Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1999, pp. 41-62.

Making Way for Multiculturalism

VALERIAN RODRIGUES
Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Shimla

Multiculturalism draws our attention to the differences that inform our social existence and not merely to what is common to all human beings qua human. These differences are constitutive of what we are and wish to be although in other respects we may have the same concerns as the rest. They are cherished differences. There are, of course, social and economic differences engendered by disadvantage. But unlike such differences which people wish to renounce or overcome, differences expressed in distinct values and ways of life are fondly treasured and people are prepared to suffer even disadvantages for the sake of persevering them. This does not mean that cultures and communities are not inequitably situated. Many of them are. But a vast majority of its members rarely forsake them on account of it. Differences are closely bound up with our identity and agency, what we are and what we wish to be. While they demarcate a set of people from another, they do not remain unchanged but are reflected on, interpreted, reformulated and brought into relation with their counterparts.

While in earlier times, social existence informed of distinctive beliefs and ways of life was carried out in relatively exclusive and secluded confines and was intimately shared across its members, this is no longer so. Cultural and religious pluralism and pluralism of values and associations is a fact of life for most societies today. Although the political articulation of differences may vary from one society to another, increasingly societies are becoming multicultural in their social and cultural composition and belief systems. Beyond the confines of nation-states, different peoples, deeply conscious of their differences are drawn into interactions. The sustainability and terms of social interaction in these societies depend on the approaches adopted to plural ways of life.

Multiculturalism asks the question how people who are otherwise profoundly different can coexist together. It seeks to formulate terms

of mutual interaction when such people are brought into social cooperation.

There is a consensus on the issue today that social inquiry is deeply marked by the beliefs and values that we assume. If understanding is tied up with the latter it makes the status of knowledge and values, as hitherto understood, highly problematic. Multiculturalism engages with the particularity of cultural existence, attempts to demarcate the zone of the universal and explores the possibility of arriving at shared understanding and involvement.[1]

Multiculturalism has left its imprint on the ideological formations that have offered an assessment of the world to us. They have made claims that from within their respective ideological frameworks issues raised by multiculturalism can be attended. But the way that these formulations have been reviewed makes it amply clear that multiculturalism has left its deep mark on them.[2] It has called attention to the limitations of the liberal project and the notion of self, com-munity and agency upheld by Marxism.

While across the ideological spectrum there are no serious disagreements on the issue that differences need to be taken into account, there are deep disagreements regarding the relationship between human claims as human and demands of communities and cultures; different kinds of differences and their bearing on understanding and social practices; the impact that human reason and freedom have on hallowed ways of life and belief systems and the relationship between liberal democracy and minority cultures and communities.

But multiculturalism is not merely an issue of academic debate and discussion. It has been the official policy of countries such as Canada and Australia. In fact, these policies have not found universal approval in these countries or in scholarly circles. They have been accused as ways of co-option and homogenisation. It is said that they have confined people into ghettoes attributing to them a fixed identity and let cultural majoritarianism to occupy the political space. The sanitised versions of culture and identity that they have constructed have not left any real options before communities except to fall in line with the cultural and political mainstream.[3] In fact, sometimes multiculturalism has been accused as promoting 'the new racism', defending cultural differences as both natural and unavoidable leading to arguing that these differences are immutable. There have been liberal, Marxist and even multicultural critiques of the policies pursued in the name of multiculturalism. It has been argued that one of the most important

demand of very large minorities in several countries has been the right to participate equally in the mainstream national life. Such is the case, for instance, with black-Americans and dalits in India. Multiculturalism has little to offer to them. Similarly, the reach of multiculturalism to gender-sensitive concerns, where both participation and difference are simultaneously voiced, has been very limited.[4]

Too many and, sometimes, irreconcilable demands are made on multiculturalism. Often it has become a conceptual terrain where aspirations and points of view that cannot be negotiated with other theories and perspectives are off loaded. Nathan Glazier has said,'We are all multiculturalists now'.[5] If it is so, it is not for the same reasons. There are deep disagreements about what constitutes multiculturalism and distinct conceptual sites are opened up within it: One hears of conservative or corporate multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism and left-liberal multiculturalism; critical or radical, polycentric and insurgent multiculturalism.[6]

Given its conceptual and policy infiltration, scramble for appropriation and deep apprehensions about its implications, the promise that multiculturalism makes has to remain necessarily limited as far as the consideration of this paper is concerned. We will focus only on three issues here:

A. The impact that multiculturalism has had on political perspectives and frameworks.
B. Arguments in justification of multiculturalism.
C. Its engagement with some of the most vexing political concerns before us today.

