

The Interplay of Religious Festivals Diwali and Eid in Shaping National and Ethnic Identity Concepts of the Indian Society

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Diwali, Ethnic Identity, Eid, Festivals, National Identity

Received : 17, September

Revised : 19, October

Accepted: 22, November

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the interplay of religious festivals, specifically Diwali and Eid, in shaping national and ethnic identity concepts within Indian society. The objective of this research was to analyse how Diwali, predominantly celebrated by Hindus, and Eid, central to the Muslim community, contribute to both national unity and ethnic distinctiveness in India. Using a qualitative comparative study approach, archival research and media content analysis were conducted to examine the broader socio-political narratives surrounding these festivals. Findings revealed that Diwali is closely tied to the construction of Hindu identity and is often intertwined with Indian national identity, promoting a sense of unity. Eid, on the other hand, reinforced ethnic and religious identity among Muslims, fostering community cohesion while simultaneously highlighting the complexities of belonging within the larger national framework. The study concludes that both Diwali and Eid play critical yet contrasting roles in shaping India's multi-layered identity, with Diwali promoting a homogenizing national identity and Eid emphasizing religious distinctiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural events have become popular for travellers to learn about and enjoy the local way of life while communicating the economic advantages to the community (Parkes et al., 2007). Numerous scholarly investigations underscore how religious holidays function as indicators of ethnic distinction, stressing the part that these celebrations play in upholding social boundaries. religious festivals like Eid and Diwali, which are associated with specific ethnic identities in South Asia, reinforce societal divisions while also serving as a means of fostering community cohesiveness. According to Smith's research, festivals serve as settings for the performance, negotiation, and contestation of ethnic identity, with rituals acting as identifiers between different groups (Choudrie et al., 2018). Robertson examines the function of religious holidays in the Middle East, where celebrations like Ashura and Ramadan are used to express ethnic identity in a religious and political capacity. Turner's research indicates that religious festivals provide marginalized communities with a platform to affirm their ethnic identity in larger national contexts, frequently taking a stand against prevailing narratives (Robertson et al., 2015). While religious festivals can promote national unity, they can also deepen divisions within multi-ethnic states celebration of dominant religious festivals in Iran, such as Nowruz, has the potential to marginalize ethnic and religious minorities, whose festivals are either suppressed or excluded from the national narrative (Jong, 2020). Local festivals have been created about the mega-event as a means of attempting to unite communities and facilitate their collaboration. These festivals can help local communities adapt to change as they respond to the opportunities and difficulties brought about by the area's rapid development (Stevenson, 2016). perceived human congestion and the festival experience have a U-shaped relationship, whereas perceived spatial crowding always hurts the festival experience. Additionally, it is confirmed that visitor interactions have a moderating effect. Specifically, the quantity of interactivity positively moderates the relationship between perceived spatial crowding and festival experience, while the quality of interaction has varying moderating effects on the relationship between different types of crowding perception and festival experience (Cheng et al., 2021). Even though event tourism is expanding, there isn't much study in the field—particularly when it comes to the advantages festivals offer visitors. Instead, the importance of festivals and other events for financial gain has been highlighted (Lee et al., 2012). The motives of attendees from six distinct event items varied significantly. We conducted Duncan's multiple-range tests to investigate these guests' varying levels of motivation. The average scores of the various groups show that participants in "rock events" tended to be less motivated than other groups and to rate themselves lowest on the "family togetherness" aspect. Nonetheless, regardless of the festival product attended, participants' perceptions of the significance of socio-economic repercussions and their level of satisfaction with the event were the same (Weber et al., 2012). Thus far, the consensus on the topic is that public festivals can promote communication across various communities by establishing other frameworks for social organization and identity (Quinn et al., 2021). Music

