

## MULTICULTURAL VALUES AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY: ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PRESENT INDIAN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism has emerged as a liberal ideology that stipulates that voices unite and opportunities be provided for the minority with the assistance of group rights and politics of difference. Multiculturalism is inspired by certain values, such as equality, freedom and justice. However, these ideas may be made indispensable only by means of education. Education is considered to be the panacea to the struggle. The Indian society is afflicted by evils such as discrimination and exclusion, which are centered on structural inequality that has culture as its most influential component. Education has to be transformed in a progressive manner by a multicultural education that holistically critically evaluates and tackles the prevalent inadequacies, limitations, and prejudiced customs in education. Multicultural education is founded on the principles of social justice, education equity, and a dedication for assisting educational proficiencies. Education should enable all students to achieve their full potential as learners and at the same time make them socially conscious and active individuals in the local, national, and global scenario. Multicultural education appreciates the role that schools play to reach these goals. Such an education asserts the crucial need to establish the foundation for the transformation of society and the eradication of oppression and injustice. Multicultural education has turned out to be one-policy mediation in the Indian population through which the ideals of Indian democracy may be realized.

**KEYWORDS:** Multicultural Education, Discriminatory Customs, Exclusion, Group Rights, Politics of Difference

### INTRODUCTION

“Ignorance ... is a guarantee of marginalization”

- Lewin K. (2000)<sup>1</sup>

Multiculturalism materializes as a result of liberal ideologies, although in a slightly diverse style. It signifies a shift from universal to democratic/differentiated citizenship. This approach makes group rights for minorities, for people based on their ethnicity, indigenous populace, and immigrants mandatory. The approach seeks to create a multicultural or all-encompassing society, which has its basis on the standards of equality, liberty, and social justice. The advent of multiculturalism has helped it to flourish in several fields and policies implemented. Multicultural education has heralded the implementation of multiculturalism.

Multicultural education was initiated in the 1960s. It has perpetually altered, refocused, and reconceptualized, and

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<sup>1</sup>Lewin, K., (2000). Knowledge Matters for Development, Professorial Lecture, University of Sussex, p. 23.

is endlessly evolving theoretically and practically. Generally, neither classroom teachers nor education scholars define multicultural education similarly. Corresponding to any discourse on education, concepts are commonly fashioned as per their individual motivation (*Paul Gorski and Bob Covert, 2000*).

According to some, multicultural education is just an alteration in curriculum. The alteration could be just the enhancement of new and miscellaneous resources and perspectives that include even the traditionally underrepresented groups. Some consider the alterations to even include discussions on classroom ambiance or teaching styles that might be representative of certain groups while hindering the inclusion of others. Still others emphasize on institutional and systemic topics that deal with tracking, standardized testing, or funding inconsistencies. There are some who go even farther by demanding education revolution that would bring about a societal transformation. This societal transformation would investigate and disapprove the oppressive foundations of society. It would also highlight how education in its current form tends to retain the –the plaguing issues such as white supremacy, capitalism, international socioeconomics, and exploitation.

This paper presents the ideas of the three prominent philosophers, Will Kymlicka, Nancy Fraser, and Hernandez.

## **THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM**

During the 1970s and 1980s, political theorists concentrated on Rawls' 'basic structure' of society, which included constitutional rights, political policymaking methods, and social establishments (Rawls 1971: 7-11). Currently, however, it is acknowledged that political theorists must also deliberate on the qualities and temperaments of the individuals operating within these establishments and the techniques employed by them. This was the reason why later in the 1990s, political theorists concentrated on identifying individual citizens and observing their conduct, incorporating their duties, loyalties, and function.

The concept of multiculturalism can be understood only when its evolution is viewed historically. The development of multiculturalism was aided by its simplified organization and attention to identity and loyalties. It is even considered to be as old as humanity. Since time immemorial, varied cultures have known to coexist. These cultures also incorporated diversity, which was a common scenario in many ancient empires, such as the Ottoman Empire. However, multiculturalism as we know today, with its "rise and fall," was noticed first in the late 1960s in the Western democracies. These records help to understand multiculturalism as a phenomenon that led to social transformations post-war.

