Cultural Diversity: An Approach to Multiculturalism

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People feel that the prescription for perceived linear process of development is the result of dangerous cultural homogeneity. But peoples have their own ways of life as value, as right, as responsibility and as their opportunity. For culture and development to come together harmoniously and for humanity to progress authentically each and every individual seeks a strong sense of identity as well as community. Salad-bowl pluralism is essential to establish and flourish democratic initiatives. We should not recognize mono-cultural and mono-lingual expansionism, but we should construct our identities by recognizing one's self and the other without losing sight of other. We need not Western expansionism. In fact, human cultural behaviour is learned and dynamic. Cultural diversity essentially unfolds itself in different castes, races, religions, tribes, contesting voices and oral languages etc. Everyone should be included in the democratic process as post-modernist thinkers say. There is power everywhere. We need not melting-pot multiculturalism like that of the Americans.

'In 2001, when cultural diversity was actually of 'common heritage of humanity' through the UNESCO Universal Declaration on cultural diversity, little did one realize the value of this position. Today, when the forces of globalization are taking over rapidly, respect for indigenous cultures has to be created urgently, perhaps by decolonizing education so that the mind-set formed, brewed and toughened over several generations of monolingual, monocultural norms can be replaced convincingly by an inclusive cultural diversity.' (Paul Kumar,2007, p. 79). There should be no insularity of a single culture to perceive Indian cultural diversity. Here, religion should be treated as a faith, not as an ideology.Dalits and tribals are discriminated and denied access to land. They are also abused by administration and higher caste groups. The tribals have had demonstrated tremendous fight against alien developmental model and played important role in socio-political movements of their regions for the protection of their identity. 'Celebrating life and creativity in freedom are basic to cultural diversity.'(Paul Kumar, 2007, p. 83). This diversity emerges from narratives, songs, beliefs, languages and dialects etc. We should lean from Poet Amir Khurau, the diversity, belongingness and recognition:

As I belong to India, it is only befitting that I also talk of the things Indian.

There is a different language in every corner of this land with its own system and technique.

Sindhi, Lahori, Kashmiri, Kubri, Dhur-Samundri, Tilangi, Gujar, Ma'abri, Ghouri, Bengali, Oudhi, Delhi and around it, within boundaries of this land are the languages of India.

All these languages are Hindwi languages, languages of India since olden times and they are spoken by the people at large.

(From Amir Khusrau's poem *Nuh-Siphir*)

In a plural society after winning the election and forming the government, majority should respect minority opinion; minority interests should not be immersed thoroughly into the majority community's interests causing laboured breathing and fixed into a wooden framework of immolation leaving only a sacrificial death. In plural multiparty societies and political demagogy with socio-political sub-divisions aggravate and intensify political conflict, tend to decrease the probability of effective policy formulations and thereby resultant consequences: system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy and effectiveness, interest aggregation and proper boundary maintenance. A pluralist society with parliamentary democracy is incapable of sustaining democracy and democratic stability. Pluralism in parliamentary democracy unequivocally invites domination of one group over another or majority domination over minority. Therefore, a plural society like India is a society of domination characterized by heterogeneity and cultural diversity. Therefore, I do not agree with J.L. Pennock's majority theory, when he says that the representative should act after the desires and interests of effective majority of his constituency and desires and interests of the nation or 'an effective majority of it' (Pickles 1970, p. 118). Therefore, to me, 'representation of interests' is an agglomeration of both majority and minority interests.

RanjitGuha and GayatriChakravortySpivak (1988) specifically point out the elitist view of Indian nationalism, where the subalterns are not taken into consideration. I think the Muslims are basically subalterns in character devoid of elitist nationalism. 'The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism.' (Guha and Spivak 1988,p. 37). These nationalist elites were agents of colonialist elites as the former were deficient in articulating national capital with international capital due to lack of fullest development of capitalism. The bourgeois-nationalist elites necessarily have had to pursue coercive state action and coercive form of labour control. The disadvantaged groups were under the control of the bourgeois-nationalist elites. ParthaChatterjee (1986, 1993) has suggested that anti-colonial nationalism is 'different' from the West but 'dominated' in character. It creates its own domain of sovereignty. I think, the bourgeois-nationalist elites tried to imitate the Western material and realized the need to preserve the inner spiritual, the Hindu cultural identity. '… anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material domain is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. …The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture.'(Chatterjee 1993,p. 6). To Chatterjee, 'difference' is not a viable criterion in the domain of the material. In essence, difference is a function of inclusionary nationalism, which is not in consonance with the exclusionary majoritarian identity or nationalism.