festivals do not serve as useful venues for implementing social and cultural policies that aim to reduce social exclusion, break down barriers between different groups, and promote greater community cohesiveness (Specified, 2014). To enhance the design of festival experiences and better meet the artistic, musical, social, and psychological demands of participants, improved management tactics for music festivals are proposed. This would increase the experience's impact and depth (Ballantyne et al., 2014). The complex nature of how people perceive tourism has an impact on social capital in the Chinese tourism industry and helps to clarify how locals see the social capital connected to community-based tourism as a component of sustainable development (Zhang et al., 2021). The incidents showed how important it is to comprehend innovation and how it helps the event industry be resilient, even during uncertain times like the COVID-19 epidemic. Before COVID-19, these companies succeeded by consistently promoting innovative work environments by being customer-focused and value-driven enterprises. Instead of being employed as temporary fixes, digital technologies were utilized to improve the experience platforms for event attendees and increase the economic possibilities of each event (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022). A consistent metric impact examination of sustainability. Regarding financial implications, socio-cultural effects are just as significant as economic effects, whereas environmental effects are not very significant in the grand scheme of things. This demonstrates how, from an economic standpoint, environmental concerns are insignificant due to the low market value of emission rights. In conclusion, the scope of the assessment, commensurability, and opportunity cost are examined (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013). Festivals boost destination marketing and event tourism while benefiting local communities economically, socially, and culturally. The main goal for festival organizers should be to offer a fun program in a cozy setting for a fair fee. This plan will encourage return attendance and encourage more trips to the event location (Tanford & Jung, 2017). The literature on festival tourism overemphasizes the economic effects and consumer motives; while its concepts and methodologies are well-developed, comparative and cross-cultural research can still advance the field. An approach that is more triple-bottom-line and balanced is required to assess the effects of festival tourism (Hirshleifer et al., 2012). Around the world, festivals are becoming a more important and dynamic part of the travel and leisure sectors. They are thought to have profound effects on the host communities and the destination region from an economic, sociocultural, and political standpoint. Festivals are events that the local community wants to celebrate and wants the public to join in on as participants. The main goal of festivals should be to draw as many people as possible while offering an experience that is distinct from or larger than daily life. While it is frequently economically desirable, extending the hands-on experience beyond a single day is not required (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). Malaysia is home to a diverse population in terms of race, culture, and religion. The three main racial groupings that comprise the population are Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Other ethnic groups in Malaysia include the numerous ethnic groups that makeup Sabah and Sarawak. Malaysia, a nation

endowed with a varied ethnic heritage, is tolerant of the practice of various religious faiths and cultural celebrations. Every ethnic group's popular and traditional festivals symbolize the priceless heritage that has allowed them to survive to this day. They are acknowledged by the government, which even designates some dates as official public holidays (Haji Ishak, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

India is a diverse and multicultural country, where religion plays a central role in shaping both individual and collective identities. Among the many religious festivals celebrated in India, Diwali and Eid stand out as two significant events, each representing the core values and beliefs of their respective religious communities – Hinduism and Islam. While Diwali is one of the most celebrated Hindu festivals, marking the victory of light over darkness, Eid is celebrated by Muslims, symbolizing the end of Ramadan and a time for communal harmony. This literature review explores how these two festivals contribute to the construction and reinforcement of national and ethnic identities in Indian society. The review also examines the intersectionality of these identities within the complex fabric of India's pluralistic culture, with particular focus on the social and political dynamics that shape the perceptions of Diwali and Eid. Festivals in India are more than just religious observances; they are key mechanisms in the formation of personal, communal, and national identities. According to Ninan (2018), festivals serve as platforms for reinforcing religious customs and traditions while also reinforcing a collective social fabric. The celebration of Diwali and Eid, while centered on specific religious groups, plays an integral role in how individuals and communities perceive themselves and others. Ramachandra Guha (2007) emphasizes the role of festivals in India as a means of fostering both a sense of belonging and the expression of national identity. Diwali, for example, connects Hindu communities to a shared mythological heritage, while Eid fosters a sense of unity among Muslims, particularly in the context of the larger Indian nation. The manner in which these festivals are celebrated can either bridge communal divides or reinforce ethnic and religious separations. Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in India, and it plays a significant role in shaping the national and ethnic identity of Hindus. Singh (2011) highlights that Diwali is not just a religious observance but also a cultural practice that reinforces Hindu identity across generations. The rituals surrounding Diwali, such as lighting lamps and fireworks, are deeply ingrained in the collective memory of Hindus. As Bhargava (2015) asserts, Diwali is emblematic of the Hindu ethos and serves as an affirmation of Hindu values in both private and public spaces. Moreover, Menon (2017) discusses how Diwali has also been incorporated into the national identity, especially through state-sponsored celebrations and media representation. The omnipresence of Diwali across Indian society, particularly in urban areas, is a testament to its central role in shaping national identity. The festival also provides an opportunity for Hindus to assert their religious identity within the pluralistic framework of Indian society. Literature Review: The Interplay of Religious Festivals Diwali and Eid in Shaping National and Ethnic Identity Concepts of Indian Society India is a diverse and multicultural