Multiculturalism is considered to be the hand behind human rights revolution that led to inclusion of ethnic and racial diversity. Preceding World War II, in the west, the concept of ethno cultural and religious diversity was tarnished by various illiberal and undemocratic structures of hierarchy, which were approved by racist ideologies (in India this is caste) that advocated certain peoples and cultures to be superior to other and, therefore, their right to rule over the less fortunate. These ideologies were so incorporated into the Western thought that it determined the establishment of domestic laws (e.g., racially biased immigration and citizenship policy) and foreign policies (e.g., when considering overseas colonies).

## **THE EMERGENCE OF MULTICULTURALISM IN THE WEST, ITS UNIVERSAL FUNCTION, AND AN INDIAN CONTEXT**

The 1970s to mid-1990s heralded a large number of multiculturalism policies (MCPs) and minority rights in the

Western democratic world. This was possible by an upsurge in recognizing diversity and accommodating it in everyday life. The policies introduced garnered support in some states at the domestic level; in addition, they were also recognized by international organizations. These policies dismissed the former notions of unitary and homogeneous nationhood. Nevertheless, since the mid-1990s, there has been a hostile response towards multiculturalism and we have noticed a departure from its policies. This change insists on ideas of nation building, common values and identity, and unitary citizenship, including the “return of assimilation” (Kymlicka, 2012).

Multiculturalism has become apparent in the west in spite of their society being riddled with the two dominating hierarchies, economical position and status. A person's standing in this economic hierarchy is established by the affiliation to the market or by the production methods employed. Efforts to rectify these inequalities result in legislations that are in favor of redistribution. Nancy Fraser has illustrated the following to be the customary practice for mobilization of the working class (Fraser 1998; 2000):

### **Politics of Redistribution**

- Centers around socioeconomic inequalities that are prevalent in the society, such as exploitation (others seizing the bounties of one's hard work), economic ostracism (limiting the opportunities to a certain section of society by providing them only undesirable work or barring them from the labour market), and economic deprivation (denial of a basic standard of living).
- The aforementioned problems can be resolved by economic reorganization, such as income reallocation, restructuring the labour market, or regulating investment choices.
- Public policies were formulated that catered to specific classes or the entire masses. These policies were outlined on the basis of the economic situation, with regard to the market or of the method of production employed.
- These policies also targeted the bringing down of group differences (lessening differences among the classes in regard to the opportunities provided and the culture followed).

Western democracies too demonstrate the presence of such hierarchies. It is manifested by the higher prominence given to Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied white men. 'Politics of recognition' arose by those striving to undo these injustices as is seen by the present-day movements by gays, religious minorities, immigrants, and national minorities. Fraser illustrates the politics of recognition in the following manner:

### **Politics of Recognition**

- Centers around cultural injustices prevalent in the society, such as representation as per social norms, interpretation and communication that incorporates cultural supremacy (interpretations based on another culture); non-recognition (having no voice because of the authoritative communicative customs of one's culture); and contempt (ridiculed in stereotypical public cultural representations or in routine dealings).
- The aforementioned problems can be resolved by cultural changes that are symbolic of the change that enhances the respect for individualities and improves the cultural products of maligned groups, or encouragingly values cultural diversity.
- These policies targeted the status of groups by recognizing those that are deprived of respect, honour, and

prestige.

- The methods adopted intent to encourage group differences.

For transforming a third-world society, politics of redistribution and recognition need to be adopted. These criteria cater to the Indian population as well and are more important because the country is in a constructive mode. The contradictory situations prevalent in society with varied ideas and interest on identity structure the society by utilizing the state agency.

