



## Negation and Synthesis: Cultural Identity as an Obstacle to National Class Solidarity

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### Abstract

This paper explores the argument that cultural identity, while historically rooted and emotionally resonant, acts as an obstacle to national class solidarity in capitalist societies. Using the example of the Sindhi community in India, who, despite lacking a geographic homeland, maintain strong linguistic, religious, and economic cohesion, the paper demonstrates how cultural preservation can lead to socio-economic fragmentation. The Sindhis' emphasis on intra-community networks and entrepreneurial self-sufficiency has often aligned them with bourgeois interests rather than integrating them into broader class-based national movements. Drawing on dialectical materialism, the paper argues for the negation of such cultural particularisms, not as cultural erasure, but as a necessary transformation to forge a unified national consciousness grounded in class solidarity. Through historical examples such as the Paris Commune, the Soviet Union, and revolutionary Cuba, the paper illustrates how a redefined identity centered on labor and collective struggle can replace divisive cultural affiliations. Ultimately, it contends that without this dialectical shift, the working class remains fractured and vulnerable to bourgeois capitalist domination. The paper concludes that revolutionary change requires cultural identity to be reimaged, not preserved, in service of national unity and cohesion.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity Politics, Dialectical Synthesis, National-Class Contradiction, Postcolonial Fragmentation.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of nation-building and collective identity, cultural identity often stands as both a pillar of heritage and a barrier to unity. While it offers belonging and continuity, from a Marxist lens, it can obstruct the development of a unified class-conscious national identity. This research asserts that the persistence of discrete cultural identities, exemplified through the Sindhi community in India, impedes national class solidarity. Consequently, the dialectical negation of such cultural identities becomes imperative for the synthesis of a cohesive national consciousness grounded in proletarian unity.

Historically, cultural identity has served as a mechanism for social cohesion within communities. However, in a capitalist society where the proletariat's emancipation is central, cultural identity can reinforce divisions aligned with pre-capitalist or bourgeois values (Marx & Engels, 2010, pp. 127-186). This paper will explore the tension between cultural and national identities through the framework of historical materialism. It will also use the Sindhi community in India as a contemporary case to examine how a strong attachment to cultural preservation can lead to socio-economic and political fragmentation.

This paper proceeds in several sections: first, a conceptual framework detailing the theoretical constructs of culture, nationhood, and dialectical negation; second, an analysis of how cultural identity functions as an instrument of division; third, a discussion on the necessity of negation for class unification; fourth, a proposal for a synthesized proletarian identity; fifth, counterarguments and limitations; and finally, a conclusion outlining the implications of this approach. Using historical examples and scholarly interpretations, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive Marxist critique of cultural identity's role in national class solidarity.

Ultimately, this study aims not to erase cultures but to critique the ideological uses of cultural identity that serve bourgeois hegemony. In doing so, it calls for a dialectical synthesis that centers the working class as the primary agent of national unity, free from divisive cultural allegiances.

## Conceptual Framework

Understanding the relationship between cultural identity and national class solidarity requires unpacking the fundamental concepts of identity, nationhood, and dialectical transformation within Marxist theory. Cultural identity is generally understood as the shared customs, language, religion, and values that define a specific group (Hall, 1996). It provides a sense of belonging and continuity but can also foster exclusivity and segregation. Within the context of India, communities like the Sindhis have preserved their linguistic, religious, and commercial traditions even after migration and national integration. This persistent inward cultural cohesion, while offering community stability, often creates social boundaries that inhibit collective political action on a national scale (Kothari, 2002).

In contrast, national identity is a relatively modern construct shaped by the emergence of the bourgeois state. Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1976, pp. 100-120) described nations as “imagined communities” bound not by face-to-face relationships but by shared narratives constructed through media, education, and state apparatuses. From a Marxist perspective, this imagined unity can only become genuinely revolutionary if it transcends ethnic and cultural divisions and aligns with class interests (Marx & Engels, 2010). The nation, therefore, becomes not merely a geographical entity but a political one whose primary objective should be the unification of the working class across cultural boundaries.

