (2023, November 08). Social justice is BJP's firm commitment, says Prime Minister Modi. *The Hindu.* https://www.thehindu.com/elections/telangana-assembly/social-justice-is-our-firm-commitment-prime-minister-modi/article67509346.ece

[24] Singh, S. (2025, June 30). Kanker: Witnessing transformation in an aspirational & LWE-affected district. *News18.* https://www.news18.com/opinion/opinion-kanker-witnessing-transformation-in-an-aspirational-lwe-affected-district-ws-kl-9412450.html

[25] Ibid.

Similarly, schemes like PM Jan Dhan, Ujjwala, PM Awas, and Ayushman Bharat have universalized access to financial inclusion, clean cooking fuel, housing, and health coverage with a deliberate focus on first-time access for the poor, especially women, Dalits, tribals, and minorities. These schemes act as vehicles of empowerment. In his own words, Modi affirmed:

"We first instilled sensitivity into the government's thinking! We made service our resolution!... we have been able to provide concrete houses to crores of poor, Dalit-suffering-exploited-deprived families under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Our goal is to give every poor person with a permanent house… we provide a home that transforms dreams into resolutions. That is why every facility like gas, electricity, toilet is being ensured in the houses under PM Awas Yojana… Among the tribals, especially the most backward tribals, we have started PM JanMan Yojana for them. Due to this, the image of many areas is changing today."[26]

Further, the reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) through the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, a move previously unthinkable in traditional justice debates portray the positive-sum logic. It extends affirmative action without reducing existing quotas for SC, ST, or OBC communities, thus creating new opportunities without triggering competitive resentment.

These steps signify a transition from grievance-based justice to aspirational social justice. This architecture of positive-sum inclusion where recognition, material upliftment, and collective dignity converge that allows social justice to function as a foundational pillar of social unity. Under Modi's leadership, India has begun to witness a justice discourse where solidarity grows both from shared grievance and shared hope.

Modi's model of social justice addresses material inequality while affirming ethical equality, the dignity of being treated as an equal citizen. Instead of dividing society into grievance

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[26] Press Information Bureau. (2025, June 24). *English rendering of PM's address at Centenary Celebration Meeting of Conversation between Sree Narayana Guru & Gandhi Ji*. Government of India.
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2139151

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groups, it revives a shared civic promise. Framed through gender justice and constitutional fraternity, these reforms turn social justice into a foundation for social unity.

Fraternity: Cultivating Trust Across Cleavages

Unlike many classical or even Nehruvian frameworks, which often imagined unity through a somewhat homogenizing lens, Modi's approach accepts India's diversity as a starting point, seeking to cultivate trust and common purpose across it. His repeated invocations of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" articulate this vision, where difference is not forcibly dissolved, but harmonized into a larger cooperative endeavor.

Programs like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB), which twinned states and cultures through mutual festivals, student exchanges, and linguistic learning, aim precisely to deepen appreciation of diversity as a unifying strength. This spirit is behind the organization of Kashi Tamil Sangamam and Saurashtra Kashi Sangamam.[27] The Prime Minister reached out to the attendees at the inauguration of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam in 2023 and emphasized the cultural bond between Kashi and Tamil Nadu:

"Coming from Tamil Nadu to Kashi means coming from one home of Mahadev to His other home. Coming from Tamil Nadu to Kashi means coming from the place of Madurai Meenakshi to Kashi Vishalakshi's place."[28]

This model by PM Modi redefines unity: not as sameness but as a deliberate forging of trust and mutual familiarity across inherited divides. The Prime Minister repeatedly emphasizes the need for knowing each other's culture as this increases trust and develops rapport.[29] As PM Modi eloquently called for celebrating the Unity in Diversity of the country:

"We have our pride in our Unity in Diversity… We don't find any contradictions in our diversity…When we respect our different ways of life & traditions then the feeling of

[27] Press Information Bureau. (2023, December 17). *PM inaugurates Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023*. Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1987518

[28] PTI. (2023, December 18). PM Modi's speech at Kashi Tamil Sangamam translated real-time using AI. *The Economic Times*. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/pm-modis-speech-at-kashi-tamil-sangamam-translated-real-time-using-ai/articleshow/106080083.cms

[29] Press Information Bureau. (2023, December 17). *PM inaugurates Kashi Tamil Sangamam* 2023. Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1987518

harmony and brotherhood would develop further… we have to celebrate our diversity and this is nation building."[30]

In advancing fraternity as a civic ethic, Modi has explicitly framed development and mutual respect as transcending religious or identity lines. Speaking at Aligarh Muslim University in 2020, he asserted, "We are heading towards a path where no one is left behind because of religion… the welfare of the country lies in the welfare of every citizen without any discrimination."[31] Calling AMU a "mini-India" that embodies the strength of diversity, he further emphasized, "Whatever religion we are born in, it is important to see how to blend our aspirations with national goals." [32]

By declaring that "politics can wait, society cannot," Modi positioned fraternity as an immediate, practical necessity for national progress.[33] The vision of celebrating diversity while uniting people through shared aspirations lies at the core of India's emerging social unity. Modi seeks to guide this path, where fraternity and collective progress form the common heartbeat of a new India.