### **MULTICULTURALISM IN AN INDIAN CONTEXT: *DE JURE* EXISTENCE AND NOT *DE FACTO***

The Indian constitution has been liberally framed by ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms to every citizen, along with their cultural rights. The constitution grants equality to every individual regardless of caste, class, religion, and sect. Even though the Indian constitution does not discriminate, the Indian society has two basic hierarchies, i.e., economic hierarchy and status hierarchy. These hierarchies are also influenced by religion. Therefore, caste, religion, ethnicity, etc. are crucial elements in these hierarchies.

It is of paramount importance to identify the problems facing the Indian society and identify the inception of these problems. To do so, we must comprehend the concept of social exclusion, discrimination, and deprivation, while identifying their existence in the day-to-day activities of individuals/groups or community.

#### **The Responsibility of Education**

Education is not an unprejudiced plan of the state, but is affected by the policies of the state. Althusser and Gramsci have presented this concept in a detailed manner. In this paper, we do not review the works of various scholars, but rather pay attention to the concept of multicultural education. Multiculturalism is about inclusion of all individuals in the society through policy intervention of the state. The concept concentrates on group rights rather than citizenship. It endeavors to embrace the minorities into mainstream society by providing them similar resources and opportunities. The concept also highlights the importance of a democratic voice in their support for the establishment of an inclusive society with multicultural values.

Bank (Banks, 1988, p.43), on the basis of his proposed multiple identities, reasons that each child coming to school has an ethnic distinctiveness. This distinctiveness may be made consciously or unconsciously by an individual, and is usually recognized and respected by the teacher. The identification of ethnic background helps to comprehend the individuals learning activities in the classroom, by understanding the differences and not disregarding them. Therefore, children need to understand the differences generated by ethnicity and be aware of their own. This identification initiates a communication between the teacher and the student, as well as among the students. It is a progressive step to recognize the child's identity and how the child relates to one's own ethnicity. The identification is essential in the education process as it enables the development of national identification in the future.

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) has defined an inclusive society as follows: "society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play." Therefore, an inclusive society must stipulate the importance to impart human rights and fundamental freedoms, while maintaining

cultural and religious diversity, as well as social justice.<sup>3</sup>In addition, the distinctive needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups must be identified, enabling their democratic involvement and implementation of the rule of law. These positive changes have been brought about by the social policies that are meant to decrease inequality and generate flexible and tolerant societies, which encompass all people. Establishing an inclusive society is the ultimate aim of any society, and education is the most prominent factor that can help in its structuring, in spite of multiculturalism being based on an inclusive society.

Hernandez has mentioned in his work, *Multicultural education: A teacher's guide to content and process*, 1989, How we frame our education for the promotion of multiculturalism through the education system, the issues that influence multicultural education. The following are the highlighted aspects:

- The US needs to be acknowledged as a culturally diverse society for political, social, educational and economic reasons (parallel circumstances are seen in India).
- Multicultural education is without bias for all students.
- Multicultural education is hand-in-glove with efficient teaching.
- Teaching incorporates all cultures.
- The current educational system has inequalities in its implementation.
- Multicultural education should integrate educational innovation and reform.
- Excellent teachers are of paramount importance, as they influence children next only to the parents (primary caregivers).
- There needs to be effective communication in the classroom between teachers and students, and it is a key aspect of the educational system.

## CONCLUSIONS: NECESSITY FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

*Paul Gorski (2000)* asserts that the primary objective of multicultural education is to bring about social change. The social change transpires by three components of transformation:

- the transformation of self,
- the transformation of schools and education system, and
- The transformation of society.

Revolution is justified only if it can produce positive and sustainable results. Educational revolution has the scope to alter the prevailing values in any society. The State needs to involve in implementing policies on education that incorporates the values of multiculturalism in each feature of education and society.

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<sup>3</sup>Social justice refers to the principles, values and belief that every individual and group is entitled to fair and equal treatment, which is necessary for the achievement of a society in which all people have equal access to rights, not only under law, but in all aspects of life, and all people get an impartial share of the benefits as well as carry a fair share of the responsibilities of society.

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