The dialectical materialist method offers a lens to understand this transformation. In dialectics, every historical stage contains internal contradictions that push it toward its negation and eventual synthesis (Marx, 1977). Applied to identity, cultural particularism must be negated in order to synthesize a collective national identity rooted in shared economic interests rather than inherited cultural affiliations. This does not imply cultural annihilation but rather a historical progression in which culture ceases to act as a barrier to solidarity.

In the case of the Sindhi community, their cultural distinctiveness, emphasized through separate educational institutions, matrimonial networks, and business conglomerates, can be seen as resisting integration into a broader national identity based on class (Kothari, 2002). This resistance contributes to the fragmentation of the working class, reinforcing divisions that ultimately benefit bourgeois dominance.

## **Cultural Identity as an Instrument of Division**

Cultural identity, while often considered benign or even beneficial, can function as a powerful instrument of division within capitalist societies. The fragmentation caused by cultural identity prevents the emergence of unified class consciousness, which is essential for revolutionary transformation. For Marxists, this division is not accidental, it is structurally embedded and often manipulated by the ruling bourgeoisie to maintain their dominance (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 26-40). In India, for example, caste, language, and regional identities have historically been exploited to divide workers who otherwise share common economic grievances.

The Sindhi community in India exemplifies how cultural identity can impede integration into broader class-based movements. Following the Partition in 1947, displaced Sindhis resettled in various parts of India, particularly in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Despite no homeland of their own, they constructed self-contained cultural economies, Sindhi schools, housing colonies, religious centers, and business networks, which, while ensuring preservation of identity, also fostered insularity (Markovits, 2000). Sindhis were notably absent in major working-class movements and often leaned towards commercial and entrepreneurial pursuits, aligning them more with bourgeois than proletarian interests (Kothari, 2002).

Cultural divisions such as these allow capitalism to operate with impunity. The bourgeoisie benefits when the proletariat is more loyal to its cultural community than to its class. Through cultural institutions, traditions,

and even identity-based political parties, the capitalist state ensures that proletarian energies are redirected toward preserving heritage rather than challenging exploitation (Althusser, 1971). When a Sindhi worker sees themselves first as Sindhi, then as Indian, and only last as a worker, revolutionary potential is effectively neutralized.

This strategic use of culture as a tool of class division is reinforced by education, media, and civil society, all of which portray cultural preservation as apolitical or even patriotic. Thus, while culture provides emotional and social security, it also serves as an ideological apparatus that stifles national class solidarity.

## **The Necessity of Negation**

To move toward true national solidarity rooted in proletarian interests, cultural identity must be subjected to a process of dialectical negation. Negation, as per Hegelian-Marxist dialectics, does not entail destruction but transformation, removing the obstructive elements of an idea while preserving its useful core (Lukács, 1971). Cultural identity, in its current form, functions primarily to separate workers based on inherited traditions rather than unite them under shared material conditions.

For example, in India, cultural and religious identities have repeatedly undermined the emergence of a national working-class consciousness. The emphasis on caste among Dalits, religion among Hindus and Muslims, and linguistic identity among regional groups creates a terrain where collective bargaining and political organization are fragmented (Desai, 2007). In this context, the Sindhi community has consistently acted to preserve its economic and cultural enclaves, thereby resisting integration into cross-cultural labor movements or national trade unions (Markovits, 2000).

Negation is thus essential. This would involve reconfiguring identity not around language, religion, or tradition, but around shared labor, exploitation, and resistance. In doing so, the emotional energy currently invested in cultural practices can be redirected toward class struggle. This does not necessitate complete erasure of customs, but rather their transformation into expressions of class solidarity.

Historically, revolutionary movements have had to confront this challenge. The Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union actively suppressed nationalist tendencies among ethnic minorities to forge a collective socialist identity (Lenin, 1972). Similarly, revolutionary Cuba emphasized national consciousness over racial or regional distinctions, aligning citizens through shared revolutionary struggle rather than inherited differences (Guevara, 1968, pp. 52-28). These efforts were not without contradictions, but they demonstrate the necessity of negating divisive cultural identities to achieve broader class unity.