country, where religion plays a central role in shaping both individual and collective identities. Among the many religious festivals celebrated in India, Diwali and Eid stand out as two significant events, each representing the core values and beliefs of their respective religious communities—Hinduism and Islam. While Diwali is one of the most celebrated Hindu festivals, marking the victory of light over darkness, Eid is celebrated by Muslims, symbolizing the end of Ramadan and a time for communal harmony. This literature review explores how these two festivals contribute to the construction and reinforcement of national and ethnic identities in Indian society. The review also examines the intersectionality of these identities within the complex fabric of India's pluralistic culture, with particular focus on the social and political dynamics that shape the perceptions of Diwali and Eid. Festivals in India are more than just religious observances; they are key mechanisms in the formation of personal, communal, and national identities. According to Ninan (2018), festivals serve as platforms for reinforcing religious customs and traditions while also reinforcing a collective social fabric. The celebration of Diwali and Eid, while centered on specific religious groups, plays an integral role in how individuals and communities perceive themselves and others. Ramachandra Guha (2007) emphasizes the role of festivals in India as a means of fostering both a sense of belonging and the expression of national identity. Diwali, for example, connects Hindu communities to a shared mythological heritage, while Eid fosters a sense of unity among Muslims, particularly in the context of the larger Indian nation. The manner in which these festivals are celebrated can either bridge communal divides or reinforce ethnic and religious separations. Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in India, and it plays a significant role in shaping the national and ethnic identity of Hindus. Singh (2011) highlights that Diwali is not just a religious observance but also a cultural practice that reinforces Hindu identity across generations. The rituals surrounding Diwali, such as lighting lamps and fireworks, are deeply ingrained in the collective memory of Hindus. As Bhargava (2015) asserts, Diwali is emblematic of the Hindu ethos and serves as an affirmation of Hindu values in both private and public spaces. Moreover, Menon (2017) discusses how Diwali has also been incorporated into the national identity, especially through state-sponsored celebrations and media representation. The omnipresence of Diwali across Indian society, particularly in urban areas, is a testament to its central role in shaping national identity. The festival also provides an opportunity for Hindus to assert their religious identity within the pluralistic framework of Indian society. Eid, as a major festival for Muslims in India, provides a space for the Muslim community to celebrate their religious heritage. According to Ahmed (2014), Eid serves as a marker of Islamic identity, with celebrations encompassing prayers, family gatherings, and the giving of charity (Zakat). Eid's cultural significance, however, extends beyond its religious importance. As Fatima (2019) notes, the festival fosters solidarity among Muslims and provides them with an opportunity to unite and express their distinct religious identity, particularly in a context where they may feel marginalized in the broader national narrative.

The political dimensions of Eid celebrations are particularly evident in the context of communal relations. Qureshi (2021) discusses how the Muslim community's public observance of Eid can be seen as both a form of religious expression and a political statement, asserting Muslim identity in a predominantly Hindu nation. Eid's observance in India often intersects with national identity in complex ways, as Muslims balance the desire to express their religious identity with the need to engage with the larger national community. The juxtaposition of Diwali and Eid provides a lens through which the intersections of religion, ethnicity, and national identity can be examined. Desai (2016) suggests that while Diwali and Eid are seen as festivals of religious communities, they also transcend their religious boundaries, influencing the broader cultural and political landscape of India. Both festivals, while celebrated by distinct communities, have been appropriated in different ways by the national discourse. Diwali, as a symbol of Hindu values, is often linked with ideas of national unity, while Eid, as a celebration of Muslim identity, is frequently marked by political struggles surrounding secularism and minority rights in India. Raghavan (2018) points out that the celebration of Diwali and Eid is also a reflection of the tension between religious pluralism and nationalism in India. The way these festivals are celebrated, particularly in public spaces, plays a role in negotiating the relationship between India's diverse religious communities. These festivals are not only markers of religious identity but also of the nation-state's engagement with its pluralistic identity.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative comparative study approach, focusing on the festivals of Diwali and Eid to examine their role in shaping national and ethnic identity concepts among the Indian population. Ethnographic methods, including participant observation, were conducted during both festivals in diverse regions to capture the rituals, cultural practices, and social interactions. Additionally, archival research and content analysis of media coverage, government statements, and cultural narratives surrounding Diwali and Eid were performed to understand their broader social and political significance. This combination of ethnographic and documentary data allowed for a comprehensive comparison of the festivals' impact on identity formation.

