

Multiculturalism and Political System

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The idea of multiculturalism in contemporary political discourse and in political philosophy is about how to understand and respond to the challenges associated with cultural and religious diversity. In simplest form we can understand it by splitting as *multi* means many and *culture* means traditions, things which we are carrying so far from generation to generation.

Modern states are organized around the language and cultural norms of the dominant groups that have historically constituted them. Multiculturalism can take place on a nationwide scale or within a nation's communities. It may occur either naturally through immigration, or artificially when jurisdictions of different cultures are combined through legislative decree, as in the case of French and English Canada.

Proponents of multiculturalism believe that people should retain at least some features of their traditional cultures. Opponents say that multiculturalism threatens the social order by diminishing the identity and influence of the predominant culture.

In reference to political science, Multiculturalism can be defined as a state's capacity to effectively and efficiently deal with cultural plurality within its sovereign borders. The two primary theories or models of multiculturalism, one of them is the "melting pot" and the other one is "salad bowl" theory.

In the political philosophy of multiculturalism, ideas are focused on the ways in which societies are either believed to or should, respond to cultural and religious differences. It is often associated with "identity politics", "the politics of difference", and "the politics of recognition

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It is also a matter of economic interests and political power, as sometimes all of electoral politics based only on minorities vote bank. Leaders play with the sentiments of minorities. Multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterize the moral and political claims of a wide range of marginalized groups, including African Americans, women, LGBT people, and people with disabilities (Glazer 1997, Hollinger 1995, Taylor 1992).

Multicultural societies are those in which people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities living together in the same community. The community's public schools in multicultural society curricula are crafted to introduce young people to the qualities and benefits of cultural diversity. Canada adopted multiculturalism as official policy during the premiership of Pierre Trudeau in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, the Canadian constitution, along with laws such as

the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and the Broadcasting Act of 1991, recognize the importance of multicultural diversity.

Diversity is important as today, entire countries, workplaces, and schools are increasingly made up of various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. By recognizing and learning about these various group, communities build trust, respect, and understanding across all cultures. Public debate about immigrant multiculturalism should be pursued in a broader context that considers the politics of immigration, race, religion, and national security. Multiculturalism may become an easy rhetorical scapegoat for public fear and anxiety when national security is threatened and when economic conditions are bad.

A second justification for multiculturalism comes from within liberalism but a liberalism that has been revised through critical engagement with the communitarian critique of liberalism. Will Kymlicka has developed the most influential liberal theory of multiculturalism by marrying the liberal values of autonomy and equality with an argument about the value of cultural membership. The biggest challenge to multiculturalism may not be philosophical but political.

In Indian perspective

According to the 1961 Census of India, there are 1652 indigenous languages in the country. The culture of India has been shaped by its long history, unique geography and diverse demography. India's languages, religions, dance; music, architecture and customs differ from place to place within the country, but nevertheless possess a commonality. The culture of India is an amalgamation of these diverse sub-cultures spread all over the Indian subcontinent.

Religiously, Hindus form the majority, followed by Muslims. The statistics are: Hindu (80.5%), Muslim (13.4%), Christian (2.3%), Sikh (2.1%) and others. The Indian constitution requires the various state-run institutions to provide quotas for minorities, which give these cultural minorities' equal opportunities, as well as a forum through which they can actively participate in the institutions of the dominant culture. Indian polity after the 1990's has been marked by a shift from secular principles to a landscape that is dominated by pro-Hindu propaganda; the BJP has used this rhetoric by reconstructing Hinduism and bartering it under the guise of Indian nationalism. However, the rise of pro-Hindu ideology, commonly known as Hindutva, has impinged on the rights of cultural minorities.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are constitutionally recognized terms in India and constitute approximately 25% of the Indian population. The Indian constitution also provides SC's and ST's with protective measures that ensure equality, which is the main issue faced by members of both communities.

Criticism

Critics of multiculturalism often debate whether the multicultural ideal of benignly co-existing cultures that interrelate and influence one another, and yet remain distinct, is sustainable, paradoxical, or even desirable. It is argued that nation states, who would previously have been synonymous with a distinctive cultural identity of their own, lose out to enforced multiculturalism and that this ultimately erodes the host nations' distinct culture.

Multicultural theorists have tended to focus on inequalities between groups in arguing for special protections for minority groups, but group-based protections can exacerbate inequalities within minority groups.

Vulnerable subgroups within minority groups include religious dissenters, sexual minorities, women, and children. Most oppressive group norms and practices revolve around issues of gender and sexuality,

CONCLUSION

Communities and organizations in all settings benefit from the different backgrounds, skills, experiences and new ways of thinking that come with cultural diversity. Multiculturalism is the way in which a society deals with cultural diversity, both at the national and at the community level. Multiculturalism refers to the ways in which societies choose to formulate and implement official policies dealing with the equitable treatment of different cultures.

REFERENCES:

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