A. MULTICULTURALISM AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

The absence of 'nation' and 'culture' in liberal discourse

Although there are a number of distinctive versions of liberalism, none of these versions took into account nation and culture as integral elements of their conceptual frameworks till recently. The nation, however, came to be assumed in this discourse unreflectively without drawing out its implications for the liberal construction of rights and institutions. On the other hand, those reflections that dwelt on nation and culture did not bring them into interface with the liberal analysis and agenda. The liberal trajectory was spawned ignoring the nationalist trajectory and vice-versa. In fact this hiatus was present in Marxism as

well although the avowal of internationalism built into it made engagement with the national-question less unavoidable.[7]

Liberals sometimes counter-posed nation and culture to the state and at other times saw the former as affirming a set of rights. Sometimes, they construed the cultural domain as an expression of a body of rights and its other dimensions, made of beliefs and corresponding practices, were exiled to the private sphere.[8] Rousseou, Herder and later Hegel drew attention to community and nation but their considerations were not to become core elements of the liberal doctrines. The rise of conservative nationalism and particularly nazism and fascism were to make liberals vary of national assertions further. Liberals, therefore,

> Tended either to assume the existence of the nation-state as an arena of justice, democracy and so on without properly theorising it or tried to justify particular boundaries from universal premises.[9]

Similarly, Kymlicka has argued, 'Liberals have never been very comfortable with the language of community or fraternity'. He feels that the major reason for it is the fear 'that group differentiated rights will undermine the sense of shared civic identity that holds a liberal society together'.[10]

Multiculturalism is, therefore, an attempt by liberalism to reach out to culture and nation particularly in a context where they have become very palpable realities in the liberal world and which liberalism confronts in its march in the rest of the world. In this version it rejects culture-blind cosmopolitanism and calls for a 'culturally inclusive, rather than cosmopolitan liberalism'.[11] It is in favour of a group-differentiated citizenship rather than a citizenship that is cleansed off all social cleavages. A multicultural society does not want to base itself by inventing a common history. Inventing a common history could also lead to uninvent it through the same devices. Its orientation is much more in tune with the old adage 'live and let live'. Kymlicka states it as follows:

> If there is a viable way to promote a sense of solidarity and common purpose in a multinational state, it will involve accommodating, rather than subordinating national identities.[12]

A major engagement between identity, culture and nation on one hand, and rights, civil society and state was to take place in India during the course of the anti-colonial and nationalist movement. The colonial state interposed identities and projected them as candidates

for the constitution of political power. It also privileged identities, in several instances, and restricted the operation of laws so as not to affect them. We can identify three responses of the national movement towards such a policy:

1. One of the responses singled out the nation as the terrain of rights with an imagining of history and culture interspersed with it in an unproblematic way. This response saw identities as something passe in the course of time or a J.S. Mill kind of solution was proffered to them wherein they would be provided a small public space under the patronising care of a nation-state. One of the strands of this response strove to re-articulate identities as embodiment of rights.
2. A second response saw in the realm of rights and public institutions attuned to them beliefs, values and ways of life not in consonance with culture and heritage. They thought that the relationship between culture and the nation-state was in need of reformulation. This response, however, threw up a wide variety of alternatives which were in contention with one another to various extents.
3. A third response attempted to relate identities and communities with a regime of rights and domain of common law and saw the issue of nation and culture from that perspective. There were several variations in this response.

These responses were, however, expressed in the complex political stances that came to be adopted. They were rarely explored consistently in a sustained theoretical endeavour. As a consequence, political manoeuvering, factionalism and intrigues, often came to replace development of public reason. The impact these responses had is expressed in the partition of India, in the constituent assembly debates, in the federal arrangements that were fashioned, the regime of affirmative action that came to be evolved over the years and the version of secularism that came to be popularised in India.

The standoff between liberalism and communitarianism

Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*[13] proposed a set of principles of justice by adopting a certain procedure and by accepting some presuppositions regarding justice, morality and the nature of man/woman. These principles of justice do not take into cognizance embodied conceptions of the good as manifest in nation, culture, community and other social identities that 'divide man from Man'. They are prior to, and in a well

ordered society they have priority over, the various conceptions of the good prevailing in society. If good were to dictate terms to right then its subjects will not be able to exercise their choice. Incidentally Rawls applies the same argument to reject the utilitarian conception of justice as it prioritises a conception of the good over rights. Rawls falls upon Kant's maxim, 'The self is prior to its ends' to sustain the argument. The self is not imprisoned by its choices but is able to reject, reorder and affirm them.

The communitarians reject the relation between 'right before the good' and 'self prior to its ends' and consequently the conception of justice, rights and political institutions that Rawls came to construct based on the conception of justice that he elaborated. They argued that the self is constituted in and through the community and cannot be expected to regulate itself on the basis of socially sanitised universal principles. Being constituted by the community the self is also implicated in the community. They find the Liberal view of the self empty.

They argue that if we are to question every conceivable conception of the good then there will be nothing worth seeking or exploring. There will not be justificatory and privileging grounds at all. In such a case there will not be a basis for making one choice rather than another.

