

MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS PROSPECTS

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Abstract: *Multicultural society denotes a society where several cultures exist. The expansion of the term multiculturalism arose partly from the changing political climate in international politics in the late 1960s and 1970s and partly out of the debates surrounding minority rights and the feminist movement. It encompasses the rights of minorities, the feminist movement has frequently provided a model for the resolution of apparent injustice. The dominant ethnic majority was seeking to expel or discriminate against an ethnic trading which had been settled in the country for generations. Political, economic, geography, cultural and religious matters differ from one country to another. "Multiculturalism" appears to have become the container into which Western European nations have poured anxieties whose origins often lie in social and economic changes that are considerably wider than those stemming from the consequences of immigration and multiculturalists policies. Multiculturalism compels us to think through the social and collective dimensions of diversity.*

Key words: *Multiculturalism, culture, nation, immigrants, minority*

The concept of multiculturalism originated in the 1960s and early 1970s and used in Canada and Australia for the first time to tackle the problem of immigrants minorities. These two countries at the first time felt the need to embrace the identity 'multicultural' and declare their support for multiculturalism. During this period, Australia and Canada had begun to allow a new immigration that was now 'Asianizing' this nation. Immigrants were encouraged to 'integrate'. They were to be enabled to retain elements of their 'home culture' and ethnic communities were as important vehicles of integration. Multiculturalism involved the recognition of the desire of immigrants and minorities to retain aspects of their culture and that cultural diversity is itself desirable and benefits the nation variety of ways.

Multicultural society denotes a society where several cultures exist. Culture is a set of beliefs and values that is held in common by a group. As Ronald Dworkin puts it, 'Culture a shared vocabulary of tradition and convention'. (Dworkin 1985 :231). Conventions are accepted ways of doing things, and traditions are conventions transmitted across generations. And

conventions and traditions are differing from one group to the other, so the shared vocabulary is one through which a group identifies itself as a particular group distinct from others. Pluralists such as *Henry Louis Gates* and *Edward Said* embrace the idea that , in modernity , culture is hybrid and interactive ,and is therefore never contained cleanly in the form of ethnic groups but travel between groups, never multiplying and continually mutating.

Culture includes, racial, religious, linguistic, etc. which may have differences and distinctions in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking and communicative styles. As we say that human beings in a society or nation should live as members of a family irrespective of their race, religion, caste, language or gender, it is necessary that we should live in harmony with other beings, both animals and plants. India is the best example of multicultural society where people speak 122 major languages and 1600 other languages, 4600 castes and communities, 4000 faiths and beliefs.

Multiculturalism is defined as the state of co-existence of diverse cultures. The term multiculturalism is used to indicate a specific social and cultural school of thoughts that adopts the liberal and all compulsive policy of cultural amalgamation. Multiculturalism is applied by the government, philosophers, politicians, writers, critics and scholars for human society alone, and it also includes non-human beings, plants and the planet itself. Multicultural questions to do with a celebration of cultural diversity and pluralism, and redressing the inequalities between majorities and minorities.

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines multiculturalism as the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society and it includes people of several, different races, religions, languages and traditions. According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, multicultural as an adjective of relating to, or adopted to diverse cultures and multiculturalism is noun form of it. Terence Turner in his book *Anthropology and Multiculturalism* points out: Multiculturalism is one manifestation of the postmodernist reaction to the de-legitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the dominant culture in advanced capitalist countries (416). *C.W. Watson* reflects the fact that political, economic, cultural and religious matters differ in the salience of their hold on popular consciousness from one country to another. *Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology (1991)* referred to the acknowledgement and promotion of cultural pluralism..... multiculturalism celebrates and seeks to promote cultural variety, for example minority languages. At the same time it focuses on the unequal relationship of minority to mainstream cultures.

Multiculturalist *George Crowder* proposes three part definition of multiculturalism:

- 1) Multiculturalism starts with the observation the most contemporary societies are ‘multicultural’ – that is, they do in fact contain multiple cultures.
- 2) More distinctively, multiculturalists respond to the fact as something to approve of rather than oppose or merely tolerate.
- 3) More distinctively still, multiculturalists argue that the multiplicity of cultures within a single society should be not only generally approved of but also given positive recognition in the public policy and public institutions of the society.