In essence, without the negation of cultural particularisms, national identity becomes an incoherent patchwork incapable of supporting revolutionary transformation. Only through dialectical synthesis, wherein the proletariat becomes the primary subject of national identity, can true solidarity emerge.

## **Synthesis: Constructing a New National Consciousness**

Once cultural identity is critically negated, the space opens for the synthesis of a new form of national consciousness: one grounded in class rather than culture. This national identity does not emerge organically; it must be cultivated through state apparatuses, revolutionary education, and shared economic struggle. A proletarian national identity is one in which workers see themselves not through the lens of language, religion, or ethnicity, but as participants in a common battle against exploitation.

This synthesis has historical precedent. The Paris Commune of 1871 and the Soviet Union's early years show how identity based on shared labor and mutual sacrifice can supplant fragmented loyalties (Marx, 1871, pp. 25-27). In Cuba, revolutionary identity emerged from participation in land reform and anti-imperialist struggle, not racial or cultural lineage (Guevara, 1968). These examples highlight that cultural synthesis does not mean homogenization but transformation, reframing identity around material solidarity.

In India, the challenge remains complex. A working-class Sindhi, Dalit, or Bengali may have more in common with each other than with their bourgeois co-ethnics. But without a unifying narrative and economic platform, cultural differences continue to define their political behavior. If the Sindhi community, for example, were to redefine its identity around labor solidarity and anti-capitalist struggle rather than business exclusivity or religious tradition, it could contribute powerfully to national cohesion.

Educational reform, secular mass media, inclusive labor policies, and proletarian cultural production are critical to this transformation. Such efforts would replace cultural nostalgia with revolutionary futurism. The goal is to ensure that national identity becomes synonymous with class identity, where the term "Indian" or "worker" evokes shared struggle and collective future, not fragmented pasts.

This synthesis is not an endpoint but a process. It must be continually renewed through struggle, critique, and participatory politics. Only then can the nation be reclaimed as a space of emancipation, rather than exclusion.

## **Critiques and Counter Arguments**

Critics may argue that the negation of cultural identity is tantamount to cultural erasure or authoritarian homogenization. Indeed, postcolonial theorists and human rights activists often emphasize the importance of cultural pluralism and minority rights in preserving dignity and democracy (Appiah, 2006). However, this critique often assumes a liberal framework, overlooking the class functions that cultural identities perform under capitalism. The question is not whether culture should exist, but whose interests it serves.

In the Indian context, many communities, Sindhis included, express fears of cultural dilution in the name of national integration. These fears are not unfounded, especially given historical instances of forced assimilation and state violence. However, such critiques frequently ignore how cultural preservation can also serve bourgeois interests by keeping working-class communities divided and politically disengaged (Desai, 2007).

Further, proponents of identity politics suggest that culture-based mobilizations can coexist with class-based struggles (Fraser, 1997). But in practice, identity politics often becomes a substitute for class politics, especially when co-opted by neoliberal institutions and electoral parties. Celebrating cultural difference without confronting structural inequality leads to symbolic inclusion and material exclusion.

Thus, a Marxist approach neither romanticizes nor demonizes culture. It seeks to reveal the class dimensions of identity and redirect cultural energies toward solidarity. The Sindhi community's emphasis on entrepreneurship, education, and religious distinction may appear empowering, but in reality, it aligns them more closely with bourgeois aspirations than with proletarian revolution.

The path forward is not cultural erasure, but cultural transformation, guided by class interest, not communal preservation. Revolution demands a rupture from inherited forms of identity, not their elevation.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that cultural identity, while socially meaningful, becomes a serious obstacle to national class solidarity in capitalist societies. Through a Marxist dialectical analysis, it has shown that cultural divisions, such as those preserved by the Sindhi community in India, fracture the proletariat and serve bourgeois dominance. Negation of cultural particularism is necessary, not as erasure, but as transformation toward a new national consciousness based on class unity.

The path to synthesis requires educational reform, ideological struggle, and revolutionary leadership capable of mobilizing people beyond inherited identities. Only then can the nation become an instrument of emancipation, rather than exclusion. In this reimagined nation, the worker, regardless of culture, is the cornerstone of unity.

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