> Complete freedom would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything. The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless and hence without defined purpose.[14]

They scorn at the liberal view that we can make judgements keeping ourselves aloof from embeddedness. We cannot distinguish 'me' from 'my ends'. We are constituted partly, at least, by ends that we do not choose but discover by being embedded in social contexts.[15] Sandel has argued that the 'pure subject of agency, ultimately thin', that Rawls assumes is 'radically at odds with our more familiar notion of ourselves as beings thick with particular traits'[16] There is no disembodied self, a 'substrate' lying 'behind' my ends.[17]

The communitarians claim that given the fact that the self is constituted in and through the community it 'comes by its ends' not 'by choice' but by 'discovery'; not 'by choosing that which is already given . . . but by reflecting on itself and inquiring into its constituent nature, discussing its laws and imperatives and acknowledging its purposes as its own'.[18]

They accuse liberals for being far too gullible to assume that individuals outside society can be self-sufficient and do not require community contexts to exercise the capacity for self-determination. They argue that the neutral liberal state cannot adequately protect social environment necessary for self-determination. Such a capacity can be be exercised only in a particular sort of community. For the purpose common good has to be privileged. Some limits on self-determination are required to preserve a social condition which enables self-determination.

There are other arguments that communitarians advance such as the constitution of the self through the responses and appreciation of others and the absence of an Archimedean anchor to universality, constituted as we are in and through the communities.

The claims of the communitarians that communities are central not merely in the constitution of the self but in making evaluations and choices that have significant bearing on us were to influence the conception of political liberalism profoundly. Rawls constructs political liberalism on the explicit supposition that the existence of plural conceptions of the good as upheld by communities and identities have to be assumed in the constitution of a liberal polity.

New Challenges (Before Liberalism)

Till recently, liberalism resorted to the principle of toleration, located in the conceptual spaces and distinctions of rights, the private-public spheres, civil-society and state and limited and neutral state to handle identity concerns. Even today there are advocates who argue that liberalism cannot reach out to culture and therefore should remain indifferent to it.[19]

However, if we keep the economic issues aside, some of the most important questions before societies today are: religious identities, ethnic conflicts, linguistic identities, gender concerns, policies with respect to education, cultural minorities within territorial boundaries, national integration and citizenship, federal arrangements based on linguistic/cultural differences and the constitution of local communities. They pose some of the most intractable problems confronting India too.These developments do not let a state to remain neutral even if it so desires. In fact the legitimacy of the systems are under challenge if they are not able to reach out to these major concerns. Kymlicka feels that if liberalism has to succeed 'It must explicitly address

the needs and aspirations of ethnic and national minorities'.[20] Multiculturalism calls for the evolution of a polity which acknowledges these differences rather than erase them out or establish the hegemony of a specific identity over the rest.

Marxism and the acknowledgement of difference

Generally in Marxism differences are highlighted in terms of social constituencies and their differential role is brought out in the course of revolutionary transformations. Marxism also has a highly developed theory on the national question. The other issues of identities are generally discussed under 'relations' or secondary contradictions. It is believed that all such differences will be eventually transcended in the communist society. However, Marx also talks about a specific kind of difference which is related to these transformations but is much more oriented in terms of self-realisation. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*,[21] Marx argues that in the early stages of the socialist society wages will be in accordance with the productivity of labour. Given the uneven development of productive abilities, the norm of equal pay for equal work, which Marx terms as a bourgeois norm, will necessarily beget inequality. Equality of treatment, therefore, cannot be a norm for socialist society. However with the development of productive forces and skills and capacities of workers, this law can be transformed, Marx believes, from each according to his capacities to each according to her need. 'Under such conditions', as Terry Eagleton suggests,

> to treat two individuals equally must surely mean not giving them the same treatment but paying equal attention to the specific needs and desires of each. It is not that they are equal individuals, but that they are *equally individuals*.[22]

In such a society labour will not be a necessity but life's prime want. Marx argues that the social relations that will come to prevail in it will enable the fullest development of the personality. Marx is emphatic on the agency of this development: It is the self and not social forces directing the course of things. But such self-direction and the kind of development it promotes makes its agents to necessarily cherish identities and ways of life distinctive to themselves. Marx uses various metaphors to denote such pursuits. He also argues that with the elimination of class relations and such of its bases—the division of mental and manual labour and relations of town and countryside and withering of the state—community bonds will be reinforced. In such

a setting, the community and its members will mutually complement and cherish each other.

The freedom of the self supported and abetted through its community anchoring is something anticipated by the multiculturalists without the pre-conditions considered imperative by Marx. The absence of focus on the state and on the economy and a specific conception of agency prods the multiculturalists to stipulate a relation between the community and self by distancing both of them from the concrete situation. What is interesting, however, is the light that multiculturalists throw on the concept of self, community and difference, central themes in Marx which existing socialisms attempted to sideline or bypass. By projecting them to the centre-stage multiculturalism enables a normative critique not merely of the capitalist order but other relations, masquerading themselves as socialism. It injects the proleptic future in the present itself.

Multiculturalism in the context of Globalisation

The economic blindness of multiculturalism is in a way shocking. The major theoreticians of multiculturalism, such as Taylor and Kymlicka, have not paid much attention to the relation between culture and the economy. Many of them, however, are deeply aware that if a large group with advantages is placed vis-à-vis a disadvantaged group the former would enjoy a competitive edge in spite of the avowal of equal rights as resources get shifted towards the advantageous pole. They, however, have not applied the same logic of unequal resource distribution to probe into unequal and patently exploitative economic relations except in the larger matrix of equality of consideration or equal dignity.