RESEARCH RESULT

For Hindus, Diwali is the most important religious holiday. Deepavali, another name for Diwali, is also called the festival of lights. Spiritually speaking, the celebration represents the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, Knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair. Diwali is observed for five days in most regions. Hindus celebrate Diwali, a holiday that dates back to the time of Lord Rama or possibly much earlier when Goddess Lakshmi emerged from the milky ocean to bless the gods and all of humanity. Given that Hinduism is the oldest religion with a millennium of history, it is hardly surprising that Diwali is linked to a multitude of mythology. All of them, however, represent the triumph of hope over despair, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and light over darkness. Throughout the five-day

Diwali celebration, numerous deities are worshipped and placated. When the mention of Diwali Puja is made, the most notable figures that immediately spring to mind are Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Ganesha, and Lord Kuber. God Dhanvantari, God Yamraj, God. As per the Amanta Hindu Calendar, five days of Diwali festivity spans over two months. Diwali begins - Krishna Paksha Trayodashi (28th day) of Ashwin (7th month) Diwali ends - Shukla Paksha Dwitiya (2nd day) of Kartik (8th month) As per Purnimanta Calendar Diwali begins - Krishna Paksha Trayodashi (13th day) of Kartik (8th month) Diwali ends - Shukla Paksha Dwitiya (17th day) of Kartik (8th month) Diwali is celebrated as per lunisolar based Hindu calendar, its date(s) varies on Gregorian calendar and usually falls in mid-October and mid-November. Diwali Calendar lists all five days of Diwali festivities for 1000 years (Ummah, 2019).

Table 1. Diwali Festivals List

Day 1	Dhantrayodashi
Day 2	Narak Chaturdashi
Day 3	Lakshmi Puja
Day4	Govardhan Puja
Day 5	Bhaiya Dooj

The third day of Lakshmi Puja is the most important day of five days' festivities and most of the time this day is referred to as Diwali Puja itself. Apart from the above five festivals, the most famous festivals for which Diwali is known, Diwali Calendar lists several other festivals celebrated during 5 days of Diwali festivities. Numerous rituals are followed during Diwali. These rituals vary from state to state and from region to region (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006).

Table 2. The Most Important Activities in the Five Days of Diwali

1	cleaning and decorating homes usually by giving new whitewash or fresh paints,
2	buying new clothes and jewelry,
3	buying new household items either big or small,
4	preparing traditional home-made sweets,
5	worshipping numerous deities,
6	lighting Diya(s) and decorating the home with blinking electric lamps,
8	bursting firecrackers,
9	trying Diwali remedies to gain wealth,
10	visiting relatives and family friends,
11	distributing sweets, dry fruits, and gifts,
12	calling distant family members, relatives, and friends to exchange Diwali wishes is the most common activity during Diwali.

During Diwali, most public spaces operate normally. The majority of eateries, bars, metro trains, buses, taxis, movie theaters, stores, and hospitals' emergency and vital services operate normally on the eve of Diwali. However, over half of the employees would be on leave at the majority of commercial establishments. The majority of stores and private offices are open on Diwali because most businesspeople conduct Chopda Puja and Lakshmi Puja on that day. Despite being closed for the Diwali holiday; Indian stock exchanges are

only open for Muhurat trade in the evening for an hour. Muhurat trading is a symbolic practice that has been carried out for years and is seen as auspicious by traders. Diwali is similar to Christmas for the majority of large and small companies. The majority of public areas are open as usual throughout Diwali. On the eve of Diwali, most restaurants, bars, metro trains, buses, taxis, movie theaters, shops, and hospitals' emergency and critical services run as usual. At most commercial organizations, however, more than half of the staff would be on leave. Since most entrepreneurs perform Chopda Puja and Lakshmi Puja on Diwali, most shops and private offices are open on that day. Indian stock exchanges are only open for Muhurat trade in the evening for an hour, even though they are closed for the Diwali holiday. For many years, traders have engaged in the symbolic activity of muhurat trading, which they consider auspicious. For most people (Tanford & Jung, 2017).