Diverse social groups can find an important place by negotiating and balancing overlapping conceptions for competing membership claims without sacrificing various group identities. In India ethno-nationalist citizenship discourse gained currency after partition. Indian constitution established a common citizenship based on individual rights and collectivist notion of citizenship and common good. In 1950s and 1960s Government failed to provide equal citizenship to the Muslims. There is a liberal dilemma in the role of the state with respect to religious community – 'If the government defers to the wishes of the religious group, a vulnerable groups of individuals will lose basic rights; if the government commits itself to respecting the equal human rights of all individuals, it will stand accused of indifference to the liberty of conscience.' (Nussbaum, 1999,p. 84). By the mid-1970s the republican conception of citizenship was called into question by non-statist citizenship discourse. During the emergency period an attempt was made by the Indira Gandhi government to restore republican discourse of citizenship by achieving socio-economic revolution, reducing poverty and ignorance. During this period a fundamental shift began to take place – growing prominence of ethno-nationalist and liberal citizenship discourses were balanced against each other. However, the process of economic liberalization from the 1980s provided the liberal citizenship discourse. Hindu nationalist discourse began popularity in response to ethno-nationalist discourse of citizenship. In India the minority incorporates not only the Muslims, but also the Christians, SCs, STs and OBCs etc. Therefore, the Muslim citizenship in terms of 'majority-minority' question cannot be constructed. 'Caste, tribal, linguistic as well as religious groups can be self-defined minorities for any one of a number of reasons: they have a distinctive group identity that they fear is eroding; they regard themselves as socially and economically subordinate to others; or they believe that they suffer from discrimination, either from others in the society or from the state itself… To declare one's group a minority is, therefore, a political act. In the Indian context, it is a way of calling attention to a situation of self-defined deprivation… The term 'minority' has come to be reserved for those who are "disadvantaged".' (Weiner, 1989,pp. 42-43).

Indian nation-state has adopted Western parliamentary set up with liberal-democratic character. The nation-state is defined in terms of territorial political community of citizens. Nation-building process in India is associated with state-sponsored and state-directed process of economic development and social transformation. The 'concept of nation building has been challenged… Infused with a strong missionary zeal of unitary nationalism *Hindutva* seeks to legitimize majority communalism in the name of nationalism. Such an ideology of nationalism, *i.e.* majority-ethnicism, cannot serve as the basis for the functioning of a modern state in India – a multiethnic society.' (Seth, 1999,p. 35). In India, we find a contradiction between civil society and political national society and minority rights in terms of citizenship rights, are insufficient to protect cultural identity of the minority communities. In liberal democracy fairness demands more than state neutrality and considerations of justice, freedom, citizenship and equality demand differences of cultural identities, cultural and group rights, multiculturalism, the claims of diversity, politics of difference and recognition. Public institutions should recognize cultural and disadvantaged minorities. 'This requirement of political recognition of cultural particularity – extended to all individuals – is compatible with form of universalism…' (Gutmann, 1994,p 3). Culture is marked with marginalization and politics of redress of grievances. Multicultural perspective is concerned with justice, fairness and citizenship. Constitution is a 'form of accommodation of cultural diversity' and 'an intercultural dialogue in which the culturally diverse sovereign citizens of contemporary societies