Equally instructive is India's long civilizational practice of nurturing unity through shared cultural and spiritual congregations, of which the Kumbh Mela stands as an example. For centuries, this vast gathering has drawn millions from across castes, sects, languages, and regions, creating a temporary yet powerful social space where differences recede before a collective identity as seekers and pilgrims.

The 2025 Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj emerged as a monumental event highlighting India's intrinsic harmony amidst its vast diversity. Spanning 45 days, this grand congregation attracted millions from various regions, languages, and communities, all converging at the sacred Triveni Sangam. PM Modi aptly described the festival as a "*Maha Yagya* of unity,"

[30] Prime Minister's Office. (2019, October 31). *PM calls for celebrating the unity in diversity of the country*. PM India. https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-calls-for-celebrating-the-unity-in-diversity-of-the-country/
[31] The Statesman. (2020, December 22). *"We are heading to a path where no one is left behind because of religion": PM Modi at AMU*. The Statesman. https://www.thestatesman.com/india/we-are-heading-to-a-path-where-no-one-is-left-behind-because-of-religion-pm-modi-at-amu-1502942029.html
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

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emphasizing its role in dissolving societal divisions.[34] He remarked, "Once an individual comes to Maha Kumbh, everyone becomes one, be it saints, sages, or common people, and the difference of caste and sects ends."[35]

What sets Modi apart in his effort to build a fraternal India is his consistent communication with the people, that too not as a distant authority figure, but as a fellow citizen. He chooses moments of national importance to nudge public conscience, offering reminders of shared responsibilities and ethical behavior in everyday life.

In one such powerful appeal, delivered from the Red Fort on Independence Day, Modi addressed the growing trend of violence during protests or in the name of faith[36]:

"Sometimes in the name of faith, some people, due to a lack of patience, end up destroying the social fabric. The poison of casteism and communalism can never benefit the country. This is the land of Gandhi and Buddha; we have to move forward, taking everyone along… Whose cultural legacy is this? This is our cultural legacy, the legacy of 125 crore people. Whose faith is this? This is our faith… I'd like to appeal to all the countrymen that at that time our motto was *'Bharat Chodo'* and today's slogan is *'Bharat Jodo'*. We have to take everyone and every section of the society along to take the country forward."

Conclusion

A vision of social unity that moves decisively beyond classical formulations is not simply an arithmetic sum of social justice and fraternity, nor a utopian homogenization of differences. It is a consciously and carefully crafted civic ecosystem, where shared rights and dignities, participatory symbols, and the very texture of governance conspire to produce a society in which citizens see themselves as co-travellers in a moral and developmental journey.

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[34] Dixit, K. (2024, December 14). 'Maha Kumbh will become a Maha Yagya of unity': PM Narendra Modi in Prayagraj. *The Times of India.* https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/maha-kumbh-will-become-a-maha-yagya-of-unity-pm-modi/articleshow/116301020.cms

[35] Ibid.

[36] Press Information Bureau. (2017, August 15). *English rendering of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Address to the Nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 71st Independence Day- August, 15, 2017.* Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetail.aspx?PRID=1499736

India's experience over the last decade, under PM Modi's leadership, illustrates how this unity can be pragmatically advanced. By combining welfare and opportunity structures that do not deepen cleavages with direct investments in fraternity through policies, symbols, and institutional choreography, India has charted a pathway where individual growth does not come at another's expense, but often becomes the bridge to collective upliftment. In doing so, PM Modi is innovating for the present and carrying forward Bharat's civilizational legacy of promoting unity in diversity, where the well-being of the individual has always been seen as inseparable from the well-being of the collective.

An ecosystem of social unity is gradually emerging in India, where diverse paths of development and varied aspirations coexist. Differences in individual and group pursuits no longer stand opposed but converge toward a shared horizon of peace, prosperity, and mutual respect.

India today offers a distinctive and hopeful lesson that through the careful intertwining of social justice and fraternity, even a deeply plural and diverse society can cultivate a durable unity, woven from a shared commitment. In an age driven by polarization and zero-sum anxieties, India's evolving model inspired by the politics of PM Modi offers a proposition that social justice and fraternity, rightly designed and pursued, can culminate in a society bound by trust, pride, and an abiding sense that individual's progress is woven into the progress of all.