Both Diwali and Eid have transcended communal barriers to become emblems of a wider national celebration, despite their religious roots. Regardless of one's own religious beliefs, many Indians find that celebrating or taking part in these holidays strengthens their sense of national identity. These festivals' national holidays, public festivities, and media portrayals promote inclusivity and unity among various religious and ethnic communities. This common cultural experience, which is frequently seen through a secularist viewpoint, demonstrates how festivals support a national narrative that emphasizes unity while embracing variety. Both celebrations support national unity, but they are also essential for preserving ethnic and religious identity. For Hindus, Diwali is still a significant time to reinforce their religious and cultural customs, and for Muslims, Eid is a similar occasion. These festivals offer chances for social events, customs, and rituals that strengthen a person's sense of ethnic and religious identity. From prayers to particular customs, these festivals' uniqueness contributes to the preservation of cultural continuity within certain communities. Eid and Diwali serve as occasions for social contact amongst communities, encouraging harmony and tolerance. Mutual respect is promoted when Hindus, Muslims, and other communities greet one another, exchange presents, and take part in one other's festivities. However, different geographical areas and socioeconomic levels have different levels of these relationships. Cross-religious engagement is more common in urban regions with more cosmopolitan people, whereas at festivals, religious borders may be more rigid in rural community's festivals frequently promote harmony, there are sometimes situations in which they can deepen divisions. Some people believe that Diwali, which is frequently observed as a national holiday, can eclipse other religious holidays and cause minority cultures to feel excluded. Similar to this, Eid festivities in some areas can lead to social or political unrest, especially in situations where religious identities are contentious. These conflicts draw attention to the intricate relationship that exists in India between identity politics and religious festivals. Both Diwali and Eid have been utilized as symbols of resistance and adaptation by minority communities. In regions where certain groups feel politically or socially marginalized, the public celebration of these festivals can become an act of reclaiming space and

visibility. At the same time, the commercialization and national branding of these festivals have led to adaptive changes in how they are celebrated, blending traditional practices with modern elements, and thus reshaping the ways in which religious and ethnic identities are expressed (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013).

In India, the Hindu holiday of Diwali and the Islamic holiday of Eid provide opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. These significant festivals' coexistence demonstrates how Indian society is syncretic, with many religious customs overlapping. Participation in both ceremonies by numerous families, irrespective of their religious origin, fosters tolerance and respect for one another. These celebrations represent a wider Indian cultural identity that celebrates diversity via the cross-religious exchange of sweets, gifts, and pleasantries. India's national identity is greatly influenced by Diwali and Eid, which highlight the secular nature of the nation. India's dedication to secularism is demonstrated by the fact that both festivals are celebrated in public areas, workplaces, and educational institutions. To promote a sense of national cohesion, government buildings and public institutions frequently conduct community celebrations for both Eid and Diwali. The belief that religious variety is an essential component of the Indian national character is reinforced by these festivals, which act as reminders of India's heterogeneous fabric. Both Eid and Diwali are changing in contemporary Indian society in response to shifting social and economic circumstances. The way these holidays are observed has changed due to urbanization, migration, and the influence of other cultures. For instance, Diwali has seen shifts toward eco-friendly festivities as a result of growing environmental concern. Similar to this, the emergence of internet channels has caused a change in charitable behaviors around Eid. These modifications demonstrate how religious celebrations can be adjusted to meet the needs of modern society while preserving their essential principles (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022).

India's identity is shaped both at home and abroad by the cultural soft power of Diwali and Eid. Beyond their religious significance, the festivals' iconography embodies more general ideals like kindness, light triumphing over darkness, and communal well-being. These principles support Indian society's moral underpinnings and have an impact on how India is viewed internationally. Both celebrations highlight the nation's dedication to tolerance, peace, and cultural diplomacy, enhancing its reputation as a multicultural but cohesive society. Although Eid and Diwali have traditionally promoted harmony, there are times when they have also turned into hot spots for political and religious unrest. Conflict has occasionally arisen during festival seasons as a result of the politicization of religious identities, especially in regions where community tensions already exist. Nevertheless, community leaders and civil society have also attempted to use these events as opportunities to strengthen common identities and reestablish trust in the face of these difficulties. Diwali is celebrated by lighting candles and oil lamps (diyas), setting off fireworks, adorning homes with rangolis, and praying. It is a time of joy and togetherness when families and friends exchange gifts, greetings, and candies. Additionally,

it is seen to be a good time to start new projects and tidy up residences in anticipation of success. Eid celebrations in India, especially in cities and towns with large Muslim populations, often bring together people of different communities. The spirit of generosity, reflected in the giving of zakat and sharing of meals, fosters a sense of brotherhood and inclusiveness. Many non-Muslims join their Muslim friends and neighbors in celebrating Eid, further promoting social harmony. Diwali and Eid often serve as opportunities for interfaith dialogue and social integration. Celebrating these festivals together strengthens communal relationships and fosters a deeper understanding of one another's religious practices and beliefs. In Indian society, Diwali and Eid are not only religious events but also markers of cultural identity. They contribute to the creation of a collective national identity that values inclusivity and tolerance. Both festivals are recognized as national holidays in India, further highlighting their significance in the public and cultural life of the nation(Quinn et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