negotiate agreements.' (Tully, 1995,p. 30). It is essential to justify multiplicity of culturally diverse voices. Wittgenstein's idea of language game, Michel Foucault's genealogy and governmentality, and Hanna Arendt's concept of freedom and active citizenship are sources of multicultural tradition. Politics of cultural recognition means gathering the broad and various political activities which jointly call cultural diversity into question as constitutional problem. 'A constitution can seek to impose one cultural practice, one way of rule following, or it can recognize a diversity of cultural ways of being a citizen, but it cannot eliminate, overcome or transcend this cultural dimension of politics.' (Tully, 1995,p. 6). In fact, cultures are overlapping, interactive and internally negotiated. Culture is the universal and commanding natural language of difference. All the differences are fundamentally relative. '… one of the basic values of our culture is that it and its basic values are relative, *i.e.* that it is one culture among many essentially unrelated cultures… knows that it is relative, … it locates its own superiority in this knowledge of its relativity, as it likewise locates inferiority in ignorance of this relativity.' (McGrane, 1989,p. 120). Taylor (1992) finds that politics of equal recognition is important and fundamentally human life is dialogical and interactive. As human agents we define our identity. We are interacting with significant others. Human identity rests on autonomy, on the ability of each person to determine the good of life. In 'politics of equal identity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities… forms of non-discrimination that is quite "blind" to the ways in which citizens differ.' (Taylor, 1992,pp. 38-39).

The 'Hindutva' movement is based on a system of religion which derives its strength from 'primordial attachments' and 'the assumed "givens" of social existence' (Geertz, 1973,p. 259). The Hindu middle classes provide the support for the rising tide of Hindu nationalism from the fear of losing their dominance. They mobilized the lower ranks of the Hindu society for their dominance. Politicization and mobilization of the voters and the on-going process of modernization have resulted in the revival and reassertion of religious identities. But this movement did not come into fruition due to the political market needs of the politicians and the heterogeneous character of the Hindu society in particular and Indian society at large. In fact, liberal parliamentary democracy is a kind of market mechanism where the voters are conceived as mere consumers and politicians as entrepreneurs seeking to bag votes for securing office (MacPherson, 1977). Again, the Hindu society and its organization is fragmented into various castes, hence it becomes impossible to develop a unified and homogeneous society based on Hindu religion and ideology. The vision of the 'Hindutva' movement that the non-Hindus must adopt Hindu culture and religion, must respect Hindu religion, give up the attitude of intolerance and live in this country under the hegemony of Hinduism deserving no special privilege and preferential treatment – this seems difficult to entertain and attain. The 'Hindutva' movement and the crisis of the Indian state are closely associated characterizing the crisis of legitimacy of the regime, *i.e.* crisis of regime efficacy and regime effectiveness, and the crisis of hegemony of the Congress party. The 'Hindutva' movement is a semi-loyal opposition to the Congress regime. It is like Gramscian 'war of position' with elements of 'war of movement' with the goal of 'passive revolution' or 'revolution-without-a-revolution' or 'revolution-restoration' as the 'Hindutva' movement has to modify status quo without fundamentally changing the social relations. BJP demands that the 'Hindutva' movement will replace the failed regime formula of national unity and integration. It is like the fascist formula of organic unification of all reactionary forces within a single political organism. '… fascism… modifies the program of conservation and reaction… It replaces the tactic of agreements and compromises by the project of achieving the organic unity of all the forces in a single political organism under the control of a single centre.' (Forgacs, 1988,pp. 147-48).

In plural multi-party societies political demagogy with socio-political divisions and sub-divisions aggravate and intensify political conflict, tend to decrease the probability of effective policy formulation and thereby resultant consequences: system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy and effectiveness, interest aggregation and proper boundary maintenance. Through government vs. opposition model a pluralist society is incapable of sustaining democracy and democratic stability. Pluralism unequivocally invites domination of one group over another or majority domination over minority. A plural society like India is a society of domination characterised by heterogeneity and cultural diversity deviated from national integration and nation-building. In a plural society representatives ought to produce all component parts of a country proportionately and a system of consensus-building involving a multiple balance of power and a tradition of elite accommodation. What is needed is a balanced social structure, where no social group in a society should be allowed to exert undue pressure on the government to preserve democratic chastity and to prevent anti-democratic trends. Democracy depends upon the agreement on fundamentals and willingness to compromise, but not the intention systematically to exaggerate the support of large parties and to underrepresent the smaller parties.

In a plural society where the social cleavages are intense, representation on the basis of race or ethnicity or minority is preferred rather than policy preferences and socio-economic considerations. Diversity within the party system would control the majority dominance; diversity within each party should act as a resistance to majority extremism. A large pluralist society entails differences and divergence of opinion on any specific issue or large number of issues, but that cannot undermine cohesion within the society and politics in it.