It has been suggested that in the wake of globalisation the economic bases of communities sustaining autonomous cultures are progressively eroded caving in to the demands of metropolitan capitalism. What exist in the era of globalisation are scare-crow cultures and communities rather than the authentic ones who would be able to make strong valuations. In fact it has been argued that multiculturalism as a mode of understanding and policy making has been thrown up precisely at the juncture when cultures and communities are left with little resources to chalk an autonomous trajectory.

There are those who argue that big capital has generally been very happy with the turn towards multiculturalism.[23] If a society is

conceived as made of several communities with very distinct cultural articulations then the possibility of resisting big capital will be the lowest. Further, multiculturalism by constructing communities which are necessarily fragmented, with a minimum level of agreement across them, if at all, are not able to offer a resistance that classes and class-blocs can muster. Those who agree with this argument see multiculturalism as a platform which obfuscates social relations.

It has also been argued that the Left has come to support a multiculturalism with feet-of-clay. They have been victims of the hoary language of its theoreticians who see the need to support multiculturalism as it would be supporting minorities and disadvantaged groups. In fact the support of the Left is garnered by social forces exactly opposed to their advocacy.[24] In fact such a Left, critics allege, has become the victim of their very slogans rather than having the ability to initiate a major debate based on the concrete analysis of the concrete conditions.

There is however enough evidence to suggest that the rapid spread of multiculturalism as a trend of thinking has gone hand-in-hand with the great growth of disadvantaged communities world-wide. Leave alone enabling differences, the trend seems to be just the reverse; i.e. the depletion of the very sources of enabling. In fact, what is allowed to exist in the notional form of communities is nothing but clusters of exploited classes, class fractions and strata rather than wholesome communities enabling their members to make strong evaluations and sustainable decisions. Such communities which exist in a stronger sense are those whose elites are hand-in-glove with the interests of big capital and they help in throttling the voices of a large number of its own members.

As said earlier, there are several versions of multiculturalism and some of them may be the ideological counterpart of globalisation. However, there are two ways of seeing multiculturalism: the normative and the sociological. It is better to hold on to this distinction. The sheer coincidence of multiculturalism with globalisation need not necessarily vitiate the insight of the former and its argument in favour of appreciating difference and sustaining disadvantaged communities. There is no much evidence to suggest that class organisations have put up a consistent and united struggle against globalisation and multiculturalism will not be able to foot such a bill. In fact there is no need to see them in opposition. The endorsement of multiculturalism by the Left has never been total and whenever such an endorsement has

been done it has not been necessarily for the enabling of disadvantaged groups and minorities.[25] We have suggested earlier that the ideal of authenticity is central to the Marxist project.[26] The pursuit of authenticity, a central claim of multiculturalists cannot be realised in capitalist society but placing such demands before capital does not mean placating it.

The engagement between multiculturalism and globalisation is much more complex than the simple association suggested earlier. The relation between differential identities and the process of globalisation is contradictory and susceptible to rapid transformation. On the one hand multiculturalism plays the role of opposition against the homogenising drive of globalisation. At the same time globalisation attempts to reach out to its clientele, not uncommonly, piggyback on multiculturalism and in the process, sometimes, bypassing the nation-state as well.

As an opposition, resting on the ground of age-old identities, relatively closed and insular, cultural communities provide the appropriate spaces for mounting an assualt on globalisation as it attempts to dish out a de-territorialised and de-nationalised identity. Globalisation necessarily excludes large number of communities from its purview which in earlier times nationalism attempted to co-opt, albeit in a subordinate way. Such processes of exclusion heighten the awareness of identity and community. While globalisation runs down space and localities and attempts to construct social relations on time-spans, communities and identities construct themselves by intruding into space and time.Those who are caught in the ebb and flow of globalisation, deprived of an anchor in real communities, are prone to relate themselves, symbolically at least to communities of recall and memory. A large number of people are able to sustain the traumas of massive displacement that globalisation brings about by constituting themselves as communities on a new basis. The information networks afford a certain interaction between a local community and a symbolic community spread across the globe, at least in a potential sense. Sometimes, those who relate to the community virtually and symbolically may transfer some resources to highlight certain facets of the community cherished by them.

Probably the significance of the community has become much more today because capitalism appropriating the language of rights and mobilising state power behind it has wantonly rode roughshod over cultures and communities except those which can prove beneficial

to its largescale operations. Therefore, it is not multiculturalism but those very principles which it attacks that could be held responsible for the march of capitalism. In fact, multiculturalism could provide arguments for resisting dominant cultures which are sweeping across in the name of liberal rights.