Multiculturalism requires that the value of cultural diversity be recognized in public policy, the political voice of the society as a whole. Public recognition of the whole cultural diversity may take various forms. Because of political invasions, migrations, renaissance, industrial revolution, enlightenment, science and technology ,colonialism, imperialism, the mass moved and mixed up the ‘other’ of race ,religion ,ethos and gender, producing a mixture of heterogeneous culture. So, diversity in race, religion, ethos, geography, language, has produced multiculturalism.

The Anglo – Jewish American writer Israel Zangwill developed the concept of melting-pot in the play of the same name .The ‘melting pot’ image refers to the immigrants in America at the end of the 19th century ,who shed their native cultures ,and got assimilated into American culture ,becoming a bright new alloy. The new cultural matrix came to be described as the *salad –bowl* .In the bowl, different constituents retain their distinctive flavors and forms but the dish as a whole is recognizably *sui generis*, having its own distinctive character as result of its unique blending. This is also chatnification.

Western countries accepted the theory and need of plurality in culture. This is especially true of America and England. The acceptance of plurality in culture was both a challenge and resource, because the whole process led to diversification .Many schools opened classes for national foreign languages like Hindi, and Arabic, and Eastern subject had a scope, referred as multicultural education. The black movements, and migration movement, and feminist waves were responsible for multiculturalism. The ethnic minorities were given such constitutional opportunities of recognition in the West. As for example, the Asian African migrants, African-Americans, the natives and Spanish speaking groups got in America. The aboriginals in Australia, the Wales and Scots in England, and the French speaking people in Canada and likewise different ethnic minorities like the Bodos, East Bengal main Muslims in

Assam, the Tulus in Karnataka and such other ethnic minorities in other parts of the world were accorded a comfortable place. Besides, the SC and ST accorded in India.

Multiculturalist policies incorporate two basic principles: firstly, that admissions criteria should be race- neutral, so that immigrants to multiculturalist countries came increasingly from non-European and often than not from non-Christian; and secondly ,that immigrants can retain and express their ethnic identities ,therefore placing an obligation on the pat of public institution .These principles yield eight multiculturalist policies that have been adopted to varying degrees in different countries :

- 1) Constitutional, legislative, or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism at the central and or regional and municipal levels.
- 2) The adoption of multiculturalism in the school curriculum.
- 3) The inclusion of ethnic minority representation and sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing.
- 4) Exemptions from dress codes ,such as allowing Sikhs to wear turbans instead of helmets or school caps ,and exemptions from laws banning Sunday trading and so forth.
- 5) Allowing dual citizenship.
- 6) The funding of ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities.
- 7) The funding of bilingual education or mother – tongue instruction.
- 8) Affirmative action for disadvantages groups.

Peter Mc Laren identifies four major political positions:

- a) Conservative multiculturalism
- b) Liberal multiculturalism
- c) Left-liberal multiculturalism
- d) Critical and resistant multiculturalism

Conservative multiculturalism promotes the idea of integration and is implicitly underpinned by a legacy of racial demonization. This perspective several key disposition the assumption that ‘whiteness’ is not a form of ethnicity but the norm and standard against which all other forms of ethnicity must be measured .It is taken to be the means by which equal opportunity and economic benefits are made available to all. Liberal multiculturalism exposes the call to create gender equality through education and legislation is extended to other racial and ethnic groups. It demands for ‘sameness’ over ‘difference’, to be realized through the reform of

legislation. The Left liberal multiculturalism attempts to address the ideological blindness of the liberal position by emphasizing differences between communities ,connected with social values ,attitudes, styles, and practices related to race, ethnicity, class ,gender, and sexuality. The Critical and Resistant multiculturalism view that the site of struggle is textuality: representation of race and ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality are part of larger ideological struggles that are subject to displacement and transformative agenda.

So the idea of multiculturalism or pluralism implies that all cultures embody genuine human values to some degree and extent worthy not merely of toleration but positive evaluation. Multiculturalism endorses public recognition of multiple cultures to address a complex balancing of benefit and cost that will have to proceed contextually. It has the notion of universalism, relativism, liberalism, democrats, value pluralism and cosmopolitanism. Multiculturalism directs our attention away from purely visible aspects of diversity,to the deeper philosophical and political implications of the coexistence of different orientations to engagement with the world ,and the way in which those differences jostle for recognition within national and global boundaries ,sometimes in relative harmony with each other ,sometimes in real conflict. In conclusion, multiculturalism leads to globalization.

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