If there is intra-party conflict and both the majority and minority act within the same structure cohesively as a compromise formula in and outside the legislature, but not minority's total acceptance of majority's decisions, then the party can represent itself united to the electorate, otherwise factionalism and outstanding factionalism are obvious. Furthermore, inter-party conflict is not suitable for consensus building in parliamentary democracy. Consensus here implies a political system allowing the peaceful give and take policy with regard to power sharing and recognizing each other's rights and duties in the game of politics. Democracy depends upon the power of reason over men's mind.

The need is the structural change with a new and bold leadership punctuated by political and cultural craftsmanship, decisiveness, direction and assertiveness capable of delivering goods and services. I argue for I argue for the principles of 'consociational democracy' (Lijphart, 1989) to satisfy the diverse interests in our society. Mere government vs. opposition model might not solve the various socio-economic problems of our society. Consociational democracy can solve the problems of political instability and disorder, uncompromising quarrel between segmental differences and society of 'equals and peers' (Lijphart, 1989, p. 1). Nonetheless, it challenges the pessimistic mood of our times: a society of segments cannot give birth to a sanguine political order and social progress in the womb of democracy. It is a system of segmental cleavages, system of conflict management with elite co-operation likely to produce a stable democratic regime, besides immobilism and fragmented culture with Caesaristic breakthrough. '… consociational democracy can be identified in terms of four characteristics. The first and most important element is government by a grand coalition cabinet in a parliamentary system, a "grand" council or committee with important and advisory functions, or a grand coalition of a president or other top office holders in a presidential system.' (Lijphart, 1989, p.5).Consociational democracy is more democratic than mere majority rule. There are two ways of transformation of minorities into majorities – (1) the electorate may transfer their support from one party to another, and (2) shifting coalition. Grand coalitions can provide a solution to majority domination over minority and stimulus to accommodation, moderation and compromise or even encourage cooperative and coalescent strategies of parties or groups concerned.

In fact, the government vs. opposition model prescribes a system where the minority is excluded from the governmental decision-making. A plural society like India is a society of domination characterized by heterogeneity and cultural diversity where free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people with fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government cannot exist. (Lijphart, 1989). In connection with this, J. Boskin presents that a pluralist society provides something more than freedom itself. That is, it provides certain conditions under which the habit of compromise has a chance to develop and opportunities for reasonable compromises are likely to flourish. No centre of power and interest embraces all the issues and interests in the society, no particular issue overshadows others or becomes dominant. So, conflicts in a plural society become milder than those that arise in societies where individual is wholly emasculated within the group to which he belongs (Boskin, 1968). To Lijphart, among the established democracies in the world, there are basically two types of democracies – consensus system and majoritarian system, the former is ruled by as many people as possible and the latter is ruled by simple majority (Lijphart 1999). To him, consensus democracy is the most kinder and gentler. Consensus democracy is most suitable in plural societies. Lijphart (1968) treats politics of accommodation as the most suitable style of politics in plural societies. An oversized coalition constituting consociational democracies in consensus democracies does not with minimal-winning coalitions in majoritarian democracies. Oversized coalitions in consensus democracies are defined by their structure, not only the willingness of the individual members to engage into them (Amyot 1985). Consensus democracy is more inclusive than majoritarian democracy. Consensus democracy is a dependent variable influenced by underlying social structure.

Pluralism arises from the dynamics of the modernization process, which has enhanced multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. In fact, differences of opinion and interest provide democracy its content and rationale. Multiculturalism is only one aspect of the problem, pluralism poses to liberal democracy. There are four options to solve these problems of pluralism – (1) solving of differences through neutral approach in liberal democracy, (2) solving of differences through negotiation, trading and compromise formula, (3) solving of differences through segregation of group rights and consociationalism, and (4) solving of differences through recognition of differences and accommodation of differences etc. It mixes voices and promotes deliberation, pooling of sovereignty, partnership and dispersal of power (Scott, 1998). It is compromise by negotiation. A functioning democracy requires a continuous process of discussion, resting ultimately on public opinion reached by discussion and the interplay of ideas.

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