On the other hand communities and identities may be drawn in the globalisation drive. For the purpose and in the process they might be appropriately sanitised and screened to meet the requirements. Globalisation type-castes identities from their 'life-world',[27] sometimes making its bearers unable to distinguish the former from the latter. It makes cultures and identities fixed and reified and makes them a grid to channelise its products and form its network of communication, while their authentic counterparts were fluid and context-bound. Globalisation often dissects hybrid cultures and projects them as distinct relocating them in a makeshift world. Sometimes globalisation may coopt only certain elements of an indigenous culture and make them as the whole. Further, globalisation can promote trends and outlooks in the name of indigeneity wholly inimical to it.

Although sometimes it is suggested that multiculturalism is the social base of globalisation, such a suggestion is made on the basis of a superficial understanding such as hightened human interaction and greater projection of identities through the media. They are, however, processes that are meant to network supposed differences into the rationale of the globalising drive. There is no agency highlighted here. On the other hand multiculturalism asserts that communities have a right and they should be enabled to charter their own course and redefine their values and beliefs. Such a stress on the agency of communities and cultures is a challenge to big capital monitoring the globalising dynamic. Globalisation however, manufactures vacuous identities which it can easily manipulate and dramatically overhaul if need be. For it, communities and cultures become desirable precisely because of the resources they can muster, both symbolic and instrumental.

Multiculturalism could possibly provide an alternative model for globalisation by radically overhauling the economic basis of globalisation driven by big capital. In a way, multiculturalism highlights facets of ideologies and perspectives which were earlier ignored or dimly recognised. The resolution of issues that it offers is also quite novel. One could probably say that this is not the last word that multiculturalism has to say on political perspectives and frameworks.

B. THE CASE FOR MULTICULTURALISM

The case for multiculturalism can be constructed from several perspectives. We have already outlined above the Marxist perspective on it. We will provide the outlines of three significant justifications for multiculturalism from three distinct perspectives:

(i) from the perspective of justice;
(ii) from the perspective of rights and freedoms;
(iii) from the perspective of philosophy of science.

If these arguments are correct, without cherishing cultures and communities, justice, rights and freedoms and knowledge cannot be pursued or adequately safeguarded. Our pursuit of them will be closely bound with ensuring a multicultural existence.

The Perspective of Justice

Charles Taylor notes a distinctive shift in the conception of personal identity in the eighteenth century. Following the work of Lionel Trilling[28] he argues that then authenticity came to mark one's social role stipulated, hitherto, in social hierarchies. To be authentic meant to be true to myself and my particular way of being.[29] Taylor feels that, initially, Herder suggests that 'Each of us have an original way of being human. Each has his or her own "measure". There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way and not in imitation of anyone else's life'.[30] However, such a self-understanding is constituted through a dialogic relation rather than something given out there. 'We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against the things our significant others want to see in us.'[31]

Earlier identities were caught up in social hierarchies and one's conception of oneself was bound up in spaces of honour. However, with the shift to authenticity and the conception of identity reflecting it, dignity came to replace honour. One might be different but difference need not beget subordination or superiority. Recognition was sought not merely as human beings but as a human being possessing different but equally worthy characteristics. Tayor argues that Rousseou and Hegel particularly recognised the significance of such identities.[32]

Such a self-recognition is, of course, socially constituted. Inappropriate recognition and distorted recognition can do a lot of harm to the constitution of human personality.

In this background, Taylor argues that there are two trajectories of equal recognition. The first trajectory is made of the shift from 'honour to dignity' from which has come a politics of universalism, emphasising the equal dignity of all citizens, and the content of this politics has been the equalisation of rights and entitlements'. The second trajectory emerges from 'the development of the modern notion of identity', giving rise to a politics of difference. It means everyone should be recognised for his or her unique identity.

Taylor suggests that the consequences of these two trajectories are very different. While the first trajectory suggests sameness of the moral claims of one and all, the second trajectory suggests that one might be different but equality of considerations be extended to him/her in spite of being different. Due recogniton be extended to what is present universally by 'recognising what is peculiar to each'.

Taylor argues that these two trajectories begot very different kinds of policies. While one fought against discrimination, the other wanted distinctions to be recognised in constituting politics.

> Where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of non-discrimination that were quite "blind" to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of difference often redefines non-discrimination as requiring that we make these distinction the basis of differential treatment.'[33]

Taylor has suggested that the politics of equality of rights requires that we treat people in a difference blind fashion. It has often led to reverse discrimination so that disadvantaged groups can establish a competitive edge over others relatively better endowed. On the other hand the politics of difference suggests that differences be cherished. The orientation that all humans command the same respect focuses on what is the same in all. For the other claim, he says, we have to recognise and even foster particularity. 'The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of non-discrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into homogenous mould that is untrue to them.'[34] The second claim is based on the argument that the difference blind principle cannot but uphold hegemonic culture. Therefore, a difference blind society turns out to be highly discriminatory. The role of the state, therefore, is both to uphold rights and affirm identities. What if rights and identities come into clash? In such contexts Taylor finds a great deal to recommend in Rawlsian concept of overlapping consensus and in Habermas' ideal speech communication.[35]

The mode in which Taylor builds up a case for authenticity is through a detour across the cultural tapestry of the modern West. While an inventory of other cultural formations may throw up other considerations, it need not preclude authenticity as central value before them too. For Taylor to be authentic means to be true to one's culture.