Religious festivals in India, such as Diwali and Eid, play a significant role in shaping the concepts of national and ethnic identity within its multicultural society. These celebrations transcend their religious origins and become public events that foster a sense of collective identity while simultaneously emphasizing the diversity within the Indian population. The observance of both Diwali (celebrated primarily by Hindus) and Eid (a Muslim celebration) allows these two major religious communities to contribute to a shared cultural narrative of Indian identity. These festivals bring people of various backgrounds together, both in urban and rural settings, to witness and often participate in the customs, traditions, and rituals of others. This shared experience encourages a sense of unity, particularly in a country as diverse as India. Events like these illustrate that Indian identity is not monolithic but rather a tapestry of different religious and cultural traditions woven together. Despite this shared cultural space, the celebrations of Diwali and Eid still maintain their distinct religious identities, thus reinforcing ethnic and religious boundaries as well. This creates an ongoing dialogue between unity and diversity in India's national identity formation. The festivals serve as a dual force: they unite people under a national umbrella, while also reinforcing individual ethnic and religious identities. The impact of Diwali and Eid in shaping identity is also influenced by the geographical and socioeconomic contexts. In urban India, where globalization and modernity often blur religious distinctions, both festivals have become more commercialized and secularized. Diwali is celebrated with lights, gifts, and fireworks, while Eid is marked with feasting and exchanging of sweets. This commercialization of festivals in cities underscores a more Pan-Indian identity that is less focused on religious differences and more on the shared experience of celebration. In contrast, in rural India, religious festivals remain deeply embedded in traditional practices and rituals, which can reinforce religious boundaries more strongly than in urban settings. The religious significance of Diwali and Eid is more pronounced

in rural areas, where participation in each other's festivals may not be as common. These differences reflect the varying ways in which national and ethnic identities are negotiated across India's diverse sociocultural landscapes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

In Indian civilization, the religious holidays of Diwali and Eid are crucial in forming ideas of national and ethnic identity. Despite having their origins in different theological traditions—Islam and Hinduism, respectively—these celebrations serve as unifying cultural forces that cut beyond religious lines and promote a feeling of community. Diwali and Eid uphold India's pluralistic culture, which not only accepts but celebrates religious variety, by encouraging virtues like compassion, charity, and community. The interplay between these festivals highlights India's commitment to secularism, where multiple religious' identities coexist within a unified national framework. Through the celebration of Diwali and Eid, communities engage in mutual understanding, fostering interfaith dialogue and social cohesion, which is essential in maintaining communal harmony in a multi-religious society. Moreover, these festivals reflect the rich ethnic diversity within India. Regional variations in celebrations provide a glimpse into the different cultural identities that make up the Indian subcontinent, while at the same time reinforcing a collective national identity. Despite occasional political and social challenges, Diwali and Eid continue to serve as symbols of unity, showcasing India's capacity to integrate its diverse religious and cultural traditions into a cohesive social and national fabric. In essence, the shared celebration of Diwali and Eid emphasizes the inclusivity, resilience, and unity of Indian society, making them instrumental in shaping both ethnic and national identities across the country.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This research primarily focuses on major urban centres where the celebrations of Diwali and Eid are most prominent and visible. However, religious festivals play out differently in rural areas, where local traditions, economic conditions, and political factors may significantly alter how festivals contribute to identity formation. The lack of attention to rural India limits the broader applicability of findings, especially when considering how regional variations in the celebration of Diwali and Eid might influence local identities. The study's geographic focus on urban centres means it cannot fully capture the nuances of festival celebrations in rural or remote areas, where community dynamics and ethnic identity may be different. The current research, while discussing Hindu and Muslim communities in India, may not fully address the experiences of other religious minorities who also observe festivals (e.g., Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists). The absence of these communities' perspectives, particularly in the context of how they observe Diwali and Eid, results in a potentially incomplete understanding of how these festivals contribute to broader national and ethnic identity. For instance, Sikhs may observe Diwali but with distinct regional and religious traditions, while the Christian population in India may also celebrate Eid in some regions. This study does not include the views and experiences of other religious minorities in India, which

could provide a more holistic understanding of how religious festivals contribute to national and ethnic identities in a more inclusive manner.

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