Indian Multiculturalism; The Contemporary Scenario

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Abstract: *All democratic states in third-world nations fight silently for recognition of their national identities in international forums, believing that ethnicity and culture serve as the foundation for nationalism. However, Due to their diverse cultural identities, after gaining independence or liberation from colonies, they had to fragment and disperse, but this process was halted by the centralist government and globalization, which gave rise to the myth of cultural homogeneity. Every nationalist throughout history has fought solely for the self-rule of the people, but they have never defined that self-rule in detail. Instead of being recognized, those nationalists who had defined it have disappeared. This study tries to highlight the two aspects of multiculturalism in India, which has to adopt multiculturalism policies to alleviate the minority concerns. The evolving difficulty in nationalism is minorities are threatened to survive in majoritarian state.*

Keywords: Multiculturalism, India, Culture, Identities, Minorities, Nation

1. Understanding Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism in modern political theory and discourse reflects a discussion on how to understand and address the difficulties posed by cultural diversity based on ethnic, national, and religious differences. In countries without multiculturalism policies the members of minority groups are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Instead, proponents of multiculturalism endorse an ideal in which members of minority groups can maintain their distinctive collective identities and practices. Multiculturalism is part of a broader political movement for greater inclusion of marginalized groups, including African Americans, women, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities. Modern conceptions of multiculturalism place a greater emphasis on the acceptance and inclusion of minority groups which are largely classified by their race, nationality, and religion. [1]

2. Indian Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism in India has two distinct aspects: one is multiculturalism in Hindu religion (which includes different caste, cultures, ethnic groups and linguistic groups) and another is multiculturalism in India (which includes different religions such as Hindus, Muslims, Christian, Sikhs and other minority religion). According to Phule, "Aryans religious slavery was countered by efforts by Buddha, the Muslims appeared to conquer India due to their great spirit and to the weakness of a Brahman-enslaved India." Phule argued that, "even forcible conversion had a liberatory effect on the oppressed mass." [2]

The history of India was written by invaders rather than the founding fathers of the nation, and there is evidence of multiculturalism in India dating back to the arrival of Buddhism, the Muslim invasion, and later the British (Christians), who saved the populace from high caste Hindu discrimination. Numerous conversions were performed at this time in order to ensure their survival and to defend their ethnicity, languages, and culture from Hindu upper caste.

Although their religion has changed, but their culture, ethnicity, and language have not. For instance, in Tamilnadu in southern India, the tradition of Pongal has been celebrated by people of all religions. As a result, Indian multiculturalism differs from that of Canada and the United States. [3]

3. Hindu and It's Multiculturalism

In India multiple cultures, ethnic and linguistics were compressed into one religion (Hinduism) for example each religion celebrates the each festivals such as Muslims celebrates Ramadan, Bakrid and etc…., Christians celebrates Christmas, Easter and etc…. but in India Hindu religion people festivals differs from region to region where the Pongal, Jallikattu..etc are celebrated only in Tamilnadu. Onam, Adoor Gajamela..etc are only celebrated in Kerala and also in other several regions (NER, Andhra, Karnataka, etc...) people celebrates the different festivals as per their culture and tradition. The problem arises when specific customs or cultures are forced to be celebrated or unknowingly accepted across India, such as Vinayaka Chathurthi and Diwali, which discriminate against those in the southern regions who reverence Lord Ravana and vinayaka chathurthi threaten other minority religions through processions. [4]

4. Failure of Indian Multiculturalism

The main argument in this paper is the multiculturalism in India is gradually declining, by assimilating the diverse cultures, language, ethnic, nation into one so called one nation, one ration, one language and one India- Hindutuva ideology which is continuously propagated after independence from British. On one hand this ideology unites the people in India into one religion which so called Hindu religion created artificially by British through merging the (non Muslims and non Christians) small communities and clan into one for administration purpose [5], but on contrary it also threatens the minority religions. When this kind of majoritarianism arises the minority rights get deprived and it leads to communal clash. Through the recent judgement in

Bilkis bano [6], Hijab ban [7] and other case studies, it is evident that minority religions, as well as their traditions and cultures, are strongly discouraged from participating in educational institutions. The rise of Hindutva is where multiculturalism begins to fail.

After India gained its independence in the 1950's. Instead of multi-nations, the India represented several regions into one nation. In constitution of India, part three of fundamental rights of article 30 defines minority communities into linguistic and religious and in article 29 provides 'a distinct language, script, or culture of its own' has right to conserve. Constitution provides cultural rights of religious minorities and territorial autonomy for linguistic minorities and tribal populations [8], whereas in both article the word ethnic is not included. Despite the existence of cultural and religious rights, they did not succeed in protecting the minority or religious conflicts. The communal violence occurs very often before the every election in India, Hence it has became a trend to get attention from vote bank. The only progressive multiculturalism policy followed in India is India's Reservation Act which provides empowerment to depressed caste and vulnerable caste, other than reservation policy such as cultural and linguistic rights (article 29 & 30) and Autonomous District Council Act (fifth & sixth schedule) are only applicable in Utopian state.

5. Conclusion

I suggest two ways to protect the interest of minority rights, first, the essential thing for multicultural policies is social justice which can be achieved only through separate electorates and proportional representation associated with greater inclusiveness. Second, the countries like India which consist of several nations called as multi-nation, should not adopt national policies based on religious values. The Hindutuva culture or philosophy, which incorrectly claims that India is for Hindus, needs to be eradicated or reformatted because if it spreads, other cultures won't be able to recreate themselves, which eventually results in national minorities.

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