The Perspectives of Rights and Freedom

While Taylor's two-fold trajectories of how to treat people fairly emerge from a position of an engaged critique of liberalism, Kymlicka deploys certain arguments of Taylor to strengthen the encapsulation of culture by liberalism. For the purpose, Kymlicka situates his arguments in the background of the initial debates between Rawls and the communitarians. Rawls had suggested in *A Theory of Justice* that all human beings seek certain basic primary goods which includes self-respect. Self and self-respect, using Taylor's arguments suggested earlier, are constituted in and through the community. When the self is atomised it will not be able to enter into confident relations with others. Cultural belonging is absolutely essential not merely for the constitution of the self but to make strong evaluations and basic judgements. Kymlicka contends that liberals like Rawls and Dworkin accept this argument. They differ, however, in asserting that the self is capable of interrogating and evaluating elements that go into its very making. In other words, they will privilege the autonomy of the self, as an individual, relative to the communitarians.

Kymlicka attempts to reconstruct the liberal discourse with community and culture central to it. The central question that Kymlicka explores is what is the fair way to relate to cultural identities and distribute powers in a multicultural society. In other words what constitutes justice in a multicultural society.

Cultural resources are collective resources and they are unequal. Right to culture apparently might be seen as violating the principle of non-discrimination as different cultures are articulated in different ways. A possible and one of the predominant approach to culture is to consider it as a private affair. However as argued earlier it is not fair to treat it so. Kymlicka suggests that there are two ways that cultural identities could be handled:

1. External protection, i.e. protecting minority cultural groups from unfair competition by majority or dominant groups, and
2. Internal restrictions, i.e. demanding that all groups, minority

or majority, desist from coercing individuals within their cultural fold.

Kymlicka argues that if minority cultures and marginal groups are allowed to have competition on equal basis then the former will not be able to make head-way in their claims and therefore it is quite legitimate if restrictions are placed on the cultural inroads of the dominant groups into a minority group. However, if individuals within the group are restricted on the plea that their exercise of freedom is likely to endanger cultural identity then such freedoms violate core liberties. Curtailing individuals from making their choices including the choice to exit from their community would be a violation of the right to freedom and consequently affects the construction of the self.

All national groups should have the opportunity to maintain themselves as a distinct culture, if they so choose. However, Kymlicka feels that all multi-cultural claims need not be given the same weightage. Therefore, all differences are not worthy of equal consideration. The differences to be affirmed should be such that their suppression would lead to the endangering of culture or other rights. He offers such examples as the demand of the Sikh emigrants demanding to wear turbans in the Canadian Army and the claim of extreme right wing organisations to practice their cult in the name of culture.[36] He sees the criteria of processing these claims in a liberal society differently. For instance, he thinks that economic emigrants move to another country voluntarily and therefore they cannot make a special claim to culture within the country to which they move because when they exercise their choice they do so aware of the risks and benefits of their choice. However, if the very same emigrants are refugees they have not exercised their free choice and therefore they cannot be deprived of their cultural rights. In such applications, however, Kymlicka gets into a deep conundrum[37] sacrificing the right to revisability which he defends eloquently. After all the self of the refugee is as much constituted through a community anchoring as that of the migrant. Denying certain claims of the latter is as much violation of the self as in the case of the former. In fact, one of his preferred solution to avoid economic emigrants is to provide adequate foreign aid to the countries that economic refugees hail from. There are no dearth of critics to suggest that although economic emigration is related to the situation of the economy in the parent country, economic aid need not alleviate it and act as a curb to curtail the flow of refugees.

Taylor's regard for the difference principle has been criticised on the ground that he does not give adequate consideration to the different kinds of differences. There may be differences which do not allow other differences to exist. On the other hand Taylor while deeply appreciative of Kymlicka's intervention, has argued that Kymlicka's exit principle does not adequately consider issues in the longer run given the presence of a dominant culture and its resources.[38] Even if minority cultures adopt a policy of closure still the exit principle would deplete their resources much faster than their ability to preserve their culture. Kymlicka has also been accused that although he refuses to see culture in an essentialist way, when it comes to policy options he generally takes a notion of culture in an essentialist fashion.

Such criticisms apart, Kymlicka's argument that rights and freedoms cannot be properly advanced without sustaining cultures and communities cannot be faulted.

The Perspective of Knowledge

One of the most important debates in the philosophy of social sciences in this century has been the distinction between social sciences and natural sciences. Social enquiry always involves a pre-understanding of the subject-matter of study embedded in social relations. Such a pre-understanding of the subject-matter affects the perception, estimation and assessments that the inquiry brings forth. In several cases the anticipated consequences of the results of inquiry already affect the responses that the inquiry evokes. A great part of our understanding of social reality is paradigm-specific[39] or specific to the conceptual frameworks[40] that we deploy towards it. As our understanding is shaped by conceptual schemes that we deploy, similarly, culture, including languages, provides the principles on the basis of which the random flow of information communicated by sensation is sorted out, evaluated and organised by us. So that those in different cultures experience the world significantly different from us. In several respects the understanding of those inhabiting different conceptual frameworks and cultural worlds is different.[41]

Any attempt therefore to deny the cultural and linguistic setting of people would involve not merely unleashing violence on them but imposing one's experience on others. Agents not merely formulate their beliefs, rules and values from their cultures but through their

activity culture itself is reconstituted. Denying cultural expressions, therefore, often leads to the reification and essentialisation of cultural forms breeding the same authoritarian expressions as was expressed in the initial denial.

