

Q: What is Multiculturalism?

Ans: Multiculturalism, the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture. There is a notion of the distinctiveness of each culture, each separate from others, a notion which is vigorously challenged by modern anthropology which has emphasized time and time again the lack of any substantive boundary between cultures, but one which is for the moment entrenched in contemporary debate.

So in a brief sense it can be said that multiculturalism is the concept that society is a whole of increased diversity that abides through the harmonious coexistence of different cultures, and particularly focuses on the special acknowledgment of the minority group prevailing in a society.

But here a question may strike to our mind: why is multiculturalism actually needed? The world is composed of various people following various norms and cultures that have their distinctive importance. Therefore, society needs a multiculturalist approach to safeguard the cultural pluralism in modern democracies. Today's democratic aspect comprises people with diverse cultures; all having equal amounts of rights to hold their own culture. So, basically multiculturalism stands out as a response to many minorities who have experienced exclusion or the denigration of their identity in the past amidst the democratic society that is being rapidly growing in today's modern world. Multiculturalism tried to hold -unity without losing one's identity.

People that are vehemently being dominated and victimized in a multi-cultural society includes the National minorities, Migrant workers, Immigrant minorities, Person seeking Asylum, etc. A recent topic that is burning out is about the Kashmiri Pandits and their incident of fleeing away from Kashmir that took place in the mid of the year 1990. Kashmiri Pandits were a inhabitant of Kashmir with a very small amount of number in the overall population; been brutally tortured and were bound to deminished their own identity and accept the dominant culture of Kashmir by the population prevail in majonity. This is a small incident in the country India, that shows how multiculturalism received a deadly hit by advent of terrorism in Kashmir of the country India. This is not the problem of one country or one nation, but folding the

chapters of every country's history will highlight such kinds of incidents in numbers. However, if we see the positive aspect then we can also consider Kashmir to be a true symbol of multi-culturalism, where it is difficult for one to symbolize the difference between a Hindu Kashmiri and a Muslim Kashmiri- sometimes.

Therefore, it can be said that the concept of multiculturalism split between two sides - that of the proponents and that of the opponents. The proponents of multiculturalism believe that people should retain at least some features of their traditional cultures. Whereas, opponents say that multiculturalism threatens the social order by diminishing the identity and influence of the predominant culture.

If a country is considered to be a multicultural society and a person's sense of self worth is intimately and unavoidably bound up with their cultural identity, then the State, if it does want the nation to survive, can do one of the two things- 1. It can try to destroy the multicultural dimension of the society by rooting out all cultures other than a single one which will become dominant; which ultimately give rise to a mono-cultural society. 2. The other is an alternative attempt to mono cultural society, i.e. to celebrate and encourage multiculturalism that depict that the citizens who are proud of their culture and see that culture being endorsed by the state will be anxious to join in common citizenship with members of other cultural groups to protect the liberal tolerance which is so important for them.

Following multicultural society, it gives rise to two theories of Multiculturalism; one which has become a commonplace, is the analogy of the "Melting-pot" to refer to the process of assimilation. The "melting - pot" theory of multiculturalism assumes that various immigrant groups will tend to "melt together", abandoning their individual cultures and eventually becoming fully assimilated into the predominant Society. For example the U.S. Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 forced the assimilation of nearly 350,000 Indigenous peoples into American society without any regard for the diversity of their heritages and lifestyles.

By contrast, however, from the late 1960 onwards social philosophy began to change and doubts were cast on not only the descriptive power of the analogy - clearly different cultural groups were not simply abandoning their original cultural characteristics - but also its desirability, the analogy which emerged to take account of the new circumstances was that of a

'Salad-bowl'. This theory describes the heterogeneous society in which people co-exist but retain at least some of the unique characteristics of their traditional culture. For example, African Americans do not need to stop observing kwanzaa rather than christmas in order to be considered American.

Thus Multiculturalism can be taken up to be the key to achieving a high degree of cultural diversity. Diversity occurs when different people belonging to different zones come and settle together. But cultural diversity is truly implemented when every person, despite -mixing up; respect one another's values and always tries to hold their identity among unity of diversity. Modern world encourages the multicultural aspect of society. There was a time when people preferred less to explore themselves less and always prefer to spend their life amidst their own pre-determine Zone and culture. But now-a-days along with the advancement of society and most importantly rising of democratic approach in the modern era people prefer to move out of their Zone; be it for job, education, or whatever might be the case. And this results in the rising amount of multicultural society. However, this shift towards an endorsement of multiCulturalism has not of course occurred uniformly throughout the world and it can be seen that still it is rejected by nations which feel that their fragile unity is threatened by dennands for cultural equality from minority groups.

This is a brief explanation of what Multi- culturalism actually is.