C. MULTICULTURALISM AND POLITICAL CONCERNS

The issues that multiculturalism has raised have a bearing on a range of political concerns which is not possible to discuss here in detail. Further, different versions of multiculturalism may suggest different alternatives to these concerns. We, however, take for granted a version of multi-culturalism here which is committed to equality of rights and at the same time upholds community and identities as not merely inevitable but desirable too.

For far too long many modern states have survived on certain conceptual constructions of their polities. India is not an exception in this regard although in every case these constructions are organised in a specific way. They include notions of nation-state, separation of religion and state, rule of law and the understanding that states are the sole legitimate actors in the international arena. The federal arrangements, such as in India, serve primarily the need of the administration rather than as expressions of identities. In these states equality of rights has been privileged over consideration of identities, except that of the nation. Sometimes, other identities might be brought in by making them synonymous with the regime of rights. Polities with these attributes have led to the marginalisation of communities and identities that are not in tune with them. The knowledges expressed in the nation-state and its institutions are privileged over the understanding of communities as knowledge versus falsehood and truth versus prejudice respectively. It has reduced vast masses, particularly those bounded in ascriptive identities to silence. Where the understanding of the state has run into troubled waters with the self-understanding of communities, the state by privileging its under-standing has attempted to suppress the expression of communities if it has not succeeded in subordinating them. The institutions of civil society have been actively mobilised to watch over expressions of identities that do not tune up with the reasons of the state.

At the same time under the name of equality of rights of most of these states have taken overboard a specific identity or set of identities as normal although the formal expressions of the state may not

acknowledge the same. Therefore, when communities make a clamour for a space for themselves in a polity they might confront not merely the state but also this identity cushioned under the state.

Multiculturalism relocates the tasks of a state in a basic way. It is called upon not merely to acknowledge differences but to sustain them as well. The state cannot claim to be the Leviathan which knows what is good for its citizens. Multiculturalism is opposed to state sponsored identities, as it would undermine the authentic constitution of the self, as it is to the erasure of identities.

Multiculturalism relativises the nation and does not subscribe to the simplistic equation that the nation is state. It sees the state as made of many nations or communities or conceives the nation as made of a myriad of communities and identities where the former is in constant dialogue with the latter.

Multiculturalism is an invitation to dialogue. Given our largely culture and community bound social existence, our knowledge and understanding remain necessarily limited. Such a limitation can be transcended only by getting into an active dialogue with other communities and identities. In the process of this dialogue other communities may arise, including those who bear multiple and overladden identities.

It was poor wisdom to sanitise the public space from the expression of identities and communities. In countries like India, identities have asserted themselves in spite of attempting to delegitimise them for reasons of the nation-state. In fact the nation has tried to shove off these identities, from being contenders claiming equality with itself, to that of the electoral arena. Worse still, sometimes, it has named them as interest groups. For a large number of communities and identities there cannot be worse deals than these as they stand no chance in the electoral arena and being called upon to function as interest-groups the terms of the relation with the nation-state are wholly set by it.

Against co-option and displacement identities and communities have launched struggles for recognition. In fact certain communities have resorted even to armed struggles to counteract their electoral absorption and to assert their autonomous identity.

In fact, quite often, culture and tradition cannot be seriously appreciated when the nation-state attempts to encapsulate them or drive them to take up oppositional forms or encase them in highly pauperised expressions such as being interest groups. Given that

cultures and communities are plural and differentiated, if the nation-state becomes cozy with any one of them it immediately leads to the accusation that the state is communal. Indian state, for instance, has often come under such accusation.

The denial of communities has affected our perception of history. Those who write the biography of the nation begin from the framework of the nation-state which automatically excludes a large of other expressions.

In a country like India, a multicultural approach will reorder issues like the uniform civil code; the demand for states such as Uttarkhand and Jharkhand; the insurgent movements in the north-east; the Kashmir question; the Hindutva movement; the conversion controversy; etc., which the nation-state has not been able to engage with any degree of satisfaction. Policies towards federal units and regions, which have been festering sores in India, could see a lot of changes. The contours of concerns expressed in backward classes and dalit movements are likely to witness major transformations. The conflict of sons of the soil and migrants could be reviewed. Similarly the conflict between religious communities may undergo a change of focus. In fact on all these issues the Indian State has presently reached an impasse.

The way communities have been structured in Canada or Australia through the policy of multiculturalism is not necessarily a judgement on the scope multiculturalism offers. In fact policies are contingent expressions which could be changed significantly on the basis of general conceptions.

This does not mean that multiculturalism is a panacea for all the ailments of a polity or a specific polity such as India. However, if conceptual frameworks reord our vision and perceptions, then multi-culturalism as a framework seems to have much to offer.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Science: A Multicultural Approach*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1996.
2. As illustrations, for liberalism see John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*. Oxford: OUP, 1989; for Marxism, see Anne Philips, "Why worry about Multiculturalism?", *Dissent*. New York: Hiver, 1997, pp. 57-63; Michael Walzer, "Pluralism and Social Democracy". *Dissent*, Winter 1998, pp. 47-53; and Terry Eagleton, "Five Types of

Identity and Difference", David Bennett (ed.), *Multicultural States, Rethinking Difference and Identity.* London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 48-52.

3. See Paul Piccone, "Multicultural Homogenisation", *Telos,* No.113, Fall, 1998, pp. 173-200.
4. However, the impact of multiculturalism is obvious in such debates as the uniform civil code in India. For the shift in the terms of the debate where the impact of multicultural arguments is clearly visible, see, Nivedita Menon, "Women and Citizenship", in Partha Chatterjee, ed. *Wages Of Freedom.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 241-66.
5. Nathan Glazier, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.
6. See David Bennet, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.
7. For a brief account of the Marxist engagement with the national question, see Michael Lowy, "Marxism and the National Question", Robin Blackburn (ed.), *Revolution and Class-Struggle.* London: N.L.B., 1979.
8. John Stuart Mill in his *Considerations on Representative Government,* however, attempts to develop a link between nation and culture on one hand and rights and public institutions on the other. Mill's contribution in this respect has been twofold: (i) He equates nation with state and the state with people; and (ii) While acknowledging the minor nationalities, he accords primacy to the leading nationality which leads the former by its cultural eminence and political precedents. See J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government.* New York: Henry Holt, 1882.
9. Jonathan Seaglow, "Universals and Particulars: The case of cultural nationalism", *Political Studies,* XLVI, 963-77, 1998.
10. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights.* Oxford: OUP, 1995, p.173. The insensitivity of liberalism to nationalism is highlighted in M. Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996.
11. Jonathan Seaglow, op.cit., p. 964.
12. Will Kymlicka, op.cit., p. 189.
13. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* London: OUP, 1974.
14. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and the Modern Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
15. M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 55-9; 152-54.
16. Ibid., pp. 94, 100.
17. R. Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism", R. Hollinger (ed.), *Hermeneutics and Praxis.* University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 1985, p. 217.
18. M. Sandel, op.cit., p. 58.
19. See Chandran Kukathas, "Liberalism and Multiculturalism, The Politics of Indifference," *Political Theory,* vol. 26, no. 5, October 1998. He strongly feels "Liberal Polity be Indifferent to such matters as Identity and Group Recognition" (p. 693).
20. Ibid., p. 223.
21. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Progamme", Karl Marx Friedrick Engels, *Collected Works.* Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989, pp. 81-99.
22. Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 49 (italics mine).
23. See Claude Karnoouh, op.cit., p. 31.
24. See Anne Philips, "Why worry about Multiculturalism?", *Dissent.* New York: Hiver,

1997, pp. 57-63.

25. See Michael Walzer, op.cit.
26. For a lucid exposition, see S. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
27. See Paul Piccone, op.cit.
28. Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*. New York: Norton, 1969.
29. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, ch. 15.
30. Charles Taylor, "Politics of Recognition", Amy Gutman (ed.), *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
31. Ibid., p. 32.
32. Although Rousseaou recognised the significance of the community he traps himself by making the zone of freedom identical with the zone of the community. See Amy Gutman (ed.), op.cit., p. 7 and Charles Taylor, ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 39.
34. Ibid. p. 43.
35. See Rajeev Bhargava, Interview with Charles Taylor, *Book Review*, op.cit.
36. See Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, op.cit.
37. The argument of Masan is in place here:
"The children of immigrant groups which have succeeded in partially recreating the cultural structures which they left behind are in an analogous position to members of minority cultures. If he is to be consistent, Kymlicka should accept that in general members of minority cultures, whether constituted by indigenous groups or recent immigrants, have a complaint on grounds of justice if they are seriously disadvantaged because of their cultural membership." Andrew Mason, "Political Community, Liberal Nationalism and the Ethics of Assimilation", *Ethics*, vol. 109, no. 2, Jan. 1999, p. 270.
38. C.Taylor, "Politics of Recognition", op.cit., p. 40, n. 16.
39. For the concept of paradigm, see, Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970.
40. For perspective relative understanding, see, among others, I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; Lyotard Jean Francois, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (trans.), G. Bennington and B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; Steven Lukes, "Relativism in its Place", M. Hollis and S. Lukes (eds.), *Rationality and Relativism*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986; and Rajeev Bhargava, *Individualism in Social Sciences: Form and Limits of a Methodology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
41. That such disagreements assume fundamental background agreement, see Donald Davidson, *Inquiry into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: OUP, 1986; and *Action and Events*. Oxford: OUP, 1986.